

DEFENCES.

(1.) WORKS AND ARMAMENTS.

Auckland.—(1.) The Bastion Fort is nearly completed. (2.) Work has gone on at the electric-light installation. (3.) A 64-pr. gun has been mounted. (4.) Repairs and other slight work have been effected. (5.) Two 6in. B.L. guns have been sent Home for strengthening.

Wellington.—(1.) One 8in. B.L. gun has been mounted. (2.) Repairs and small work have been effected. (3.) Arrangements are being made for altering Fort Ballance, and for mounting one 7in. R.M.L. gun.

Lyttelton.—(1.) Fort Jervois has been completed to original design. (2.) Repairs have been made. (3.) Two 6in. B.L. guns have been sent Home for strengthening.

Dunedin.—(1.) Repairs have been effected. (2.) One 6in. B.L. gun has been sent to England for strengthening.

The ammunition for the heavy guns is deteriorating very seriously from age; the fuses are generally unreliable, and the powder is fast losing its strength.

(2.) SUBMARINE DEFENCE.

The "Ellen Ballance" has been fitted for laying E.C. mines. Stores have been received from England which improve the value of this defence. Some further stores are required for Wellington. Considerable work has to be done at Auckland; the necessary arrangements are being made.

(3.) TORPEDO-BOATS.

Beyond the fact that the boats and equipment are two years older than when I last reported, there has been no change.

PERMANENT FORCES.

PERMANENT ARTILLERY.

This force is divided into four so-called batteries.

Each battery has one officer attached to it, two of which are majors, one a captain, and one a lieutenant. A third major is borne on the strength, Major Goring. He is in command of the Auckland District, but also is practically the Battery Commanding Officer. The strength* of the batteries varies from 55 at Wellington to 21 at Lyttelton. The officers in command of these batteries appear to correspond direct with the Defence Office, the District Commanding Officer being ignored; the result being that, except in the case of Lieut.-Colonel Goring, the District Commanding Officers are not aware of what is going on as regards their Permanent Artillery, nor of the condition of their defences. For instance, they are not officially aware of the fact that the 6in. B.L. guns in an un-chase-hooped state are dangerous to fire, and consequently are not to be depended on for defence; nor do they know that the powder is rapidly deteriorating with age; nor that the fuses are generally unreliable, and not to be depended upon. This results from want of organization. They understand that the Permanent Forces and the defences are under the direct control of the Defence Office, and that they have no responsibility as regards those forces and defences. They are not aware of the number of men required to man the works, and therefore are ignorant of the numbers which are deficient in their districts. Under these circumstances, on an emergency arising they would be absolutely unable to organize their defence.

The Wellington Battery is the dépôt of the force. Recruits are there trained and clothed, and on the completion of their training they are drafted to the various other batteries to fill vacancies caused, in the main, by transfer of gunners to the police. The number of men so transferred during the past year† has been 36. This is an abnormally large number. The fact results that it has been necessary to send untrained men from the dépôt to the outlying batteries, in which it is very difficult for them to be trained, owing to the almost impossibility of getting gun detachments together for drill. In some cases it has been necessary to send men not fully trained to the police. As a set-off to this draining of the Permanent Artillery, 100 policemen have been put through a course of gunnery during the year, and the experience shows that the men who were trained previously to their being drafted to the police are to be relied upon as gunners on emergency. This is very satisfactory.

As regards drill and theoretical knowledge the non-commissioned officers and trained gunners are excellent, but as regards practical work they are ignorant. They have not sufficient practice, and most of them have rarely, if ever, fired at a moving target. I find that at the different stations there are small differences in detail of drill, consequent generally on a want of uniformity as regards certain fittings and alterations, which have not been made in the same way at each station; and at some stations alterations have been carried out and not at other stations.

The uniform of the Force is not the same throughout, nor are the rules as to discipline.

There is no officer in the position of Officer commanding the Permanent Artillery, responsible to the department for the uniform carrying-out of work and of regulations.

* Taken on 1st May, 1895.

† From 1st January, 1894, to 1st May, 1895.