

The principal towns—viz., Wanganui, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Feilding, Hawera, Stratford, Marton, Eltham, and Taihape—are growing very rapidly. Although building is being pushed on, there is a continual demand for decent houses, which shows there is an ever-increasing population.

I would draw your attention to the necessity of establishing a police-station at Gonville, Wanganui. This is a rapidly increasing suburb. The constable there would have control of that suburb and on to Castlecliff. The population of these two places numbers upwards of 3,000. A tramway system is being started to go through Gonville to Castlecliff, so that the need of a constable there is urgent.

At Wanganui at least one additional constable is required. A town of the size and importance of Wanganui should have a watchhouse-keeper on duty all night. This cannot be arranged with our present staff.

The population of this district is approximately 145,000. The present authorized strength is 80, so that on the population basis I should have more men.

The conduct of the men on the whole has been good: as a rule they have been zealous and attentive in the discharge of their duties. The detective staff has worked well, and their energy has resulted in a large number of serious cases reaching the Supreme Court.

The only serious crimes during the past year were a series of crimes committed by John Joseph Powelka at Palmerston North last April. In the pursuit and capture of this criminal I consider the police did a really smart piece of work in effecting his apprehension in a little over a week.

The criminal statistics for the past year—1910—show but a very small increase, viz., 9 offences. There were reported 2,563 offences, of which 2,498 arrests or summonses resulted, and were dealt with in the Courts, leaving 65 undetected offences, or about 2½ per cent. of the total. There has been a slight increase of the serious offences, of burglary, breaking into shops, &c., also in wife-desertion, failing to support, &c., and drunkenness; the latter is probably due to the more effective steps taken to keep the streets clear of drunken persons. There has been a slight falling-off in the convictions for sly-grog selling, but the total amount inflicted in fines was much larger than in previous years. The figures are—19 prosecutions, 14 convictions, and £302 in fines.

During the year there were 21 prosecutions against publicans for breaches of the Licensing Act, resulting in 10 convictions and 11 charges being withdrawn or dismissed.

The number of offenders committed to the Supreme Court for trial or sentence continues about the same. In 1909 there were 92 committed and 42 convicted at the Supreme Courts; in 1910 there were 94 committed and 70 convicted; showing, I submit, that more care is being taken in the preparing and presenting of these cases in the Courts.

INSPECTOR ELLISON, WELLINGTON DISTRICT.

The authorized strength of the district on the 31st March, 1911, was 146, and the actual strength 143. The removal of 7 officers of the headquarters staff from the strength of this district during the year accounts for the difference in the authorized strength from that of the previous year.

During the last twelve months 16 recruits have been appointed to the district, whilst the transfers from other districts have been 1 Sub-Inspector, 2 sergeants, 1 detective, 1 acting-detective, and 4 constables. The transfers to other districts were 2 Sub-Inspectors, 3 sergeants, 2 detectives, 1 acting-detective, and 8 constables, whilst 3 constables retired on pension, 9 were discharged on resignation, 1 was dismissed, and 1 died.

During the year the new station at Pongaroa was completed, and a new station has been erected at Motueka. New buildings are in progress at Johnsonville and Otaki; the former is almost ready for occupation.

New cells have been erected at Manners Street, Wellington, which are a great convenience in regard to arrests in that central locality. Since the cells were completed on the 30th September, 1910, up to the 31st March, 1911, 398 prisoners were locked up there.

The erection of new buildings means a considerable reduction in the amount paid by the Department annually as rent. In this behalf I again beg to urge the necessity for a new station at Masterton, and the purchase of houses at Island Bay, Kilbirnie, Eastbourne, and Brooklyn.

The increase of suburban population at Kilbirnie, Lyall Bay, and Miramar will soon demand another constable in that locality. Lyall Bay has become a very popular seaside resort, and is visited by thousands of persons every week; in fact, the constable's time is fully occupied patrolling the beach amongst the bathers. I anticipate that another constable will be required there next summer.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December, 1910, shows an increase of 229 offences reported, the total number being 5,737, as against 5,508 for the previous year. The undetected offences amounted to 261, but this includes 27 deserters from merchant vessels, and a number of persons wanted on summons, who could not be found, for disobeying orders of Court, and similar offences. The actual undetected cases amount to about 150, including principally thefts of all descriptions. The principal increases were in drunkenness, 165; failing to support relatives, 47; ship-deserters, 40; theft, 71; breaches of the peace, 38; cruelty to animals, 37. Decreases appear under—assaults, 38; deserting wives and children, 42; illegally on premises, 19; neglected children, 12; soliciting prostitution, 37.

The Gaming Amendment Act of 1910 has already had a good effect in reducing the number of undesirable semi-vagrants who are to be found idling about towns, living on what they can pick up at race meetings. Although the Act cannot be supposed to entirely stop betting or gambling, still it keeps such business within better bounds than was the case hitherto.