

A considerable amount of selling liquor without a license by persons known as “droppers” has been going on round the wharves and back streets of Auckland on Sundays and during hours in which hotels are closed, and this has no doubt been responsible for a number of cases of drunkenness. The police have taken prompt steps to bring these sly-grog sellers before the Court, and a good number of convictions have been obtained, substantial fines being inflicted. The practice still, however, prevails, and will receive further attention.

During the year two deliberate murders took place in this district. The first occurred on the night of the 13th March, 1920, when a man named Dennis Gunn visited the house of the Ponsonby Postmaster, Mr. Braithwaite, shot him dead with a revolver, stole his office keys, and afterwards robbed the strong-room of the post-office of a large sum of money. Prompt action was taken, and the murderer arrested a few days afterwards. He was subsequently tried, convicted, and hanged.

The other occurred at Pukekawa, an isolated place near Tuakau, on the night of the 24th August, 1920, when a man named Samuel John Thorne shot a settler named Sidney Seymour Eyre, who was asleep in his bed, by putting a shot-gun through the open window and close to Eyre's head and blowing the top of his head off, jealousy and revenge being the motives. Thorne lived by himself some twenty miles away, and it was extremely difficult to obtain sufficient evidence to satisfy a jury of his guilt. However, this was done, and he was subsequently convicted and hanged.

In both these cases it was only the prompt and careful inquiries, coupled with the closest observation, that enabled the police to gather the necessary evidence, and the result proved that the police are quite able to do justice to the most difficult problems, and the officers concerned were justly complimented by the Judge, juries, and the Press.

The conduct of the police during the year has been highly satisfactory; no serious and very few complaints of any kind have been made against them by the public. Considering that the training-depot has been closed for some years now, and that the men taken on have been put into uniform at once on joining without the usual two or three months' tuition that they would have had in normal times, I think they deserve great credit for performing their duty as well as they have done. I have had to inflict very few punishments for breaches of discipline.

The work thrown upon the police steadily increases. The Arms Act, which came into force on the 1st January last, has entailed an enormous amount of work, but I am pleased to say that the work has been willingly and efficiently done. I have no doubt that the provisions of the Act will prove of great value, and will lessen the indiscriminate use of revolvers that has been far too prevalent in the past, not only by criminals but by irresponsible persons and youths. To give some idea of the amount of work entailed by this Act, I need only mention that upwards of 17,000 arms have been registered, 600 automatic pistols handed in and compensation paid for, and over 300 applications received for licenses to retain automatic pistols, each of which has to be carefully investigated and reported upon.

#### INSPECTOR SHEEHAN, HAMILTON DISTRICT.

The authorized strength of the district on the 31st March was—1 Inspector, 3 Senior Sergeants, 3 sergeants, 1 detective, 54 constables, and 1 district constable.

At the beginning of the year, owing to the formation of the new police districts of New Plymouth and Gisborne, 7 stations were cut out of the district—viz., Taumarunui Sub-district, comprising 5 stations with 1 sergeant and 6 constables, was added to Wanganui District, and Opotiki sub-district, comprising 2 stations with 1 sergeant and four constables, was added to Gisborne District, reducing the authorized strength by 2 sergeants and 10 constables.

The strength of the district was increased during the year by the appointment of a constable to the new station opened at Matamata. Waihi Station is still two constables short, and its strength should be brought up to normal.

During the year Headquarters Station had great difficulty in carrying out the duties required, the strength of the station being quite inadequate for the amount of work to be done. Increases in strength are required as follows, in keeping with the volume of work done, and the rapid growth of population, and the increasing progress of the town and district: Hamilton Station—One detective and three constables. Frankton Junction—One constable for extra patrol work. As pointed out last year, this portion of the borough is becoming thickly populated. Rotorua Station—An extra constable is urgently required at this station. Tauranga Station—I would again like to draw attention to the necessity of appointing a sergeant to the charge of this station. Piopio—As pointed out last year, this centre requires the services of a permanent constable.

It is anticipated that during the coming year large developments may be expected in connection with the hydro-electric-power supply, and the services of an extra constable or more may be required, according to the scale on which the work is carried out.

The only casualties were one constable and one district constable resigned from the service.

The offences return for 1920 shows that 2,340 offences were reported during the year, as compared with 2,148 for the previous year, an increase of 192. Increases appear under the following heads: Theft (undescribed), 74; burglary, 12; forgery, 13; drunkenness, 132; vagrancy, 17; breach of prohibition order, 84; murder, 1; manslaughter, 1; procuring abortion, 3. Decreases appear in the following: Theft from dwellings, 15; house and shop breaking, 30; mischief, 38; obscene language, 26; assaults on police, 25; illegally supplying liquor to Natives, 18.

Under the heading of “Increases” the offences, when analysed, are not serious, and with one exception—that of murder—the offences are of the ordinary character. The accused charged with murder was found by medical experts to be suffering from delusions when he committed the offence, and was committed to the mental hospital during the pleasure of the Minister of Justice. Under the heading of “Decreases” there is nothing special calling for attention.