

Lieutenant-Colonel ROBERTS to Major-General Sir G. S. WHITMORE, K.C.M.G.

SIR,—

Fort Cautley, Devonport, Auckland, 23rd April, 1887.

I have the honour to report that, in obedience to instructions from the Hon. the Defence Minister communicated through you, I assumed command of the Permanent Militia on the 24th of February.

The greater part of this force formerly formed that portion of the Armed Constabulary called the Field Force; the Defence Act of 1886 has, however, given to it a distinctly military character, and it is now chiefly maintained for the defence of the colony from external aggression, and is distributed throughout the several chief ports, with the exception of the detachment still held in reserve on the west coast of this Island at Opunake.

The force consists of 350 men, and is subdivided into five branches, viz.: Garrison Artillery (120), Field Artillery (50), Torpedo Corps (50), Engineers (20), and Rifles (110); the numbers include the officers. The distribution of the several branches is as follows:—

—			Garrison Artillery.	Field Artillery.	Engineers.	Torpedo Corps.	Rifles.
Head-quarters, Auckland	...	...	27	22	1	16	12
Wellington	...	...	38	28	19	25	55
Lyttelton	...	...	27	...	...	5	...
Port Chalmers	...	...	28	...	...	4	...
Opunake	...	...	...	...	...	...	39
Taupo	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
			120	50	20	50	110

The Artillery Engineers and Torpedo Corps, being scientific corps, are under the general superintendence of Lieut.-Colonel Boddam, Engineer for the Defences; the Rifles are under Major Tuke; the Field Artillery under Major Gascoigne; all reporting to me as Commandant.

I have so recently assumed command that it has been impossible for me as yet to inspect the force at its several stations, owing to the fact that the Artillery were, till within a short time, assembled at Wellington, where I inspected them in camp. I may, however, say that a finer body of men it would be impossible to find than compose the several selected corps; a remark also applicable to the Rifles, who, if slightly inferior in physique, are men who have served the colony with credit to it and themselves for many years.

The conduct and discipline of the force has been throughout the year admirable, and will bear comparison probably with that of any military force in the world. The Artillery and Torpedo branches have attained great efficiency in their special work, while the practice with the heavy guns has been found excellent. With regard to the future recruiting of the force, it is now restricted to the Volunteers, and as yet, though the numbers coming forward are not very large, they have been sufficient, and a list of applicants is still available from which to recruit the ranks as vacancies arise.

The Code of Regulations for the force has taken some time to elaborate, as the requirements of each branch have had to be considered very carefully; it is, however, nearly complete, and will shortly be printed. The discipline of the force at present is maintained under the Act of last session.

I purpose this year making a quarterly inspection of the force, in order to insure uniformity of discipline and interior economy throughout the different detached stations.

I have, &c.,

J. M. ROBERTS, Lieut.-Colonel,

Major-General Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G.,
Commanding Colonial Forces, Wellington.

Commanding Permanent Militia.

REPORT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HARBOUR DEFENCES OF NEW ZEALAND.

Lieut.-Colonel BODDAM to Major-General Sir G. S. WHITMORE, K.C.M.G.

SINCE the date of my last report, of the 12th May, 1886, considerable progress has been made in the construction of the defence works of the colony.

Method of carrying out Work.—The work has been carried out chiefly by means of day-labour, and, except at Wellington, where the labour of the Permanent Militia was available, by the unemployed. In the latter, although it was essential that work should be found for these bodies of men, still, their pay has been entirely charged against the defence vote. All other departments have under similar circumstances obtained this class of labour gratis or at a greatly-reduced rate, and under the existing circumstances I am of opinion that their employment has tended considerably to increase the cost of the works. The work has, however, been very well and thoroughly done, and pushed on more rapidly and satisfactorily than would probably have been the case if small contracts had been let.

Design of Works.—The difficulty to be contended with in the construction of the New Zealand works has been that they have had to be designed on an entirely new system. The improvements in machine and rapid-firing guns, and also the protection given to ships' guns, has necessitated placing and firing the older-type guns in more thoroughly-protected pits, and has necessitated not