

1889.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND POLICE FORCE

(ANNUAL REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The COMMISSIONER of POLICE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Commissioner's Office, Wellington, 7th May, 1889.

I have the honour to submit for your information my annual report on the Police Force of this colony, and criminal statistics for the year ending the 31st March, 1889.

On the last-mentioned date the strength of the Force was 484, exclusive of district and Native constables, as against 487 for the corresponding period of the previous year; and on the same date there were 14 district constables, being an increase of 1, and 11 Native constables, a decrease of 10, in this class. Very many of these men have been found to be quite useless, and were therefore dispensed with; the useful men have been retained.

Two new stations have been opened during the year—one at Mahakipawa, to afford police protection to that goldfield; the other on the line of the Otago Central Railway, at Middlemarch, to replace the late Nenthorn Station, which has been closed.

It has been found necessary to increase the strength at each of the following stations: Te Aroha, Wellington (2), Blenheim, Takaka, and Kaiapoi by redistribution. Reductions have been made at the Thames, Waterford, Hamilton West, Rotorua, Waitara, Pukearuhe, and Timaru (2).

The casualties in the Force for the past year have been 25, as against 28, 33, and 24 in the three previous years—viz., transfer to prisons, 1; resignations, 12; discharges on compensation, 8; discharge, 1; dismissals, 2; death, 1: total, 25.

The criminal statistics for the year ending the 31st December, 1888, show the usual decrease in the gross total of offences, for the North Island there being a decrease of 680, and for the South Island 93. There has, however, been an increase in the following serious offences: Breaking and entering shops or houses (35), burglary (7), cattle- and horse-stealing (16), murder and attempted murder (4). On the other hand, I have to record a decrease in arson (5), assaults of all kinds (23), embezzlement (9), false pretences (7), larceny (60), malicious injury to property (113), cases under Police Offences Act (174), perjury (15). I attribute the increase in housebreaking and burglary to the fact that we have now to deal with a well-organized gang of expert thieves, who are technically known as "spielers." These men are, for the most part, the result of the numerous small race-meetings of the colony, at which places they congregate for the purpose of swindling the unwary, and who generally at all other times lead a dishonest and criminal life.

The result of the late retrenchment and amalgamation of police districts has been that this department has gained in economy without having suffered appreciably in efficiency, the staff of the reduced districts having become available for ordinary police duties, and, consequently, augmentation of strength and new stations have been provided for without a corresponding increase in the Force. I would, however, point out that the police has now been reduced to the lowest limits consistent with efficiency, and must be increased to meet any future demands for additional police protection. Such demands are, however, not likely to occur immediately, except perhaps in two instances.

I have great pleasure in reporting the growing popularity of the Police Force of this colony with young colonists, but few of whom have hitherto been found in its ranks. During the past twelve months, however, nearly one-half of the recruits have been of colonial birth. Physically, these men are not inferior to any members of the Force, while in education and intelligence they are very superior to the ordinary class of candidates.

I regret having to report that our detective system is very unsatisfactory, for although we have many good officers in that branch of the service we have also many very useless men.

Instead of appointing a man detective for life, as is practically done at present, I would suggest that in future men should simply be employed as plain clothes constables, receiving detective allowance while so employed; by this means we should obtain all the advantages of the detective system without its defects. Once a man is appointed to the permanent office he may be said to have reached the summit of his ambition. From that time many men become comparatively careless in their work, or may, possibly from ill health, lose the energy and acuteness of intellect so necessary in their profession. In such case no specific charge can be brought against the man,