

1901.

NEW ZEALAND.

UNITED FIRE BRIGADES' ASSOCIATION

(REPORT BY THE DELEGATES TO THE PARIS FIRE CONGRESS).

SIRS,—

25th February, 1901.

At the last annual meeting of the United Fire Brigades' Association, held at Blenheim, in February, 1900, a resolution was adopted that if possible the firemen of New Zealand should be represented at the Paris Fire Congress. An application was made to the Government for assistance in the shape of a grant. This was acceded to, the sum of £250 being placed at the disposal of the Association. A condition was attached to the effect that the report of the delegates sent to Paris should be placed at the disposal of the Government, for distribution to the various bodies interested in preventing the destruction of life and property by fire. It was also set out that the report should deal with the improvement of the fire brigades of the colony by the adoption, if desirable, of methods and appliances in use in other parts of the world, and suitable to the conditions obtaining in New Zealand. On the question being placed before the associated brigades, Messrs. Gilberd and Smith were selected as delegates. The selection was approved by the Government, and the delegates left New Zealand on the 16th June, 1900, to carry out the duties assigned to them, and they hereby present the following report:—

In connection with the object of our journey, we inspected the fire-prevention services of the following cities: Sydney, Melbourne, Colombo, Paris, London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Dundee, Brighton, New York, Charleston, Niagara, Chicago, Kansas City, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Honolulu.

The principal object of our trip, however, was to attend the International Fire Brigades' Congress at Paris, held from the 12th to the 20th August. This we attended as part of the British contingent, numbering about a hundred and fifty, and organized by the National Fire Brigades' Union of England. At this Congress there were present large bodies of firemen from all the European countries and from the United States, the total reaching about six thousand men.

The first business transacted took the form of a meeting of officers, but as the papers read and the discussions which followed were in French, we were unable to follow the proceedings. As subsequently we were unable to obtain any official report of them, and, as none of the British fire brigade journals published any of the papers, or the discussions resulting from them, we conclude that they were of little general interest.

An exhibition of appliances was held at Vincennes, but although very interesting and complete, was almost exclusively confined to Continental manufacturers. The fire-engines on exhibition were all on the lines of those of English make. The fire-escapes shown by German firms were very complete and useful.

One noticeable exhibit was a pneumatic telescopic tube escape, actuated and controlled by compressed air, and manufactured by Fries and Sohn, Frankfort-on-Maine. The first section being raised to a vertical position, a man ascends with the hose and branch, and stands on the top section, and by turning on the pressure from the cylinders the ladders shoot up to their full extent, about 70 ft. On a trial made at the exhibition, in forty-five seconds from the carriage stopping, a fireman was elevated to the top of the frame-building used for the displays. The air-cylinder can be charged by ordinary hand-compressor, or liquified carbonic-acid may be used. One charge is sufficient to raise and lower the ladder five times. The inclining or revolving of the ladder is performed by hand. The ladders rotate on ball bearings. Two men are required for raising them, but only one is required for directing. The apparatus is carried on a low, four-wheeled wagon, and does not require a level site.

A very ingeniously fixed fire-escape for use in factories, schools, &c., was exhibited on a specially constructed building. It is called "Scherrer's Fire-escape," and has the merit of providing an easy and safe outlet from the threatened floors, and a useful means of entrance for the firemen in their work. The principle is that all the windows situated one above the other are connected to a bar fixed in the buildings alongside the sash-frames, and set on roller bearings on the ground-