

1890.

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, 5th April, 1890.

I have the honour to submit for your information the annual report on the Police Force of this colony, and the criminal statistics for the year ending 31st March, 1890.

On the above-mentioned date the strength of the police was 494, against 484 for the corresponding period of last year (1889). This increase is due chiefly to the unusual police protection required by Dunedin before and after the opening of the Exhibition, and to the fact that three district constables have been dispensed with, and the same number of men of the regular force employed in their place.

In addition to the above strength, there are 11 district constables and 12 Native constables.

Four new stations have been opened during the past year—viz., Nenthorn (to provide police protection at the new goldfields of that name), Waipiro in Cook County, Kurow, and Culverden. This last station is on the terminus of the Hurunui Railway, and its establishment has enabled me to close the old stations at Hurunui and Waiau. The Kamo station has also been closed and the constable removed to Whangarei, where he can be more usefully employed.

Since my last report the following stations have been increased in strength—viz., Dunedin, 5; Ahaura, 1; Reefton, 1; Palmerston North, 2; Ponsonby, 1. These augmentations are consequent in the case of Dunedin on the Exhibition, in that of Ahaura and Reefton on the prosecution of the Midland Railway works, and at Palmerston on the very large increase of population, the result of settlement of bush lands and the extension of the flax industry.

The casualties in the force during the past year have been as follow: Retired on compensation, 8; resignations, 9; transferred to prisons, 1; dismissed, 2; death, 1: total, 21.

I have much pleasure in informing you that the Police Force of this colony retains its popularity, and that a large number of recruits of good class can be obtained from the Permanent Artillery. Moreover, numerous applications for enrolment have been received from persons who, not having served in the permanent forces, are not eligible for the police so long as recruits are obtainable from the former force. Many most desirable men are lost to us owing to this regulation, since the applicants are for the most part married men, and for that reason could not afford to join the artillery on the pay of a third-class gunner, and await their turn for the police.

The rate of pay drawn by junior (third-class) constables is not large, but it is apparently sufficient to support a married man even in a town, for nearly three-fifths of the juniors are married, and the men of this rank are, for obvious reasons, mostly stationed in towns.

The first- and second-class constables are not only better paid, but have also the advantage of country stations. It has been found by experience that as a rule ten years' service will entitle a man to receive charge of a country station, of which there are over two hundred, and in a few cases where men have shown special energy or aptitude for their work this much-desired post has been obtained in less time, but under no circumstances is an unmarried man allowed this privilege.

For the last three years there has been but little promotion in the police. This state of things has arisen from the fact that the higher ranks have been blocked by an excessive number of sergeants and first-class constables, a heritage from provincial institutions. This evil still exists, to the detriment of energetic juniors, who are naturally impatient at the want of promotion. This state of stagnation will, however, shortly disappear, and meanwhile aspirants are reading to pass the examinations which are now necessary to enable constables to attain the rank of sergeant. I quite recognise that the slow rate of advancement is a real grievance to those who have joined within the last eight years, but I have not felt myself justified in giving promotion while I have sergeants doing the work of constables, except in cases where members of the Force have performed specially meritorious actions, and have been recommended by their officers. In such cases promotion has not been withheld, so that men might see that really good service would, under all circumstances, be recognised.