

FIRE BRIGADES ACT.

During the year four new fire districts were constituted—viz., Pahiatua, Onehunga, Wairoa, and Pukekohe—making in all forty-four constituted districts.

A further large quantity of fire-hose, and other equipment, not manufactured in the Dominion, has been indented, through the High Commissioner's Office, to the order of the various Fire Boards and the United Fire Brigades Association.

Assistance was rendered by the Department in the carrying-out of the biennial demonstration of the United Fire Brigades Association, which took place at Dunedin.

The usual fire-brigade inspections have been held by the Inspector of Fire Brigades in accordance with requests received from various local bodies; special visits and reports have been made, and the routine work required by the Act performed.

PASSPORTS.

During the year 3,863 passports were issued, and 1,363 renewals granted.

Visas are no longer required on entry into the Dominion by the following nationals: Belgians, Danes, Dutch, French, Italian, Liechtensteiners, Luxemburgers, Norwegians, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss.

RAFFLES.

The question of granting licenses to raffle alluvial gold has been given prominence during the year. Owing to the sudden growth of the number of applications it was necessary to take into review the whole question of these raffles. In August last it was decided, with the exception of the applications which had already been lodged, to place a limit of £500 as the value of the amount of gold which could be given as prizes. In view also of it having been reported that large sums were being paid to promoters of these raffles it was decided to insist on the production of an audited balance-sheet in order that a check might be kept on the amount of expenses, and information collected as to the cost of running them.

The wholesale broadcasting of tickets has also been prohibited. In addition, conditions were imposed requiring full information to be shown on the tickets sold as to the objects of the raffle, in order that the public might not be induced to purchase tickets under any misunderstanding. Further, it was found necessary to take exception to certain advertisements where full particulars were not given. The position is still being carefully watched, and it may be necessary to impose further restrictions.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

In August, 1925, the Dominion was honoured by a visit from the United States Fleet, different sections visiting Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Dunedin respectively. This Department represented the Government in connection with the arrangements for the reception and entertainment of the officers and men of the Fleet.

No effort was spared to make the occasion a memorable one, and thanks to the hearty co-operation and assistance of all concerned, aided in no small measure by the genuinely warm welcome extended to the visitors by all classes of the community, the visit proved an unqualified success.

In February, 1926, the Australian Squadron, under the command of Commodore Thomas F. Wardle, D.S.O., A.D.C., R.N., visited Wellington and Auckland, and during the same month calls at various ports were made by the French sloop "Cassiopee," and the Japanese training-ship "Iwatee." In these instances also the official care of the visitors was entrusted to this Department.

SOLDIERS' AND HISTORICAL GRAVES.

Veterans' and Historical Graves.—As far as possible the renovation of Maori War and historical graves was carried out in the various districts in conjunction with the work required on graves of those who died in the late Great War.

Auckland District: Work was completed on the Maori War graves in Pokeno and Drury Cemeteries and St. Stephen's Churchyard. In addition to this, contracts were entered into and work partly completed in the Rangiriri and Symonds Street Cemeteries, the latter including the provision of a more fitting monument over the grave of Captain Hobson, R.N., the first Governor of New Zealand.

Taranaki District: The erection of a surrounding stone wall and the renovation of the existing monument was commenced in the Maori War Cemetery at Ohawe, near Hawera. Arrangements were also made for the renovation of Maori War graves in St. Mary's Churchyard and Te Henui Cemetery, New Plymouth. Renovation work was carried out in Waihi Cemetery, Normanby.

Wellington District: During the year the monument in memory of men who fell at Boulcott's Farm was completed.

Canterbury District: A contract was entered into for a surrounding stone wall and the erection of a suitable monument to the memory of the early French settlers who were laid to rest in the old French Mission Burial-ground at Akaroa.

Annual grants for the maintenance of "adopted" graves were paid to the controlling authorities of fourteen cemeteries.

Great War Graves in New Zealand.—During the year there were 289 notifications of deaths of returned soldiers, of which number 91 were accepted as war graves. The total deaths of members and ex-members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in New Zealand now amount to 3,480, and of this number 2,113 are deemed to be war graves.

The number of headstones ordered during the year was 158, bringing the total since the work began up to 1,279. The headstone contractors have completed to date 1,046 headstones.