

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ARMED CONSTABULARY FORCE.

No. 1.

Lieut.-Colonel MOULE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

Armed Constabulary,

SIR,— Commissioner's Office, Wellington, 11th July, 1872.

In accordance with clause No. 159 of the Armed Constabulary Regulations, I have the honor to report on the state of the Force, as to the number of men, their distribution and efficiency, for the year ending 30th June, 1872.

At the commencement of the last financial year the Force consisted of 766 of all ranks. During the year there have been 158 enrolled, and 200 discharged, &c., leaving the strength at the close of the year 724. These are distributed as shown in Table No. 4.

It affords me much gratification to be able to state that the conduct generally of the various members of the Force has been excellent, that their duties have been satisfactorily discharged, and that cases of misconduct have largely diminished. This will be the more apparent when I say that while in the year 1870-71 the discharges for misconduct amounted to 104, the dismissals during the past year from the same cause have decreased to 60.

The Forces in the Wairoa and Poverty Bay Districts have been repeatedly engaged during the year in toilsome expeditions in search of Te Kooti, and it is manifestly owing to their exertions that this portion of the country has been freed from his presence.

Regarding Table No. 3, I desire to draw your attention to the large number of men, 119, who have taken their discharge on completion of the term for which they enrolled, and would beg to recommend an alteration from one to three years in the period of service, as now that there is a growing demand for labour all over the Colony, men tender their resignations at the expiry of their engagement, just as their training has been completed, and they have become really useful. A change in the direction I have indicated I consider as most essential.

Accompanying are reports from Officers commanding Districts, showing the civil and military duties, also public and useful works, on which the Force has been employed in their respective districts. A reference to these reports will, I think, prove that minute attention has been paid to these duties, and that in addition to a considerable amount of important road work, the building of redoubts, and erection of quarters, &c., have been executed by the Force during the year.

The non-commissioned officers of the Force have, in accordance with your instructions, been directed to furnish reports and sketch maps of the country in the vicinity of their various stations, which reports have been submitted to you with my letter No. 283, 1872, of the 5th ultimo. I feel confident that a perusal of these will afford you, as it has myself, much satisfaction. They nearly all exhibit care and attention in their preparation, and considerable knowledge and observation of special localities on the part of the writers; more particularly the reports of those non-commissioned officers brought to your notice in my letter already quoted, whose papers are very good.

The Auckland Police, which forms a part of the Armed Constabulary, has, under Inspector Broham, performed its various duties in a most satisfactory manner; and the capture of the notorious offender, Cyrus Haley, personally by Inspector Broham, reflects great credit upon that officer.

It is only just to Inspector Broham and those under his command to say that it is greatly due to their exertions that, during the last year, there has been so little crime of a serious nature in the Province of Auckland. Notwithstanding its large and partially unsettled population, in which an increase of more than 14,000 has taken place since the opening of the Thames Gold Fields, yet no addition has been made to the strength of the police.

An efficient though small detective force is attached to the Auckland Police, and its action has been most useful during the past year.

The annual course of musketry training prescribed for Her Majesty's army was this year adopted in the Armed Constabulary Force, and by far the greater number of all ranks have been exercised therein. I attach the report of Captain Stack, Instructor of Musketry, which details the progress made in this branch of instruction, and points out the favourable contrast between the number of representatives qualified for the Colonial Prize Firing this year as compared with last, and the figure of merit obtained at target practice. It being remembered that this is only the initiation of the musketry instruction of the Force, it may be reasonably presumed that, if the system be kept up, next and each succeeding year will show a further improvement in the shooting, a most important, if not the most important matter, should they be required to operate against an enemy in the field. There is no doubt that the improvement in this branch of training, which has been sufficiently marked, would have been more so had a greater number of non-commissioned officers and constables been exercised therein at the Dépôt; and it is a subject of regret, as stated by Captain Stack, that the average strength at the Dépôt did not admit of more classes being formed and instructed there, the exigencies of the service often requiring drafts to be sent to out-districts composed in a great measure of recruits. In connection with this subject, I would beg to recommend that in future the strength at the Dépôt be kept up as nearly as practicable to about fifty duty men, as this would allow of all the duties being performed, and successive classes detailed for musketry instruction.