

been emplaced in well-constructed batteries, with proper magazines, casemates, and other accessories, while satisfactory progress has also been made with the dépôts, equipment, and preparations for the submarine mining and torpedo defences. The vote proposed for the present year provides only for those works which it is absolutely necessary to carry to completion in order to put the defences of the harbours in a fairly-sound position. In this connection Auckland has been specially regarded by the Imperial authorities as a possible naval base in these seas; and it is therefore advisable that the colony should, as far as possible, endeavour to justify the selection by providing such efficient defences to the harbour as will enable Her Majesty's ships to confidently take advantage of it. The same argument to a large extent applies to Wellington also; and more especially in view of the recent special augmentation of the Australian Squadron and permanent stationing of war-vessels in New Zealand waters."

The lines above indicated have been as closely as possible followed during the year. The smallness of the vote, however—£7,000 only—has prevented any substantial works being entered upon, and has necessitated the convict-labour being employed to a greater extent than usual on earthworks and other details not demanding outlay of moment for material, in order to keep within the mark. The expenses of the purely disciplinary supervision of prisoners are of such comparatively heavy and fixed nature that this class of labour ceases to be profitable in such operations as the defence works when the available margin of funds for material and direct construction is brought below a certain limit.

The works at Otago Heads, mentioned in last year's report as having been definitely stopped at date 31st March, 1891, were resumed (in so far only as required by submarine defence) by authority in the following October. The prisoners did not leave the Heads during the interregnum, but were employed at general roadwork and stone-breaking at the charge of the Harbour Defences vote.

Amounts voted for Harbour Defences.

The subjoined schedule of the amounts voted for harbour defences since their inception in 1885 to the present year shows the rapid shrinkage of funds made available.

								£
1885-86	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	200,000
1886-87	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	142,500
1887-88	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	80,000
1888-89	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	56,541
1889-90	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16,452
1890-91	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	13,000
1891-92	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7,000

Inspections.

There have been no special visits of Imperial officers of eminence to the defences of the colony as a whole; but the captains of Her Majesty's ships visiting New Zealand waters have inspected some of the works, &c., in a more or less formal manner, and have communicated their impressions to the Hon. the Minister.

Land Works uncommenced.

With regard to those land works included in the complete scheme of defence upon which operations of construction have not yet been commenced or brought to any definite stage of design, no progress has been made during the year, as such works were not brought within the scope of authorisation; and the remarks under this head in the report of last year hold good. The same applies to questions of additional armament.

Mounting of Ordnance.

The racer for an additional 8in. B.L. 13-ton gun has been laid during the year, and the emplacements for two 64-pr. converted guns and one 64-pr. R.M.L., and for two Q.F. guns, have been constructed, while the emplacement for a third Q.F. gun has been commenced. The two 64-pr. converted guns have been mounted; the 64-pr. R.M.L. can be mounted at short notice, as can also the three Q.F. guns.

Excluding the above, there still remain, out of the heavy ordnance at command in the colony, the following:—

8in. B.L. 13-ton guns	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
6in. B.L. 5-ton guns	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
7in. R.M.L. 7-ton guns	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
64-pr. R.M.L. 64-cwt. guns	...	...	...	...	...	...	2

The works for which the above B.L. guns are intended have not been authorised or entered upon, and the ultimate disposition of the above M.L. guns has not yet been finally determined. Of the ten Q.F. guns, emplacements are complete (and guns capable of being mounted) for nine; three additional emplacements are in hand, as these guns can serve more than one position on emergency.

There are also ten Q.F. guns on travelling-carriages, available as they stand for field-service. It has been advised that six of these should be dismounted from their carriages and used as pivotally-mounted guns in fixed positions. The pillars for such mountings were made locally some years ago to the service pattern, but the necessary additional special fittings have not yet been authorised, and the final disposition of these guns is therefore indeterminate.

Submarine Defence.

The requirements for enabling the submarine defence of the ports to be rendered properly effective were generally pointed out at some length in the report of 1890 (H.—15), and it is therein