

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ARMED CONSTABULARY FORCE.

No 1.

Lieutenant-Colonel MOULE to the Hon. DEFENCE MINISTER.

Armed Constabulary Commissioner's Office.

Wellington, 26th July, 1871.

SIR,—

In compliance with Clause No 159, of the Armed Constabulary Regulations, I have the honor to report on the general state, efficiency and distribution of the force, for the year ending 30th June, 1871.

At the commencement of the last financial year the force numbered seven hundred and seventy-six (776) of all ranks, and during this period it has been increased by the enrolment of two hundred and thirty-nine (239) men, and reduced by two hundred and ninety-two (292) through resignation, dismissals, deaths, &c., leaving the strength on the above date seven hundred and twenty-three (723) which were distributed as per Table, No 4.

Owing to my recent appointment to the temporary charge of the Armed Constabulary Department, and not having yet had an opportunity of visiting the several Districts and Stations, I am unable from personal knowledge to report on the general efficiency of the force, but the Commissioner, whom I met after making his tour of inspection, and before his unfortunate illness, expressed to me his very great satisfaction at the marked improvement observable at each station, the amount of public and useful works performed, the enlarged accommodation for men and horses, the smart and healthy condition of the various detachments, the small amount of crime as compared with the former year, and the general contentment of all grades.

The system adopted during the past year, of keeping the officers and men constantly and usefully employed on Road and other Works has been productive of the best effects, both as regards the diminution of crime, and the health, vigor, and activity of the men, who by being thus inured to constant active employment, are prepared, if called upon suddenly to take the field, for the hardships and fatigues inseparable from long marches in a rugged country, when encumbered by the weight of arms, tools, food, and other indispensable necessities.

Within the last year the old breech-loading carbines, which were limited in range, wanting in precision, and subject to foul and get out of order, have been replaced by Snider (long and medium) rifles, which are formidable weapons for the rapidity with which they can be loaded and fired; but on the other hand they are too long and too heavy for bush warfare, and I beg to suggest the purchase of seven hundred (700) Snider carbines with Knife bayonets, the cost of which would not exceed £3,000. The arms at present in use would be available for the Militia and Volunteers.

The force has also been supplied with new and uniform accoutrements.

Camp equipage, entrenching tools, cooking utensils, &c., have been furnished to each District, to enable the force to take the field promptly on any sudden emergency, and to move with celerity wherever its services may be required. Pack horses have also been provided for the Taupo District for this purpose. In other Districts they can be purchased, or hired if required.

Officers Commanding stations have furnished sketch maps, and reports of the localities about their posts, which evince a knowledge of the various tracks, positions, and capabilities of the surrounding country, so necessary for effective operations, or the successful pursuit of an enemy.

The shooting of the force at the annual competition for prizes, has not been so good as might have been expected, except in the Taupo District, where the men carried off the largest number, and most valuable of the prizes as shown on Table, No. 8. The bad shooting is, no doubt, attributable, to a certain extent, to the fact of the Snider rifles being issued only a short time before the firing took place and the brief period available for preliminary practice.

Lately, an Officer Instructor of Musketry has been appointed to the force, who has already completed the instruction of one class, and has another in progress. From these each District will be supplied with Instructors, and I hope soon to have every member of the force put through a course of musketry instruction, target practice, and judging distance drill and practice, which will, I trust result in improved shooting for the Government Prizes for 1871-2.

Attached is Captain and Musketry Instructor Stack's report.

A large supply of clothing has been received from England, so that in future the Force can be supplied from the Government Stores with articles of a uniform pattern.

The recruiting of the force is conducted with every possible care, and those only enrolled who are found adapted for the service, after undergoing a term of probation.

A grant of £1,000 from the Reward Fund having been sanctioned for establishing Libraries in the various Districts, a large supply of books has been ordered from England, and in a short time the force will receive the benefit of this liberal gift for its instruction and amusement.

Officers Commanding Districts have been instructed to encourage athletic exercises in every way, and to employ some of their men in erecting suitable buildings for gymnasiums, towards the cost of which, and providing suitable fittings, the Government has notified its willingness to assist. I need hardly refer to the advantages likely to accrue from the introduction of such valuable aids to the development of the physical powers of the men.