

CONSTABLES.

The constables are a fair average lot of men. Generally, they carry out their duties satisfactorily. The Force would, no doubt, be improved if some who are of loose habits, and others who are either mentally or bodily unfit, were got rid of. Those coming under the former head can be weeded out by closer supervision, and a pension system would remedy the latter. There is an abundance of suitable material in the colony from which to select recruits, and with the closer selection suggested under the heading of "Recruiting," and better system of training, I feel convinced the Police Force of this colony could soon be made to compare favourably with any of the other colonial Forces.

That the men, as a body, are not lacking in intelligence, is clearly demonstrated by the general satisfaction they give in carrying out the multifarious duties outside that of police constable which they are called upon to perform for the various Government departments and local bodies.

Instances occasionally arise of constables becoming lax in carrying out their duties, but this cannot be wondered at, considering that in many out-of-the-way places these men have not in the past been visited by their superior officer on an average more than once a year, and in some very isolated places not even as frequently as that.

DETECTIVES.

The Detective Branch of the Force is doing its work fairly well, but is not sufficient in numbers. If the augmentation I have asked for, and my application for an allowance of 1s. a day to men employed temporarily in plain clothes be granted, it will give me greater opportunities than I now possess to employ men in plain-clothes work, and thus enable me to discover any latent detective talent that may exist in the Force.

CONDUCT.

In this Force, as in all others that I have been acquainted with, there are a certain number of men who misconduct themselves, and this will always be so in a greater or lesser degree, as, unfortunately, the frailties of human nature apply to policemen as well as to other classes of the community. In all cases of misconduct that have come under my notice I have meted out such punishment as I considered the case demanded, and I trust that if the increased means of supervision I have already suggested be granted me I may be able to weed out and get rid of the objectionable members now in the Force, and thus reduce to a minimum the causes of complaint upon this score.

RECRUITING.

The present system of recruiting needs alteration. A candidate now fills up a form giving, in addition to his age, height, &c., particulars of the four last places where he has been employed. This form also purports to be signed by some persons who recommend him. No inquiry is made, and, without being seen by any police-officer or by the Minister, he is appointed a constable, if he can produce a satisfactory medical certificate as to his physical fitness, the certificate being paid for by the candidate himself.

In my opinion, before any candidate is taken on, his private character should be carefully inquired into by a responsible police-officer; he should be required to attend at Wellington, to be there seen by the Commissioner; he should be required to pass an elementary educational examination; and should be certified physically fit by a medical gentleman appointed and paid for by the department. The present age is from twenty-three to forty. This should be changed from twenty-one to thirty. If the candidate is deemed suitable for the Force he should be drafted to a depot at Wellington as a probationer, and there placed under a competent sergeant, to be instructed (1) in company drill, (2) the Police Act and regulations, and (3) the Acts of Parliament that are mainly enforced by the police. He should also attend the Magistrate's Court to learn how to give evidence and conduct cases, and, towards the end of his probation, be sent for a few hours daily on beat duty with an experienced constable. If at the end of three months the probationer is found to possess the intelligence and aptitude required to make a good constable he should be drafted into the Force, but if he lacks those qualifications he should be sent about his business.

PAY AND CLASSES.

The rates of pay and system of classes require revision. At present a constable joins at £10 a month, and rises at some uncertain period to 7s. 6d. a day, with a still further rise, also at some uncertain period, to 8s., which, to all men joining subsequent to the 12th February, 1887, is the maximum pay of a constable. All men who joined the Force prior to the date named receive long-service pay at the rate of 6d. a day after five years' service, and an additional 6d. a day after ten years' service. At the present rate of advancement it takes a constable about nine years to get his first rise, and about twelve years his second. I suggest that when a man is taken on as a probationer he shall receive 6s. a day, with lodgings at the depot. Immediately he is appointed a constable his pay shall be 7s. a day. After four years' service he shall, unless retarded in the meantime for misconduct, be advanced to 7s. 6d. a day; after eight years, 8s. a day; and after twelve years, 8s. 6d. a day. All well-conducted men, on completion of twenty years' service, and who have not attained promotion to sergeant, shall be given an additional 6d. a day, making the maximum pay of a constable with not less than twenty years' service 9s. a day, which would be equal to the present first-class constable's pay with long-service pay included.

Sergeants should commence at 9s. 6d. a day, and advance to their maximum of 10s. 6d. in six years by two increments of 6d. a day every three years. Inspectors to start as at present at £300 a year, and rise to their present maximum of £400 a year by increments of £25 every two years.