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NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON NEW ZEALAND FORCES.

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

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 1st July, 1892.

I have the honour to submit for the information of His Excellency the Governor, Commander-in-Chief, the annual report upon the Permanent Militia and Volunteer Forces of the colony, together with a report from Mr. Bell, Engineer for Defences, dealing with the general progress and construction of harbour-defence works, from which it will be seen that, while economy has been carefully studied, the works have made satisfactory progress.

Permanent Artillery.—The officers, non-commissioned officers, and gunners of this branch of the Force maintain a good state of efficiency in gunnery, ordnance, small-arms drill, and theoretical instruction; signalling by day with flags, and by night with lamps, &c.; and the state in which the batteries, guns, and appliances are invariably kept reflects considerable credit on all concerned. A new system of drill for breech-loading rifle, muzzle-loading rifle, breech-loading and quick-firing guns, on garrison mountings, has been compiled by the Master-gunner and Staff Artillery Sergeant, and is now in general use throughout the colony, and insures a uniform system. These drills are compiled from the drills in vogue in the Imperial service, but they have been modified to suit colonial requirements, as garrison mountings in the colony differ in many respects, but the Imperial principle has been strictly adhered to.

Instructors to Volunteer Corps and Schools.—In addition to utilising the services of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men extensively in instructing the Volunteers, which has been very satisfactorily carried out, and appears to be thoroughly appreciated by the citizen-soldiers, the Permanent Militia have, during the past year, rendered most useful service in drilling the State and other schools in the four centres, and arrangements are being undertaken by the Volunteer Drill Sergeants-Major at the smaller centres; and the requests of the various School Boards are being attended to as far as practicable.

Barracks.—I regret to have to report that an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out in the Mount Cook Barracks in February last. Nine men were attacked, two died; but the cause of the outbreak has not been satisfactorily accounted for. As soon as the disease appeared in the form of an epidemic, the men were moved to Shelly Bay, placed under canvas, and, when the winter set in and it was too cold and stormy for tents, the men were moved to the upper portion of Mount Cook, into rooms formerly occupied by the prison officers; where they still remain, while necessary sanitary and other improvements are being carried out in the Mount Cook Barracks. It has been stated that the outbreak of fever was entirely due to the old and dilapidated state of the barrack-rooms; but such is not the case, as the two barrack-rooms in which the men attacked were housed are comparatively of modern date, having been entirely rebuilt within the last fourteen years. As soon as the men were moved into camp the disease quickly disappeared.

Work done.—The work done during the past twelve months has been chiefly that which is necessary to make efficient gunners—namely, general artillery duties, service of ammunition, making up and storage of projectiles and cartridges, keeping the various emplacements and mountings clean and in a serviceable condition, mounting and dismounting guns, removing and storing ammunition, care of stores, magazines, barracks, &c., shipping guns, projectiles, and ammunition, and, generally, in all duties involving maintenance of batteries and armament in efficient order; while drills in all arms, lectures, &c., have been carefully attended to. Battery and station practices have been carried out with muzzle-loading guns, including firing at moving objects where ranges are available, as well as the usual carbine practice.

Artificers.—The artificers attached to each battery have rendered good service, as, in addition to periodically overhauling the guns and mountings and doing all necessary repairs, they have made many improvements in the fittings of both guns and carriages, thereby saving considerable expense and adding to efficiency. It appears to me that as these men cannot rise to be non-commissioned officers, their pay should be increased at certain periods of service, as in this respect they are on a worse footing than their comrades.

Transfers.—During the past year nine gunners have been transferred to the Police, and five to the Prisons Department; the men thus transferred invariably give satisfaction in both the police