

I am compelled to bring under your notice the large number of constables who have left this district from various causes during the year. Out of a total of 45 of all ranks, 10 men have resigned, 4 have been dismissed, and 3 transferred to other districts at their own request. The cause of this is not far to seek, and lies entirely in the low rate of pay the men receive. Formerly the rate of wages throughout the province was exceedingly low; at that time there was no difficulty in keeping constables in the force, but at present, when labourers receive 8s. per diem, mechanics 10s. and 12s., and the constabulary of the southern provinces 8s. 6d. and 9s., it is needless to expect that efficient constables will remain in the service at 6s. Some time ago the men memorialized for an increase of pay. I strongly recommended that an advance of at least 1s. per diem should be made to the different grades, from the sergeant-major downwards, but I regret to say that up to the present no increase has been given. The Provincial Council is now in session, and from a press copy of the proposed estimates I observe that it is intended to increase the pay of the constables only by 6d. per day, without any increase to the sergeants. Believing the latter to be an error, I have written to His Honor the Superintendent pointing it out. It is much to be desired that the Council could see its way towards granting the men the increase recommended, as it is the only means of inducing them to remain; and were the difference between an intelligent and an ignorant body of police only taken into consideration, and the good or evil likely to result from the employment of either, it would not long remain a question whether the men should get an advance of 6d. or 1s. From a knowledge of our criminal laws, acquired by many years police experience, I am enabled to say that the enforcement of those laws depends, in a great measure, on the class of men employed in the police. Year by year the Colonial Parliament, the different Provincial Councils and Municipalities, pass laws and by-laws, depending entirely on the police for their intelligent operation. By the employment of ignorant and unsuitable men in the police, these laws would become a source of oppression to the community, and instead of being a public good, would occasion much evil. On the other hand, if the police are intelligent and wisely directed, the laws will be enforced in the spirit in which they were intended, and will be likely to realize the expectations of their framers. None but those who have inquired into the matter can be aware of the powers the police possess, whether for good or evil. They can increase or decrease litigation by their advice and counsel; they can daily settle a thousand small matters which would constantly employ the time of Police Courts in investigating; they can cause any law to become a dead letter by failing to see breaches of it committed, or they can enforce any law in such a way as would defeat the object of the Legislature. Occupying such a position, it ought not to be a question whether their pay was increased 6d. or 1s. a day, when all they receive at present is 6s.

In the estimate for the ensuing year submitted to you, the total cost of police, including the Thames Gaol and the erection of a lock-up at Gisborne, is set down at £9,024 10s., being an advance on the cost for 1873, of £2,393, which is occasioned by the proposal of an increase in the men's pay, as above noted, by an increase in the cost of the travelling expenses of constables, which last year amounted to £328 12s. 11d., by the proposal of the expenditure of £220 for the erection of a lock-up and station at Mercer, which are much required, and by an increase of six constables in excess of the vote for 1873. Two of these have already been allowed by His Honor the Superintendent, one for night duty on the wharf, and one as an addition to the water police, which before only numbered two men, a force totally inadequate for a port of this importance. The other four are intended as an augmentation to the city police, and have been urgently required for years past. The entire strength at present enables me to place two constables on each relief on the town during the day, and one on the wharf and three in the town during the night; but, when men are unfit for duty from illness or injuries received in the discharge of their duty, a common occurrence, less than this number have to serve during the day, in order to keep up the strength for night duty.

I have so often brought under your notice the insufficiency of the police force of this district, that I must apologize for again reverting to it; but to furnish an annual report without noting what is a pressing want, would be to omit the most important part of it. I have frequently quoted the cost of different police forces, not with the view of drawing a comparison favourable to this place, but of showing how grossly inadequate the vote for police in Auckland is. The vote of our Provincial Council for 1873 was for forty-three men at a cost of £6,300, while the rate in Otago for the same period was for ninety men at a cost of £20,300. I do not believe that the cost of the Otago police for the year was excessive, but there can be no question that the vote for police in this province was totally insufficient. It may be thought by some that a smaller police force is required here than in Otago, but so far as I can judge there is no reason for this conclusion, and a glance at the criminal record attached will show that a large reduction in our crime is desirable. An efficient police force would cost as much here as in Otago, making due allowance for the difference in population, which amounts to 16,000, and for the employment of escorts, which are not needed here. In the year 1865, when the population of the province was perhaps some 45,000, the police vote was £9,382 1s., while at the present time, with a population of 68,000, the vote is £3,000 less than it was then. Allowing for the disturbances of those days, and the peace of these, it would still be supposed that with such a large increase of population the police vote would at least equal what it was in 1865.

I have already stated that an outcry is raised here in favour of education, and a reduction in crime is one of the advantages which it is said will arise from the spread of learning. I could have wished that the attention of the public was also turned toward the Police Department, and means afforded to improve its efficiency. While believing that vast benefits will arise from the increase of education, I cannot but think that it will cause little or no reduction in the number of such offences as forgery, embezzlement, frauds, false pretences, larceny by bailees, &c., and that as offenders will possess more intelligence from increase of education, a more intelligent, and consequently more expensive police, must be employed to detect them.

Having estimated for so large an advance in the cost of police for the ensuing year, I shall only indicate the numerous other wants of the department without stating their cost, in the hope that next year provision may be made for carrying my recommendations into effect. I would point out the necessity of purchasing sites and erecting police stations and lock-ups at Parnell and Newton, at which places constables have been stationed for years, who reside in private cottages rented by the Govern-