

Two constables resigned voluntarily in this district during the year.

There are now in the district 1 Inspector, 1 senior sergeant, 3 sergeants, 1 detective sergeant, 2 detectives, 42 constables, 4 district constables, and 1 Native constable.

Increases in the strength are required at Hastings, Gisborne, and Napier.

The station in Shakespeare Road, Napier, known as Scinde Police-station, was closed on the 5th October, 1912, and the constable in charge was transferred to a new station which was opened at Havelock North on the same date.

I anticipate next year's report by recording that on the 4th April the opening of a new station at Motu, on the Gisborne-Opotiki line of railway was authorized. A rented house was secured, and a constable appointed forthwith to take charge.

Takapau, in the Waipawa County, on Napier-Woodville Railway line, and Te Araroa, in Waiapu County, east coast, are the only places which require consideration in respect of new establishments.

The total number of offences reported during the year ending the 31st December, 1911, was 1,874, and for the year 1912, 2,197, an increase of 323. Of this number, 2,156 were prosecuted—that is, 98 per cent. The principal increases are found in the summary offences, viz.: Assaults, 15; disturbing congregations, 15; drunkenness, 134; failing to maintain, 21; fisheries offences, 16; furious riding, &c., 31; introducing liquor into Maori pa, 10; neglected children, 27. Increases are found in the following classes of serious crime: Abortion, procuring, 3; burglarious crimes, 10; detaining postal packets, 6; offences against girls, 6; forgery and uttering, 12; malicious injury, 17; mischief, 10; theft (undescribed), 19; theft by servants, 7; theft of cattle, 3. The following crimes show a decrease in numbers: Assaults on police, 5; gaming offences, 22; indecent exposure, 10; maliciously killing and maiming animals, 7; perjury, 4; theft, attempted, 7; theft from the person, 5. There were 2 cases of manslaughter, 1 being convicted; and 1 case of wife-murder, resulting in acquittal on the substituted charge of manslaughter. It is pleasing to record that in the following classes of serious offences no cases were reported: Abandoning children; arson and attempted arson; assaults, indecent; assault and robbery; bankruptcy offences; coinage offences; cruelty to children; incest; keeping disorderly houses; rape or attempted rape; robbery or extortion; smuggling; theft as bailee; theft from the person; threatening letters; wounding with intent.

Examination of the figures show that it is impossible adequately to account either for the increase or non-commission of the offences to which they relate. It is not possible to assign any common cause, or to summarize any number of causes to account for fluctuation in the number of so many different kinds of crime unconnected with each other, and committed in places wide apart. Had there been an abnormal increase in any one class, it might be possible to ascertain a reason for it. What is material is that it is clear from the percentages of prosecutions that increases are not due to inactivity on the part of the police in dealing with reported crime.

Generally speaking, the conduct of the Force throughout the district has been excellent. In only two cases have penalties been inflicted. The men have displayed self-denying alacrity in discharging extra duty when called upon during absence or illness of comrades. Attention and thoroughness characterize the work of the majority.

The serious crime reported in the district affords no grounds for alarm as regards excess. A part of the increase in the offences is no doubt due to increase in population and the attraction the district has in the form of ready employment, at good wages, for persons of roving habits and criminal tendencies. Only a small portion of the serious crime has been undetected. The most serious case of this kind was the dynamiting of a tradesman's safe in Napier. Nothing identifiable was taken, and nothing left which would afford a clue to the offender.

I consider it would be advisable to embody in the Police Force Act power or authority to arrest, without possession of the warrant, any person for whose arrest or commitment to prison a warrant is known to exist. This power has been in existence in New South Wales for many years. It is better that the power should exist than that it should be practised without authority and at the risk of the officer. This may involve a repeal or modification of section 61 of the Crimes Act, 1908.

Under section 263 of the Justices of the Peace Act, 1908, power is given to issue a warrant to search for goods which have been stolen; and under section 365 of the Crimes Act, 1908, power is given to obtain a warrant to search for things which afford evidence of a crime, for which the offender may be arrested without warrant. There are some serious crimes for which the offender cannot be arrested without a warrant—for example, crimes relating to abortion, sections 220 to 223 of the Crimes Act; and conspiracy to defraud, under section 259. These are cases in which instruments, poison, drugs, and books are commonly exhibits as evidence of the crime, yet there is no power to issue a warrant to search for them, though it is frequently desirable to do so before the arrest of the offender. Besides, the power of search accruing from the arrest of accused is not sufficient to meet all possible requirements. The defects of section 365 of the Crimes Act have often been felt in practice.

The success and advantages following upon the provisions first enacted by the Indictable Offences Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1900, and now embodied in the Justices of the Peace Act, 1908, to enable accused persons to plead guilty to indictable offences when the depositions for the prosecution have been concluded before Justices or a Magistrate, suggest the question as to whether provision should not be made in purely summary cases to enable defendants on being served with a summons to enter at once a plea of guilty. In many cases defendant does not intend either to appear or defend, and the case goes by default upon formal proof of the offence. Defendant, however, is loaded with the cost of the witnesses, and the latter attend at much inconvenience, and perhaps disturbance of their own business or occupation. Often defendant intimates to the constable who serves the summons that he intends to plead guilty, and in such cases the attendance of witnesses can, as a rule, be dispensed with. The time and convenience as well as the expenses of witnesses are matters deserving consider-