

constables was sent to Dunedin and performed police duty for a couple of months, some of them being permanently retained by the Provincial Government, sanctioned by the General Government—the remainder returning to their duty in the Armed Constabulary. Two constables volunteered to attend to the patients sent to Soames Island in June last with small-pox, one of whom caught the disease.

Agricultural Statistics.—One sergeant and 2 constables were placed at the disposal of Mr. Woodward to collect agricultural statistics, which duty appears to have been satisfactorily performed. The whole strength of the Depôt turned out on seven occasions of fire during the past year, to the assistance of the fire brigades and others in the preservation of property, and their efforts would have been more successful than they were but for the uselessness of the old barrack engine. However, a new engine has been ordered from England, and will no doubt be turned to good account in future.

PUBLIC AND USEFUL WORKS.

Fatigues.—The men at the Depôt were employed daily on fatigue for three hours cleaning and repairing the barracks and the roads thereabout. During the past year, in addition to the ordinary fatigues, the gymnasium and a magazine guard-house have been built by the men of the force, and a portion of some of the barracks re-weatherboarded. A new cook-house has also been erected. This building, together with the guard-house, were rendered necessary by the Immigration Department having taken over the Upper Mount Cook Barracks, where formerly the cooking for the mess was carried on, and where there was also a guard-room on the magazine, though entirely unsuited to the purpose. The parade-ground and road passing through the barracks were regravelled, a considerable portion of the barracks repainted, some new fencing also put up round the Armed Constabulary pad-dock and barracks, and a large culvert put in on the Magazine Road, which saved it from being all washed away. Several parties have from time to time been required at the Government Buildings for fatigue purposes, which have been duly furnished.

ANNUAL MUSKETRY PRACTICE.

Annual Musketry Practice Return.—The annual course of musketry training of the force has been carried out, and with a marked improvement upon last year; the “Figure of Merit” for this year being 95·12 as against 81·53 for last year, being an improvement of 13·59 points. The total number of marksmen for this year is 55, while last year there were but 42 marksmen, although the force was then stronger.

Drill and Practice Returns—Diagrams.—A comparison of these returns received from the several districts with the practice registers and diagrams shows that they have been carefully and correctly kept, and in accordance with the regulations respecting them.

Ranges and Musketry Articles.—Since the date of my last report there has been a large issue of iron targets for the use of the force, and I am not aware that there is any material deficiency of these articles, or any others necessary for carrying on musketry instruction.

Arms and Ammunition.—The arms and ammunition which have come under my inspection were in good order. My experience during the past year has not altered the opinion expressed to you in my last report upon the imperfect sighting, and consequent comparatively inaccurate shooting, of the converted Snider medium rifle.

Firing for Armed Constabulary Prizes.—My return of the 22nd March last shows the result of the firing for prizes allotted to the Armed Constabulary by the Government out of the money voted for the purpose by the General Assembly last Session. From this it is observable that the prizes (twenty in number) throughout have been won by higher scores this year than last.

Colonial Prize Firing.—The improvement noticed in the shooting of the force in their annual course of practice, and in firing for the Armed Constabulary prizes, is equally apparent in their competition for representatives and in their performance at the Colonial Prize Firing, seventeen having qualified as representatives this year while only six did so last year. Of those who qualified this year, six came to the firing ground at Nelson; three were winners of six prizes, while by the five who last year were present at the Christchurch meeting only two prizes were carried off; the representative of the Cavalry portion of the force being within two points of the Cavalry Champion for this year. While on this subject, I would beg to state that the marking for the Colonial Prize Firing was performed mainly by one sergeant and three constables of the force. It is unnecessary for me to enlarge upon the fact that the manner in which they did their work gave general satisfaction, as I am aware that you have already received the report of the officer superintending the firing to the same effect; and I only mention the circumstance as a portion of the duty performed by men detailed from the Depôt, to which I should add that myself and Sub-Inspector Marshall were also employed in carrying out the Prize Firing under Major Gordon.

REMARKS.

The general conduct of the Armed Constabulary at the Depôt during the past year has been very good. Returns of defaulters have been laid before you from month to month, and I am sure that from them you will have observed that there has been an entire absence of civil crimes, and that offences of a military nature have been few, and for the most part of a light character. The health of the force at the Depôt has also been excellent for the past year. During the last very hot summer, when so much illness prevailed in Wellington, there was not a serious case in barracks, showing that the physical constitutions of the men selected for the force are of the right stamp.

I cannot conclude without saying that I have received able assistance from the officer and non-commissioned officers whose duty it has been to co-operate with me in drilling and disciplining the recruits; and that every facility towards this end has been afforded me by the generally high character, steadiness, and willingness of those whose training has been committed to my charge.

I have, &c.,

W. G. STACK, Captain,
Musketry Instructor, Commanding Depôt.

The Commissioner,
Armed Constabulary, Force, Wellington.