

1896.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE POLICE FORCE OF THE COLONY

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

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

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

SIR,—

Police Department, Commissioner's Office, 15th June, 1896.

I have the honour to submit for your information the annual report on the Police Force of the colony, together with the criminal statistics of the year ended 31st March, 1896 :—

1. On the 1st April last the strength of the Force was 484 of all ranks, being a decrease of three during the year. The totals are made up as follows : Inspectors—first-class, 3 ; second-class, 3 ; sergeants-major, 3 ; sergeants—first-class, 20 ; second-class, 15 ; third-class, 13 ; constables—first-class, 111 ; second-class, 111 ; third-class, 192 ; detectives—first-class, 3 ; second-class, 5 ; third-class, 2 ; fourth-class, 3 : total of all ranks, 484, with 101 troop-horses. In addition to the above there were 16 district and 9 Native constables.

2. New stations have been formed at Avondale, Pahi, Waihi, Carlyle Street (Napier), Te Puke, Te Whaiti, Mokau, and Seddonville. Normanby has been reopened, and Maketu, Pukearuhe, Pahautanui, and Southbridge closed. District constables have been appointed at Ohaeawai and Cheviot.

3. Increases have been made at the following stations : Newton, 1 ; Ponsonby, 1 ; Wairoa, 1 ; Fielding, 1 ; Palmerston North, 1 ; Greymouth, 1 ; Reefton, 1 ; Timaru, 1 ; Port Chalmers, 1. Decreases have been made at the following stations : Auckland, 3 ; Napier, 1 ; New Plymouth, 1 ; Hawera, 1 ; Wellington, 2 ; Masterton, 1 ; Kumara, 1 ; Christchurch, 2 ; Addington, 1 ; Akaroa, 1 ; Sydenham, 1 ; Temuka, 1 ; and Dunedin, 2.

4. The casualties in the Force during the past year have been : Retired on medical grounds with compensation, 7 ; resigned, 3 ; services dispensed with, 2 ; dismissed, 15 ; suicides, 1 ; died, 3 : total, 31.

5. The question of periodical transfers from one station or district to another which are imperative for the maintenance of a thoroughly efficient Police Force, is one of the most fruitful sources of trouble to the department. I say without fear of contradiction that it is easier to move any other officer of the public service than a constable, and in this statement I feel I shall be fully borne out by any Minister who has had charge of the department. The plan of forwarding a petition to prevent the transfer of a constable is often resorted to, but, in my opinion, if any proof was wanted that a constable should be shifted, the fact of a petition against it being forwarded from the residents of the district is that proof. If a really efficient and reliable Force is to be maintained, periodical transfers must be carried out, and in this particular the department has the right to expect the assistance of the community at large.

6. It cannot be expected that a Police Force can escape a considerable amount of criticism and censure, and often hard criticism is made when, if the truth were fully known, commendation would and should have been bestowed. This is particularly applicable as regards the enforcement of the liquor laws, especially as to Sunday-trading and closing houses at the stipulated hours, gambling, the social evil, and suppression of larrikinism. The Press have a great deal to say about the Force being disorganized, and the advantages that would accrue from a Royal Commission being held to inquire into the organization and internal management ; but I must positively assert that there is no disorganization or evils that call for any such inquiry, and the colony has, at the present time, a thoroughly efficient and trustworthy Police Service ; were it otherwise, I should not hesitate to ask for an investigation. A certain class of the community are for ever crying down the Police, and apparently endeavouring to manufacture grievances and discontent. It is not for a moment argued that in a Force of some five hundred men there are not some unworthy members, but it is argued that such are only a very small portion, and, as a rule, do not last long.