

1902.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON THE), BY MAJOR-GENERAL J. M. BABINGTON, COMMANDANT OF THE FORCES.

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

SIR,—

1st July, 1902.

I have the honour to forward for the information of His Excellency the Governor, and Commander-in-Chief of the New Zealand Forces, my annual report on the Defence Forces of the Colony.

I hardly consider it necessary to refer here to the reasons for the necessity of maintaining the Defence Forces and defences of New Zealand in an efficient condition; they are obvious to all those who look beyond their own individual interests, and even to individuals cannot but be a matter of some importance. I would propose, therefore, to deal briefly with the component parts of our Defences as at present known to me.

Since I assumed command of the Defence Forces of the Colony on the 23rd January of this year three Contingents (Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth) of a thousand men each have been sent to South Africa on active service, and are still there. The former Contingents despatched have returned to New Zealand. It would appear a matter for congratulation that throughout the course of the late war not only have these contingents greatly distinguished themselves on more than one occasion, but also that no "regrettable incident" has occurred in which New-Zealanders were concerned.

A Coronation Contingent, consisting of 122 Europeans, selected from contingents that had served in South Africa, and thirty-two Maoris, was, at the invitation of His Majesty the King, sent to England.

A team, consisting of one officer and twelve men, has been sent to England to compete at the National Rifle Association at Bisley.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

The organization of the Defence Department as it at present exists leaves very much to be desired. I submitted on the 8th February and the 17th June, proposals setting forth what I consider essential for the systematic and economic administration of the forces under my command. These proposals have, I understand, been submitted to the Government, and I await their decision. In the meantime, therefore, I am unable to refer further to them here than to say that they are framed to meet urgent requirements, both as regards efficiency and the proper control of expenditure of public money. Lack of organization in peace-time means inefficiency and expense, and in war produces but one result.

The Regulations require amendment, and recommendations regarding the same will be submitted as time permits. Extra expense is at present incurred through the want of definite instructions on certain points. The pensions question, about which I have lately submitted recommendations, is a case in point. There are many others.

PERMANENT FORCE.

Captain Hume, Lieutenant Gardiner, and six non-commissioned officers of No. 1 Company have returned to the colony after a Long Course of gunnery at the School of Gunnery, Shoeburyness. Lieutenant Symon, of No. 2 Company, has nearly finished a course of submarine mining and military engineering at School of Military Engineering, Chatham, and will shortly return. There are no officers at present in England undergoing courses. Four cadets qualified for and received commissions in December, 1901, and should be sent to England in two years' time, when they have had some further experience.

The institution of a Provident Fund, on the same lines as that in vogue in the Police Force, is now under consideration.

The training of the men is very satisfactory, and a high state of efficiency has been reached. The conduct throughout the Force during the year has been exemplary.

During the last twelve months Lieutenant Pilkington has returned from South Africa. Lieutenants Mickle, Smythe, Chesney, and Sandle proceeded to South Africa with Eighth and Ninth Contingents.