

CIRCULAR TO OFFICERS COMMANDING ARMED CONSTABULARY.

SIR,—

Alexandra, 4th March, 1871.

As it is necessary that the efficiency of the standing force in New Zealand should supplement its numerical inferiority, it is absolutely imperative that the Officers should in every case be in possession of all the information which can be procured.

Every Officer in charge of a post of Armed Constabulary ought to consider himself as on picket duty; and it is his duty to make himself thoroughly acquainted with all matters relating to the post under his command.

This duty appears, however, to have been to a certain extent ignored; and it is with a view to remedying this, and of directing the attention of the Junior Officers in your District to the different considerations they ought to study, that the following instructions are forwarded.

Recent occurrences in Europe have proved that the force whose Officers possess the best knowledge of the country in which they are acting, is the most likely to win the day.

In New Zealand, a knowledge of by-paths is simply indispensable to an Officer, as it is useless to begin looking out for tracks when hostilities have once commenced. It is during a time of peace that information must be gained.

It is not sufficient that Officers should be thoroughly efficient under fire;—they must also prove themselves to be qualified for any emergency which may take place; and for this purpose should make themselves fully acquainted with the country in their vicinity, its inhabitants, and resources.

You will be good enough to forward a copy of this Circular to each Officer, who will be allowed a fortnight to make up his Report on the heads given in the instructions.

The Reports will be forwarded by you to the Defence Office, and will be submitted to a Board of Officers. The writer of the Report adjudged by them to be the best will be presented with a suitable recognition, and have a preferential claim to advancement. The information is to apply to a circuit of twenty miles from the post at which the Officer is stationed. In the case of frontier posts, accurate information is hardly to be expected concerning the country beyond the boundary line; but no exertion should be spared to approximate as nearly as possible to actual facts.

1. *Nature of Country.*—Under this head should be described the natural features of the surrounding country, whether level, undulating, mountainous, &c.; the number, names, and character of streams; swamps, and their line of drainage; character of rocks and soil, &c.; and what kinds of timber are available.

In it must also be included a comprehensive account of the number of settlers, with the extent of land under cultivation, &c.; showing what amount of stores, food, or horses, would be available in cases of emergency, with the average prices on the spot.

2. *Roads.*—The most ample information ought to be obtained on this subject—an Officer should be able to find his way in any part of his own immediate district in the darkest night. This portion of the Report must therefore give a full account of all dray, horse, or foot roads in the vicinity, giving their starting point and termination, with their length through the district; their state, summer and winter, stating whether metalled or otherwise, and if not, where metal is procurable and at what cost; the number of streams crossing them and the appliances for passing, whether by bridges, culverts, or fords; and in what state of repair each portion is. It should also mention the nature of approaches to rivers, &c., specifying requisite improvements. With regard to Native tracks in the vicinity, it is of the utmost importance that every one should be thoroughly well known, and all within their command should be familiar to Officers, and as much information gathered as possible concerning those through Native territory in the vicinity.

A sketch map should accompany the Report.

3. Each Report must give the ideas of the writer as to the strength of positions near his post; how available for attack or defence, whether on his part or that of any hostile force; what means of fortifying them are at hand, &c.

The Officer Commanding, Armed Constabulary,
District.

I have, &c.,
DONALD McLEAN.
