

cleared of fern, tutu stumps, and flax, ready for ploughing, 20 acres sown in grass, 12 chains bank and ditch, and about 90 chains of post-and-rail fencing completed. At Opunake 15 chains of three-rail fencing has been put up across a Government Reserve, enclosing a paddock of about 20 acres, and about 10 chains of three-rail fencing erected round Government buildings and signal-station. At Pungarehu a paddock has been partly cleared, and 20 acres sown in grass. At Egmont about 20 acres of the lighthouse reserve have been cleared, and a ditch-and-bank fence commenced. At Okato the paddock has been cleared of fern, and fences repaired. At Pukearuhe a paddock was fenced and sown with oats, which were cut and stacked for winter use.

Telegraphic communication has been established with all the camps, the members of the force assisting in the erection of the lines. Constables have satisfactorily discharged the duties of telegraph operators, so that these stations are worked with little cost to the Telegraph Department. The mails between Opunake and Okato, 21 miles, are carried by mounted constables, as are also those between Waitara and Pukearuhe, 20 miles, and from thence to Mokau. Until the Postal Department took over the service on the 17th January last, constables carried the mails three times a week between Waihi and Opunake. The landing-service at Opunake is done by the Government boat, manned by constables, which tenders all vessels arriving in the harbour, and lands not only Government stores but those belonging to the settlers residing in the neighbourhood. The constables are also required to serve civil summonses, and assist the Police in any other civil duties they may be called upon to perform.

The health of the men has been generally very satisfactory. A hospital was established by Dr. O'Carroll, in part of the Immigration Barracks at New Plymouth, for the treatment of the more serious cases arising from accidents or exposure, which, I am happy to say, have not exceeded an average of 14 per month. I twice visited this hospital, and was more than satisfied with the arrangements made by Dr. O'Carroll for the care and comfort of the patients, and the unremitting attention given by him to his duties. These are now by no means light, as he is the only medical officer to the whole Force quartered on the West Coast.

The casualties in the Reserve for the past year amount to 283, and are made up as follow: Discharged at own request 219, as medically unfit for further service 9, from various causes 11; dismissed, 37; deserted, 3; died, 4. The number of discharges at own request are accounted for by some of the men being anxious to see active service at the Cape, and a large number asking for their discharge in consequence of the 10-per-cent. reduction in their pay. No obstacle was placed to their leaving, and in every case discharge was granted immediately on its being applied for. That a good many only applied in hopes that the Government would not be able to spare them, and would be obliged therefore to restore the 10 per cent., I am convinced, from the fact of the number who shortly after begged to be allowed to rejoin, and about twenty even asked to be allowed to withdraw their applications when about to be discharged; but, as they had deferred taking this step till they had reached the Depôt in Wellington, they were refused.

The general conduct of the men has been most favourably reported on by the Officers in Command; and, in conclusion, I wish especially to bring to your notice the great credit that is due to Lieut.-Colonel Roberts and his officers for the high state of discipline and training prevailing throughout the Field Force, and the order, regularity, and cleanliness maintained in the camps.

I have, &c.,

H. E. READER,
Commissioner.