

1878.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND CONSTABULARY

(ANNUAL REPORTS ON).

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

No. 1.

Superintendent WELDON to the Hon. the COMMISSIONER, New Zealand Constabulary.

SIR,—

Constabulary Office, Dunedin, 24th June, 1878.

In submitting my annual report upon the state of the Constabulary under my charge in the South Island, I have the honor to represent that, organized as the force now is in three divisions—viz., the Armed Constabulary proper, the North and South Island Police—so far as this system affects the latter, I have much pleasure in saying that the unity and co-operation thus secured obviously tend to increase the efficiency of the service; and that the economy of working the department in such large districts has immense advantages over the method which hitherto existed.

The numerical strength of the division consists of 282 members of the Force of all grades, distributed in 104 stations. This, in comparison to the population (256,093), gives one policeman to about every 908 inhabitants, which is under the usual average of police to population; but as the organization already alluded to becomes more fully developed there is little doubt it will materially conduce to the most satisfactory results.

In the repression and detection of crime I am happy to say the Force has been very successful: comparatively speaking, very few serious crimes have been committed; more however could be done in this direction if the police were better aided by the law. As matters stand, without being in the possession of a warrant the police cannot arrest an offender for a lesser crime than felony, whereas there is little or no difference between felonies and misdemeanours: for instance, if a person embezzles he commits a felony and can be apprehended without a warrant, but if he obtains money or goods by false pretences, legally speaking, the police without being in possession of a warrant are powerless to arrest. They have hitherto endeavoured, by straining their powers, to get over this difficulty, but probably the time has arrived when the proper legal remedy for this state of things might be made. I would here very strongly urge that a Police Offences Act be passed embodying those and other similar offences provided for in the Otago Town and Country Police Ordinance, and giving power to arrest misdemeanants and such other offenders in the first instance without warrants.

Multifarious as the duties are which devolve upon the police, and as they are gradually increasing, it is to be feared that there must be a corresponding increase in the number of the men. Be that as it may, the great objection lies in members of the Force having to serve two officers of different departments, both giving orders irrespective of each other, and requiring the police to carry out their separate instructions at one and the same time, whereby orders clash, inefficiency sets in, and the ultimate result will be demoralization. This is most noticeable in Westland, where no less than five sergeants and constables have to act as clerks to Wardens and Magistrates, and in consequence (without going into details here) inefficiency has set in. I have therefore to recommend that the system as adopted on the Otago Gold Fields, where the Magistrates and Wardens manage these matters admirably, be followed elsewhere.

I regret to say that some considerable expense will have to be incurred in the erection of and repairs to police-stations and lock-ups. In this respect Westland, Nelson, and Marlborough demand most attention, as the buildings alluded to in those districts have been allowed to fall into a state of decay, and little or no apparent handiwork is visible for the preservation of the barracks or comfort of the occupants.

I cannot conclude this report without bringing prominently before you the able and zealous exertions of the officers, sergeants, and constables of this division in the performance of their duty—exertions which render life and property very secure. Besides, the *esprit de corps* reigning in the division in thus rendering the very best services has been repeatedly remarked, and ought to be encouraged. Therefore to maintain these commendable qualifications I have a duty to perform towards the Force, and that is to ask for the members considerations which elsewhere, and indeed all over Her Majesty's dominions, are conceded to police. I refer to provision in the shape of pensions and retiring allowances. Taking into consideration the heavy loss sustained by some of the sergeants and constables of long standing, through no fault of their own, but by the change in the Constitution