

SESS. II.—1897.  
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, 1st June, 1897.

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, 1897:—

1. On the 31st March last the strength of the Force was 516 of all ranks, being an increase of thirty-two during the year. The totals are made up as follows: Inspectors—first-class, 6; third-class, 1; sergeants-major, 3; sergeants—first-class, 21; second-class, 12; third-class, 9; constables—first-class, 119; second-class, 114; third-class, 219; detectives—first-class, 5; second-class, 4; third-class, 3; total of all ranks, 516, with 99 troop-horses. In addition to the above there were 18 district and 8 Native constables.

2. New stations have been formed at Waitekauri, Raetihi, Levin, Mangatainoko; and Kamo Station has been closed. District constables have been appointed at Tokaanu and Cullensville.

3. Increases have been made at the following stations: Auckland, 7; Coromandel, 1; New Plymouth, 2; Stratford, 1; Hawera, 1; Wellington, 3; Mount Cook, 2; Ashurst, 1; Masterton, 1; Christchurch, 6; Akaroa, 1; Ashburton, 1; Rangiora, 1; Sydenham, 1; Temuka, 1; Dunedin, 5. Decreases have been made at the following stations: Ponsoby, 1; Tauranga, 1; Te Whaiti, 1; Wanganui, 1; Pahiatua, 1; Kaikoura, 1; Invercargill, 1.

4. The casualties in the Force during the past year have been: Retired on medical grounds with compassionate allowances, 9; resigned, 10; dismissed, 9; died, 4; transferred to Permanent Militia, 1; transferred to Prisons Department, 1; total, 34.

5. A considerable number of transfers from one station and sub-district to another have been carried out during the year, and the efficiency of the Force thereby strengthened. In my reports for the years 1894 and 1895 I referred to the difficulties that are experienced in effecting the removals of constables from one station to another. These difficulties still exist. On the one hand, complaints are made that a constable remains so long in a locality that he becomes prejudiced, while on the other hand a semi-popular outcry is raised immediately it is proposed to move him. Both the public and the members of the Force appear to forget that a constable when he joins the Police Force does so under certain conditions, one of which is that he may be moved from station to station, and, further, that he need not remain in the Force if the conditions of the service do not suit him. The only solution of this difficulty appears to me to be the making of a regulation, which should be rigidly adhered to, providing for the transfer of all sergeants and constables every five years. In selecting men for transfer during the past year care has been taken to alleviate as far as possible any hardship, by placing those transferred in similar stations and circumstances as they may have enjoyed in their former localities, when their qualifications and conduct have deserved such considerations; but I have no hesitation in saying that in carrying out these periodical transfers the department has a right to look for the assistance and support of the community at large, instead of, as is too often the case, their opposition and resistance through ignorance of the circumstances in connection therewith. In one instance during the past year a constable had not been moved for nineteen years, yet when his transfer was ordered considerable local pressure was used to prevent its being carried out.

6. The criticism, and in some cases censure, of the Force continues. I do not think this is to be regretted. "Criticism," Lord Halsbury recently took occasion to remark, "is the salt of the administration of justice." It is therefore a matter of the greatest satisfaction that with all this watching so little can be said against it, and that specific charges are not forthcoming against members of it.