

The provisions of the Arms Act are working smoothly. The ease with which criminals can procure revolvers by breaking a pane of glass still exists. The way some shopkeepers exhibit these dangerous weapons is a standing temptation to evildoers. In June last a man, having by night broken into several shops at Hamilton, stole one of the revolvers exhibited for sale, at the same time providing himself with a plentiful supply of cartridges, which were placed conveniently near the weapon. After his arrest he turned the revolver on Detective Lambert, who courageously grappled with his prisoner, receiving a most serious wound which endangered his life. Constable Sutton, with equal courage, pursued and recaptured the offender. Such incidents can be expected to recur so long as deadly weapons are so easily obtainable by criminals.

The growth of population in Hamilton and district is steadily maintained. In the goldfields the mining population is, however, decreasing. As mines peter out, the miners and their families have sought other avenues of employment.

The offences return for this district shows that 1,749 offences were reported during the year 1922, compared with 2,055 in 1921, a decrease of 306. Of the offences reported, over 95 per cent. were accounted for by arrest or summons, leaving 83 offences undetected. 162 offenders were committed for trial, being 62 in excess of the previous year. 149 of them were convicted. The decreases are principally for lesser crimes and minor offences, such as theft (undescribed), 36; thefts of postal matter and other offences under the Post and Telegraph Act, 19; drunkenness (under various headings), 235; offensive language, 26; unlawfully using horses and vehicles, 21; breaches of Licensing Act, 57. The increases are chiefly for serious crimes, viz.: False declaration, 6; unnatural offences and attempts, 8; indecent assaults on males, 12; indecent assaults, 7; carnally knowing girls, 4; attempted murder, 6; causing serious bodily harm, 5; common assault, 17; theft by clerks and servants, 29; theft of animals, 8; forgery, 12; arson, 6; mischief, 34; gaming offences, 12; failing to maintain wives and children, 36.

A man shot and killed his paramour near Thames. He was tried for murder and acquitted, but was convicted of manslaughter, receiving a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment.

Of the six charges of attempted murder, four were against four residents of Kopaki, near Te Kuiti, who murderously assaulted an acclimatization society's ranger whom they suspected of being a police officer. They kicked him into insensibility and threw him into a creek. He revived and escaped. The offenders were acquitted on the charge of attempted murder, but were convicted on the minor count of causing bodily harm, and were each sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. The fifth charge of attempted murder was against a young man who, at Te Awamutu, assaulted a young girl with an iron bar. For this he was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment, and on several charges of burglary he was sentenced to fourteen years on each charge. The sixth offence was that committed by the armed burglar who shot at and wounded Detective Lambert. He was acquitted on this charge, but for various burglaries and thefts received seven years' imprisonment.

Hotels have been generally well conducted. The decrease of drunkenness by 235 convictions, and of other offences against the Licensing Act by 57, is satisfactory. The sly-grog evil is kept well in check, and in some districts is decreasing.

I suggest consideration be given to provision being made for power to arrest under warrant of commitment issued under the Justices of the Peace Act, on same being telegraphed by a Clerk of Court or Magistrate, as can be done by a Sheriff in respect to offences under the Bankruptcy Act, thus preventing miscarriages of the law by escape of offenders. At present it is illegal to arrest unless the actual warrant of commitment is in the possession of the officer at the time of arrest.

It is made unlawful by section 43 of the Licensing Act Amendment, 1910, in proclaimed districts to supply liquor to Natives for consumption off licensed premises, but it has not been specifically made an offence on the part of the Native to procure liquor in breach of this section. It would appear to be logical to make it so: it would certainly be to the benefit of the Native race. At present this legal difficulty is sometimes got over by invoking section 184 of the Justices of the Peace Act, but not always with success.

INSPECTOR HUTTON, GISBORNE DISTRICT.

During the year a new station was opened at Ruatorea, on a splendid site in the centre of that township, and Tuparoa was closed. Port Awanui Station is off the main road, and as the Court work has been removed to Ruatorea and Te Araroa, a new station should be opened at Kahukura when a suitable house can be obtained, and Port Awanui closed.

A Native constable has now been appointed at Matata, and another at Te Kaha, which supplies a long-felt want. They are carrying out their duties satisfactorily.

A constable is very much required at Kaiti, in the suburbs of Gisborne, and the inhabitants have been pressing for such for a number of years.

There have been no casualties during the year, and the general conduct of the police in the district has been good, only trivial breaches of discipline having to be dealt with. No serious complaints have been made by the public.

For the year ended 31st December, 1922, the total number of offences reported was 807, as against 1,001 for the previous year, a decrease of 194. Arrests or summonses resulted in 785 cases, leaving 22 unaccounted for. Of the cases dealt with, 44 were committed for trial, and 27 resulted in convictions, 697 were summarily convicted, and 44 discharged. The increases were principally under the headings—Indecent act, 3; manslaughter, 3; rape, 5; carnally knowing girls under sixteen years, 9; assault, obstructing, or resisting constables, 9; supplying liquor to Natives, 8; failing to register firearms, 28. Decreases appear under—Assault causing actual bodily harm, 4; indecent assault, 5; common assault, 10; theft (undescribed), 19; false pretences, 3; burglary, 6; house or shop breaking, 7; arson, 4; breach of peace, 28; drunkenness, 110; drunk and disorderly, 15; gaming with instruments, 22; inciting violence, lawlessness, 14; illegally supplying liquor to Natives, 13; and breach of prohibition orders, 20.