

examination, he is taken on probation, which lasts the whole time the candidate is at the Depot, generally from six weeks to two months, according to the aptitude or proficiency shown in learning the duties.

During the above period, the recruit is carefully and constantly instructed in musketry and drill under the best instructors obtainable in the Colony. While on probation, if his conduct should not prove satisfactory, he is liable to instant dismissal; but should he succeed in passing his examination, he is clothed, equipped, and sent wherever his services are required.

Since the establishment of the Depot, two hundred and thirty-four (234) recruits have joined, of whom, during their probationary term thirty-two (32) proved to be undesirable men for the Force, and were therefore discharged; one hundred and twenty-one (121) have been sent to various Districts, and the remaining eighty-one (81), most of whom are proficient and fit for service, are now at the Depot.

It is impossible, within the limits of this report, to state what reforms have been initiated, and what improvements carried out in attempting the re-organization of the Force, during the last nine months. I may, however, briefly state that, except in one District, the mounted members of the Force have now all been supplied by Government with troop horses, saddlery, &c. This step became necessary because in September last the Mounted Division, then stationed at Runanga, an advanced post on the Taupo line, were required to proceed to Taupo to the assistance of the friendly natives, then expecting to be hourly attacked. It was considered advisable to dismount half their number in consequence of the impossibility of supplying oats for all the horses; but the men declined to proceed further as a dismounted Force, and forwarded a "round robin," signed by thirty-seven of their number, to their commanding officer, the concluding words of which were:—"We have firmly made up our minds to abide by our resolution, be the consequences what they may."\*

The men have in many places, in the face of great difficulties, built themselves comfortable permanent quarters, especially at the various posts in the Hawke's Bay Police District, which extends from its base, Napier, along the frontier of the Uriwera country—forming a strong chain of permanent defensible posts to Taupo. There are three hundred and twenty men of the Armed Constabulary stationed in this district, one hundred of whom are now permanently located at and around Taupo.

In April last, the Auckland Provincial Police became amalgamated with, and are now part of, the Armed Constabulary, but as this step was so recently taken, the results have not yet become apparent.

During the same month, in consequence of the belief that certain persons were largely and openly engaged in trafficking in arms and gunpowder with the Natives, especially in the district of Ohinemuri, an officer of great experience was appointed to carry out, with the assistance of a small staff of intelligent detective officers, the provisions of the Arms Act. Those officers devote their whole time and attention to this one important subject, and already a very flagrant case of selling arms and ammunition to Natives has been detected.

The departmental duties of the whole Force, including their payment, as well the payment of Militia and Volunteers, have now been narrowed down and simplified in such a manner as to be conducted in the Head Quarters office, at the Depot.

I beg to attach hereto Returns, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4. No. 1 shows the monthly strength of the Armed Constabulary from July, 1869, to this date; No. 2, is a similar return of Militia and Volunteers; No. 3 exhibits present strength of all Forces on pay in the North Island; and No. 4 shows present strength and distribution.

I also beg to attach Reports from Officers Commanding Districts, showing the nature, description, and amount of public work on which the Armed Constabulary have been employed when not actually engaged in field operations, or in guarding important posts in their respective districts. It will be seen by a perusal of those Reports, that the men, besides performing their ordinary duties, have also been employed in, and have done a large amount of, road-making, constructing and repairing bridges, culverts, sawing timber, dismantling, removing and re-erecting telegraph lines, brick-making, fencing paddocks, &c., as well as building permanent quarters; so that the pernicious evil of idleness has not been permitted to exist. Besides all this, Mounted Constables are being trained to act as linemen when on their ordinary patrol duties along the new lines of telegraph between Tauranga, Maketu, and Taupo, as well as along the Wanganui and Patea line. It is proposed, also, to employ them extensively on the forthcoming Census.

In conclusion, I beg leave to say that I have every reason to believe that all ranks of the Force are now fast becoming settled and contented. Perhaps no better proof of this could be given than that resignations have been for some time past almost unknown; while arrangements are being made by officers and constables in every District for the establishment of libraries and reading rooms.

I confidently look forward, therefore, to the time as being not distant, when the Armed Constabulary of New Zealand may vie in point of efficiency, intelligence, and respectability with any force in the neighboring Colonies, in addition to being completely fitted to discharge those special duties which were mainly contemplated when the reorganization of the Force was authorised.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. Defence Minister,  
Wellington.

ST. JOHN BRANIGAN,  
Commissioner Armed Constabulary Force.

### Enclosure No. 1.

REPORT of the INSPECTOR in Charge in the WANGANUI-PATEA DISTRICT.

Armed Constabulary,  
Patea, 31st May, 1870.

SIR,—

In accordance with your instructions I have the honor to forward the following report showing the manner in which the Colonial Forces under my command have been employed from June, 1869, to May, 1870, inclusive.

\* This Division was afterwards broken up by me on my visit of inspection to Taupo.