

helped the poor lad Mullins, but as Bosted was away from Palmerston, and could not appear before me, I refrain from making any comment upon his conduct.

I was, of course, heavily handicapped in making an inquiry, as the accident had happened three months ago, and an informal inquiry had been held before two Justices in the interim ; and here I may mention that an erroneous impression has got abroad that, at that inquiry, the Justices examined the boys in the presence of each other ; but this was not so, as no two boys were in the room at the same time till after the Magistrate had heard what each boy had to say separately. There was no evidence taken in writing on that occasion.

I cannot conclude this report without expressing my opinion that the Sergeant of Police at Palmerston did not use that diligence and exertion in ascertaining, as soon as the matter was reported to him, the circumstances surrounding the fatality which might be expected from an officer of his service and experience. He seems to have rested satisfied by sending a constable round to some of the boys, and making very perfunctory inquiries. One boy assured me that he had never been interviewed by the sergeant, constable, or any member of the Force ; and, though the sergeant knew that both the father and mother were smarting with grief under the distressing death of their boy, he did not consider it worth his while to see the father from time to time and let him know how the investigation was getting on, except exchanging a few remarks on the matter when he happened to meet Mr. Mullins in the street.

I enclose for your information a copy of the evidence taken at the inquiry. Inspector Thomson was present and gave me valuable assistance, and Sergeant Slattery also attended.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Commissioner of Police.

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

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