

1874.

NEW ZEALAND.

ARMED CONSTABULARY FORCE.

(ANNUAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The COMMISSIONER, Armed Constabulary Force, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,— Armed Constabulary Office, Wellington, 30th June, 1874.

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 number of men, their distribution and efficiency, for the year ending 30th June, 1874.

At the commencement of the year, the Force consisted of 709 of all ranks. During the year there has been an increase of 156, as shown in Table No. 2, and a decrease of 197, as per Table No. 3, leaving the strength at the close of the year 668, being 56 under the authorized strength. This reduction is attributable to the difficulty of obtaining suitable men, owing to the great demand for labour and the high rate of wages ruling throughout the colony. The Force is at present distributed as shown in Table No. 4.

Since the date of my last annual report, I have made a tour of inspection of the Armed Constabulary districts, and have much pleasure in reporting that notwithstanding the manner in which the Force has been unavoidably cut up into numerous small detachments, and the number employed on special services, generally speaking the men were well acquainted with their drill, smart in appearance, and their arms, accoutrements, and clothing in good order. The horses, though not the best (it being almost impossible to obtain suitable troop horses in the colony) were in good condition, and the saddlery in good repair. The redoubts, stockades, block-houses, and buildings occupied by the Armed Constabulary were, with a few exceptions, in very excellent order; and much has been done in the way of libraries, gymnasiums, gardens, &c., for the comfort and well-being of the men. The conduct of the Force has been exemplary and the health of the men good, no sickness of any serious consequence having occurred.

In the exhaustive report of Inspector Broham are several matters worthy of serious attention. The efficiency of the small force at his disposal has been greatly impaired by the numerous changes which have taken place, principally through resignation, during the past year. These have, in a great measure, been owing to the low rate of pay, but as the Council has lately voted an increase of one shilling per diem to sergeants and constables, I hope it will have the effect of reducing the number of discharges, so that the experienced men may be retained in the Force. The duties of this branch of the Armed Constabulary are of a very onerous and responsible nature, calling for unremitting attention from each individual. The comparatively small number of men provided for by the Province causes an incessant strain upon their energies; they are exposed at all times and in all weathers; and considering the advantages resulting from the efficient discharge of the duties devolving upon them, I consider they well deserved the increase voted by the Provincial Council. Notwithstanding the serious disadvantages consequent upon the numerous changes already mentioned, the duties have been performed in a manner highly creditable to the officers and men.

The remarks upon the origin of fires, which have been of such common occurrence in the Auckland district during the past and previous years, are well deserving of consideration by insurance companies and all interested in their good management.

The Act for the regulation of Quartz Crushing Machinery, which was brought into operation about the middle of last year, has been found most useful; offenders against its provisions having been detected and punished, and the interests of the mining community largely benefited by the suppression of the crime of "specimen stealing," which, there is much reason to believe, had been carried on to a very serious extent. I am glad to say that to the praiseworthy activity of the Police this satisfactory result is attributable.

The amendment of the Adulteration of Food Act in the manner suggested by Inspector Broham would, I think, prove highly beneficial to the public at large, and tend to give effect to the views of the Legislature, as few persons will voluntarily trouble themselves to initiate proceedings under the Act as at present framed, whereas if its enforcement were left to the Police, the evil effects resulting from the use of poisonous liquor and adulterated food would, I feel assured, be materially diminished