

1924.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES.

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION, FOR THE
PERIOD 1st JULY, 1923, TO 31st MARCH, 1924.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency the Governor-General.

REPORT.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

SIR,—

H.M.S. "Chatham," 30th April, 1924.

I have the honour to submit the following report in regard to the Naval Forces of the Dominion, covering the period 1st July, 1923, to 31st March, 1924.

I. PROCEEDINGS OF H.M.S. "CHATHAM."

1. H.M.S. "Chatham" has continued to carry out her peace-time duties, which consist principally of (a) affording seagoing training and experience to recruits who have completed their preliminary harbour courses in H.M.S. "Philomel," (b) drills and gunnery and torpedo exercises, to maintain efficiency, and (c) visits to ports of the Dominion, and to the islands in the South Pacific included within the limits of the New Zealand Station. Whenever the "Chatham" has called at ports in the Dominion every effort has been made to throw the ship open to visitors, and special arrangements have been made to enable as many school-children as possible to be conducted round the ship. In this latter connection I desire to record my most sincere gratitude to the various branches of the Navy League in New Zealand, who have taken endless trouble in organizing such visits, and whose kindness and generous hospitality to both officers and men of the Squadron are deeply appreciated.

2. In July, 1923, the "Chatham" was at Auckland, where she was docked at the end of that month. In August I relieved Commodore Alan Hotham, C.B., C.M.G., in the command of the station, and shortly after my arrival the "Chatham" proceeded on a cruise to the islands. This cruise was of great benefit in affording, to a number of officers and ratings who had recently joined, an opportunity to acquire knowledge of the ship. The District Intelligence Officer at Wellington (Paymaster Lieutenant-Commander J. T. V. Webster, D.S.O.) was on board the "Chatham" for a portion of the cruise, in order to enable him to obtain first-hand knowledge of certain of the islands. The ports visited were as follows: Sunday Island, Nukualofa, Apia, Pago Pago, Papeete, Rarotonga, Niue, Suva, and Lautoka. The ship was most hospitably received in all the ports visited, and arrived at Napier on the 6th November.

3. During this cruise gunnery and torpedo exercises were carried out on every available opportunity.

4. On leaving Napier the "Chatham" proceeded to Wellington, where the ship's company carried out their annual musketry course at the military camp at Trentham. This course is of great value in many ways, and I am very grateful to the military authorities for their courtesy in allowing the Navy the use of the range, and for their many kindnesses in connection with it.

5. The "Chatham" then proceeded to Auckland, and annual leave was given to the ship's company.

6. During January, 1924, exercises were carried out by "Chatham" and the two Imperial sloops (H.M. ships "Laburnum" and "Veronica") in the Hauraki Gulf, but these were to some extent hampered by the incidence of the coal strike. Towards the end of that month "Chatham" proceeded to Wellington, in order to be present at that port during the visit of the Japanese Training Squadron.

7. A visit was paid to Lyttelton during February, and "Chatham" then again returned to Wellington to meet H.M.A.S. "Melbourne," the flagship of the Royal Australian Navy, which was visiting New Zealand subsequent to the visit of H.M.S. "Chatham" to Australia in March, 1923. The two ships left Wellington together, and gunnery exercises were carried out in company. These exercises demonstrated once more the great benefit arising from a common system of naval training, which enabled the two ships to work together in perfect harmony although belonging to totally different squadrons. On completion of practices the two ships parted company, and "Chatham" visited Picton, Akaroa, and Dunedin, returning to Auckland at the end of March, and being docked there preparatory to her passage to the East Indies Station after relief by H.M.S. "Dunedin."

8. The transfer between H.M. Ships "Chatham" and "Dunedin" will take place at Auckland, and the former ship is due to leave Auckland on the 27th May. Thirty-eight New Zealand entries, for courses of instruction in the various schools, are taking passage in her *en route* for England.