

The class of men now enrolled in the police is such that it is unnecessary to test their qualifications by a general-knowledge examination; but, with the view of encouraging constables to acquire a sound knowledge of criminal law and evidence, a system of examination in these subjects has been instituted. A pass in the junior examination renders a man eligible for the rank of first-class constable, while a pass in the senior holds out the prospect of sergeants' rank to the successful candidate.

The junior examination includes the following subjects: 1. Police Code; 2. Evidence and convictions as laid down in Johnston's "Justice of the Peace." The senior will include certain of the most useful of the criminal statutes of this colony. The first sitting under these regulations was held last January. Forty-three competitors attended, of whom twenty-four passed most creditably, for the papers were difficult, but exceedingly well considered, and were due to the kindness of H. A. Stratford, Esq., R.M., Oamaru, who volunteered his services as Police Examiner.

I have promoted the four men who obtained the greatest number of marks in this examination, in order to encourage those who had the energy to read up the theory of their duty. It is not, however, intended that this promotion shall become a precedent, since it is expressly provided that the examination is not competitive, and that a pass only is required, after which the rule of seniority has force. Moreover, it is obvious that some exceedingly good constables have failed to take a prominent position in the examination-list, and in one or two instances have not been able to pass. This examination is intended to encourage men to read up the criminal law and duties of constables, but it is not intended that it shall overshadow the real and practical work of the police.

I would again bring before your notice the advisability of instituting some system of pension which shall apply to at least a portion of the Police Force. We have now 400 men drawing long-service pay, of whom 295 receive 1s. per diem after ten years' service, and 105 receive 6d. after five years' service. Concerning these men I have no recommendation to make at present, for it may be fairly assumed that the long-service pay was granted in lieu of pension. There are, however, 67 constables who, having joined since the 10th February, 1887, are debarred by circular of that date from receiving long-service pay, and it is on their behalf that I suggest a method whereby they may receive pensions with the minimum of expense both to the Government and to themselves.

By the present system a man leaving the Force under circumstances other than dismissal or voluntary retirement is entitled by custom to receive a month's pay for each year of service up to twelve years. In lieu of this I would suggest that a yearly grant of £5 per head should be made on account of each member of the Force who has joined since the date of circular above quoted: this grant to be a contribution in aid of pension fund. Should this suggestion be approved, the result would be that, whereas, under the schedule of payments furnished to this department by the Actuary of the Government Insurance, a man thirty years of age wishing to insure for a pension of £75 at the age of sixty years would have to pay yearly a sum of £9 1s. 3d., only £4 1s. 3d. would be payable by him, the remainder being found by his department, and the aggregate of the thirty payments for which the Government would be liable in this case would hardly exceed in amount the sum which is now given to each old constable as retiring-allowance. It is this fact which enables me to urge most strenuously that some action shall be taken in order to provide pensions for all who have joined since the 10th February, 1887. A fair proportion of the Reward Fund, which now amounts to £1,398 17s. 4d., may be available for this purpose, but on this point legal advice will be necessary.

The criminal statistics for the year ending 31st December, 1889, show a slight increase in the gross total of offences. In the North Island there has been an increase of 189, in the South a decrease of 141. The general increase is due almost entirely to the crime of drunkenness, in which there has been an increase in the North of 129 and a decrease in the South of 72. In the following crimes there has been an increase: Common assaults, 110; larcenies, 157; indecent exposure, 13; forcible abduction, 12; forgery and uttering, 13; malicious injury to property, 18; vagrancy, 41; obstructing and assaulting police, 48. Other crimes have decreased, such as—Arson, 8; breaking and entering, and burglary, 34; breaches of the peace, 11; perjury, 6, &c. A careful investigation of the records shows that about nine-tenths of the men convicted of drunkenness are over forty years of age, and not more than one in thirteen has been born in the colonies.

The following stations have been built during the year:—In brick: Balclutha, Mosgiel, Ponsonby, Clinton, Invercargill (messroom and kitchen), Kurow, and Taradale. In wood: Waipawa and Culverden.

I attach return showing proportion of police to population, and cost of police per inhabitant, in each of the Australian Colonies.

I have much pleasure in reporting that the general conduct of the police has been good.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,  
Commissioner.