

stated that at that time "there was much responsible and difficult work yet to accomplish when funds were available." In the report for the following year, 1891 (H.—24), it is stated that "the exigencies in this respect were fully pointed out in last year's report, but funds have not permitted during the past year the completion of equipment, &c., therein mentioned, the absence of which must handicap the attainment of the full result that the matériel is capable of giving if the facilities and conveniences established as essential by long-continued experience in submarine-mining work carried out at R.E. stations of the Imperial army are wanting." The funds and authorisations for the present year have equally forbidden the undertaking of these essential works, so that there is no progress to be reported in this important matter.

As regards, however, actual marine operations, the largest and most difficult of the minefields has been surveyed in detail during the year, and the Torpedo Corps will be engaged forthwith in the practical preparations which follow upon the definite hydrographical and special information placed at their command by the completed survey and the plans and tables deduced therefrom.

As regards the detail survey of the remaining minefields, it is the intention to have them also completed at as early a date as possible.

The usual training of the Torpedo Corps, and testing of appliances and stores, has been kept up under the Inspector of Submarine Mining; and this body of men, though small in number, are now brought to a satisfactory degree of efficiency in the specialised work connected with submarine defences. Practical experience has been obtained during the year in the blowing-up of wrecks and harbour obstructions at various ports.

At the commencement of the present year the inquiries into the circumstances attending the unfortunate explosion of gun-cotton at Shelly Bay, by which two Torpedomen lost their lives, were proceeding. The findings of the Imperial naval officers, who acted as Royal Commissioners, and of the civil Courts, and the evidence adduced in either case, were duly forwarded to the Government, and it does not appear necessary, therefore, to refer to this matter further than to duly chronicle it in the events of the year.

Stores.

The whole of the valuable submarine stores and equipments in the colony are in the charge of the Torpedo Corps at the various stations, and are inspected at periodical intervals by the officer in command of the submarine-mining branch, and are all kept in excellent arrangement and condition.

The guns, magazines, artillery stores, ammunition, &c., are under charge of the Permanent Artillery, and are reported on by the officers of that branch.

The steam-launches, plant, gear, stores, appliances, &c., employed in and for the general carrying-on of the defence works have been maintained in an efficient and satisfactory condition throughout the year.

Maintenance of Batteries, &c.

The completed batteries, works, and stations, which have been handed over to the Artillery or Torpedo Corps, have been maintained, and various minor works required in connection with these executed during the year. The extent of this maintenance is small, the care given in original construction obviating the occurrence of any serious calls for repairs or replacements.

General Information.

Further information and suggestions connected with the perfection of the equipment and the fighting-powers of the guns and submarine-mining appliances in possession of the colony, and embodying also the latest ideas and results derived from experiments and trials of various improvements in means of defence at Home, have been forwarded during the year by the Agent-General and the Military Adviser.

As regards information in the colony, the presence of Major-General Schaw, R.E., C.B. (late Assistant Inspector-General of Imperial Defences at the War Office), has enabled me to continue to submit all questions of importance to so recognised an authority; and I would desire again, as in previous reports, to express the continued obligations of the department to this distinguished officer, whose experience and advice have always been so readily placed at its service.

Commandant of the Forces.

The departure from England for the colony of the Commandant is announced at the close of the year. The arrival of Lieut.-Colonel Fox will presumably bring the harbour defences, equally with more directly military questions, under special consideration.

Land for Sites.

In the early part of the year the award of the Compensation Court for land taken for the submarine dépôt at Auckland had to be discharged. The amount of the award was £1,500, which, with all due regard to the Court, was an exorbitant price. Contingent expenses of witnesses, law charges, &c., have brought the sum-total on this account to close upon £1,650, thus causing a serious handicap in the small vote of £7,000 at the outset of the year's operations.

There have been no further transactions of moment during the year in regard to sites, and there are no actually existent outstanding claims, except for a long-pending settlement with Natives for land at Otago Heads, delayed through non-sitting of a Native Land Court. The amount involved is about £200.

Expenditure.

With regard to expenditure during the year, provision for both matériel of war from England—which has always been charged to Loan Fund—as well as all charges for prison-labour and