

Two cases of a serious nature involving the death of four persons occurred during the year.

The first case was that of a man and his wife who were found dead in bed in a shop in Hamilton. The cause of death in both instances was poisoning by strychnine. The evidence produced at the inquest supported the theory that the husband gave the poison to his wife and then committed suicide, as he had purchased the poison mentioned a few days previously from a chemist's shop close to the vicinity of the tragedy. In the case of the wife the Coroner returned a verdict that the cause of death was poisoning by strychnine, but there was not sufficient evidence to show whether or not such poison was self-administered or was given by her husband. In the case of the husband the Coroner found that he committed suicide by poisoning himself with strychnine.

The other serious tragedy was that of a Maori girl aged fourteen years and a Maori boy, six years, found lying dead together wrapped in a blanket in a Maori whare near Cambridge. Death was due in each case to poisoning with hydrochloride of strychnine, which had been kept in the whare for rabbit-poisoning. The evidence at the inquest indicated that the girl gave the boy poison and then committed suicide by taking poison. The poison was administered on cake. The verdict in each case was that death was caused by poisoning through having eaten cake with hydrochloride of strychnine upon it, but that the evidence was not sufficient to show by whom the poison was administered.

A rather unusual case in the history of the Police Force occurred in this district during the year. A bookmaker sent through the post a parcel containing a case of pipes and a £10 note to two detectives. He was subsequently convicted on two charges of bribery and sentenced to nine months' hard labour. This demonstrates that the honour of the Police Force is well maintained.

Two constables were dismissed, one constable was called upon to resign, and six constables were fined for breaches of the Police Regulations. With these exceptions the conduct of the police was satisfactory.

INSPECTOR O'HALLORAN, GISBORNE DISTRICT.

During the year an increase in strength was made at Gisborne Station of one constable, and at Kopua railway-construction works camp of one constable.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December, 1929, showed a total of 1,362 offences reported, as compared with 1,200 in the previous year. Arrests or summonses resulted in 1,332 cases, leaving 30 cases undetected. The most noticeable increases were in breaches of Motor-vehicles Act, failing to maintain, unlawfully using motor-cars, mischief, and housebreaking.

A rather serious epidemic of burglaries occurred in Gisborne Borough some six months ago, and, owing to the fact that a quantity of revolvers and ammunition were stolen from the Drill-hall, and that the burglaries were being repeated for a few weeks despite the efforts of the police, a mild panic was occasioned among a small section of the public. A systematic search by the police resulted in the arrest and conviction of a gang of three young men. Most of the stolen property was recovered, and the youths were sent to the Borstal Institute before any serious damage was done.

The conduct of all members of the Force here has been good. Efficiency has been maintained, and there were no defaulters.

INSPECTOR CUMMINGS, NAPIER DISTRICT.

During the year the strength of the Hastings Station was increased by two constables and the Spit Station by one constable.

The new offices at Hastings were completed and handed over to this Department by the Public Works Department in May last. They are very comfortable and provide a long-felt want. Provision has been made for ample office accommodation for many years to come.

For the year ended 31st December last the total number of offences reported was 1,662, an increase of 203 on the previous year; 1,547 offences were detected, leaving a balance of 115 undetected.

The offence of unlawfully converting motor-cars is becoming very common and creates a great deal of work, this offence is being very difficult to detect. The Motor-vehicles Act is entailing a great deal of work on the part of the police investigating various breaches of the Act in respect to negligent driving, speeding, and other minor breaches, as well as numerous accidents and collisions that require investigation. One class of offence that is increasing is intoxication in charge of cars. In the great majority of cases where convictions are recorded the driving license of the offender is cancelled: this in my opinion is the best form of punishment.

Both branches of the service have done very good work during the year, and as a result we can produce an excellent return in the detection of crime, which showed a fairly substantial increase on the previous year, particularly in respect to housebreaking. The conduct of the various members of the Force during the year has been very good. Only a few men were dealt with for breaches of the regulations.

INSPECTOR FRASER, NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT.

During the year the strength of the Force in the district has been increased by one detective and two constables. The detective and one constable were posted at New Plymouth, and one constable at Tangarakau.

The offences return for the year ended 31st December shows the total number of all offences reported to be 1,422 compared with 1,485 for the previous twelve months, being a decrease of 63. Of the offences reported 1,382 were accounted for by arrest or summons, leaving 40 undetected. 225 persons were committed for trial or sentence, and of these 180 were convicted.

During the past twelve months this district has experienced something like a wave of crime in the matter of breaking and entering and theft. I am pleased to be able to report that in nearly every case the offenders have been arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

The general conduct of the police during the past twelve months has been good and their duties satisfactorily performed. Four constables had to be fined for minor breaches of the regulations.