

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

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

SIR,—

Constabulary Office, Dunedin, 30th June, 1879.

In submitting my annual report for this year, I have the honor to state that the system of working the Constabulary in divisions (inaugurated a little over twelve months ago) is, so far as it affects the South Island, giving much satisfaction. It is found to admit of dispensing with a certain amount of supervision over officers holding responsible positions, and accelerates the general transaction of business. Indeed the acceleration and ease of the system is not alone apparent, but obviously felt as being most effectual, economic, and simple; and the more effect that is given thereto, particularly in carrying out the minor details by the divisional superintendent, the still higher will this system be appreciated.

The division now consists of twelve districts (that is, including those called subdistricts), each presided over by an inspector or sub-inspector, who is afforded ample means of speedily giving effect to all matters connected with crime. The boundaries of these districts are, as far as possible, in conformity with those of counties, so that, if thought advisable, the services of the police can be advantageously utilized in the collection of statistics.

It may be seen that, by a readjustment in the matter of supervision, the services of one inspector, one sub-inspector, five sergeants, and three district constables have been dispensed with, which, with little additional expense, admits of an increase of seventeen constables, who were much needed consequent upon the increase of the population.

I think I can fairly say that the peace of the division is, and has been, well maintained. But, owing to so many experienced men having left the force, the burden of the work devolved upon the officers, sergeants, and senior constables, who have worked zealously, and indeed to them may be ascribed the credit of having upheld the efficiency of the service; for, although no doubt the men of short service have also done their best, yet their deficiency in the knowledge of their duties obviously places them at a disadvantage for a time.

Forwarded herewith are the following returns:—

No. 1. The numerical strength and distribution of the police of the division.

No. 2. Criminal statistics thereof.

No. 3. Police and stations as localized, and the crime of the respective districts.

No. 4. Number of licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors, and prosecutions against licensees for breaches of the licensing law.

No. 5. Inquests on dead bodies, and on fires.

No. 6. Resignations and discharges from the force.

The return of the distribution of the force shows that there are 276 of all ranks, including district constables, but exclusive of gaolers, and posted at 108 stations. Thus, estimating the population of this Island to be 270,000 or thereabouts, it gives one policeman to about every 978 persons. It will further be seen, by comparing the return of this year with that of last year, that an increase of six stations has taken place.

Notwithstanding an increase of about 14,000 in the population since last year, yet the criminal statistics have not, I may say, proportionately increased. Out of 7,431 cases reported, 6,954 of the offenders were arrested, leaving only about 6 per cent. of undetected crime. Needless to say the best efforts are being directed to the repression of crime, and, satisfactory as this is at present, I anticipate that year after year still better results will follow.

Return No. 3 classifies the crimes under the headings of offences against the person, against property, and miscellaneous. It also shows the localities where the offences were committed, hence a comparison can easily be made as to the crimes of the respective districts and the repressive efforts of the police thereof. This is the first time that this system of comparison has been introduced here; but, as the officers in charge of the districts alluded to are held responsible for the repression of crime within their respective commands, I propose that due notice be taken of those who show best results with the average number of police to population.

As the excessive use of intoxicating liquors has unquestionably much to do with crime, I accordingly furnish a return of the number of places licensed in this division for the sale of such liquors, and by it may be seen that, irrespective of that sold by wholesale, there is 1 retail* licensed house to about every 210 of the population. This return likewise gives information as to prosecutions against licensees for breaches of the licensing law. But, while upon this subject, permit me to say that, as there exists the general and detective Constabulary to cope with crime, so ought there, in my opinion, be established another branch of the force, to be known as the revenue police, to specially enforce the licensing law, the law dealing with the adulteration of food and liquor, the prohibition of illicit distillation of spirits, smuggling, &c.; and, with the information derivable by each branch of the service, and the whole working in co-operation, obviously the usefulness of the department could be immensely increased.

In furnishing a return of inquests on dead bodies and on fires, I have but little to say on the former, save that the dangers, difficulties, hardships, &c., which beset persons in the colonies are attributable to sudden deaths. But, as to the latter, I may mention that fires are of such frequent occurrence, and so little to be gained by inquests thereon, that that mode of investigation is falling into disuse. The chief cause for the many fires which have taken place is assignable to accidents, combined with carelessness, and wilfulness, to obtain the amount of insurance. Not unfrequently are insurance companies blamed for taking heavy risks, which tend to divest persons holding policies of insurance of interest as to their loss. It is needless, however, to say that every exertion is being made by the police to prevent fires, and rewards are offered up to £500 for information leading to the conviction of incendiaries.

A cause may possibly be sought for to account for so many men having left the force, but when it is

* This includes bottle licenses.