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NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE NEW ZEALAND FORCES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for DEFENCE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 2nd June, 1890.

I have the honour to submit, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, Commander-in-Chief, my annual report upon the Permanent and Volunteer Forces of the colony, accompanied by reports received from Lieutenant-Colonel Hume, Inspector of Volunteers, and Mr. Bell, Engineer for Defences—the former dealing with the annual inspection, &c., of Volunteer corps and the latter with the general progress and construction of harbour-defence works.

Garrison Artillery.—The officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of this branch of the Force have undergone a course of instruction in drill and artillery duties which in previous years was not attainable, in consequence of the general and diverse work they had to perform in connection with the “construction” of batteries. The result has been a marked improvement in both drill and efficiency, and I have much pleasure in stating that this was favourably commented upon by Major-General Edwards, C.B., R.E., during his recent inspection. Recruits are, as heretofore, drilled and instructed at Head-quarters, Wellington, and they now undergo, in addition to physical and small-arms drill, the full course of training with the service guns constituting the armaments of the forts, as well as a course of musketry, signalling, and theoretical instruction, before being posted to outside batteries; and, owing to the zeal and intelligence which as a rule characterize the class of men who are enlisted, the results have been exceedingly satisfactory. An annual course of gun practice has also been established, and, although of a very limited extent on account of the cost of the ammunition, it is sufficient to habituate the men to the use of the guns with which they have to deal. Batteries have been manned and practice carried out in “fighting order”—that is, under the same conditions as those under which they would have to be worked in actual service; and the special training of “qualified layers,” as in force in Her Majesty’s service, has been carefully attended to. In order that the senior grades of the Force may keep up to the efficiency which has led to their advancement, it is intended to institute, under the Staff-Officer of Artillery, an annual examination or classification in practical and theoretical knowledge, so that the high standard so requisite in a small force may be maintained; and it is anticipated that the adoption of this course will not only produce thoroughly-efficient gunners, but will also provide a class of instructors who will be of incalculable value when called upon to deal with partially-trained men who may in time of emergency be detailed for duties in the batteries. The two Quartermaster-Sergeant Instructors of the Royal Artillery referred to in my last report have been transferred to the North Island Batteries, and the whole Artillery Force has now had the benefit of their valuable services. During the year twenty-six gunners have been transferred to the Police and eight to the Prisons Departments; and, if the system advocated that these transfers should undergo an annual training in heavy-gun drill, is adopted, a valuable reserve of trained artillerymen will always be available should it ever be found necessary to call upon it for duty in the batteries.

Torpedo Corps.—The training and instruction of the men of this corps has been systematically attended to both at Wellington and Auckland, and practice in running torpedo-boats, electric lights, and Whitehead torpedoes, and in firing submarine- and land-mines, has been successfully carried out during the past year. Mines have also been loaded, and the different stations are now so far advanced as to require but few works to place them in an effective state for the carrying out of submarine defence operations. The services of an Instructor from the submarine-mining branch of the Royal Engineers have during the past year been secured, and he is at present attached to the contingent of the Torpedo Corps stationed at Auckland. The want of specially-constructed submarine-mining boats is, however, a serious drawback, as with the present launches it would be quite impossible to lay mines in boisterous weather either at Auckland or Wellington. It is strongly urged that as soon as circumstances will admit this question should receive the serious attention it requires.

Armament Court at Dunedin Exhibition.—This court, the Artillery portion of which was supervised and carried out by Major Douglas, Staff-Officer, and Major Goring, No. 4 Battery, was a marked success, and from all quarters favourable comment has been made, not only with regard to the class of exhibits in guns, arms, electric- and submarine-mining, but also to the intelligence