

1904.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCE FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT OF 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 August, 1904.

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

The musters obtained at inspections during the past year have varied considerably, but, with the exception of some of the mounted corps, have been on the whole satisfactory. I still hold to the opinion expressed in last year's report that on the occasion of the Commandant's inspection no obstacles should be allowed to exist to prevent all officers and men being present.

The progress made in defence-works during the past year has been again unsatisfactory. The employment of prison labour is the direct cause of this.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

An officer of the Royal Engineers (Captain Robinson) arrived from England in November last. Economy and increased efficiency will result from this officer's addition to the staff. Beyond this no improvement in the unsatisfactory state of the Defence Forces of the colony, as regards staff and organization, has been effected. I refer in another portion of this report to this most important matter.

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE.

The training, efficiency, and conduct of the forces during the past year have been up to the high standard of past years.

The authorised establishment is always maintained, and there is no difficulty in recruiting; on the contrary, applications for enlistment are being received every week, and names are continually being placed on the lists of candidates for both branches. Several of the non-commissioned officers and rank and file are too old, and should be retired.

Lieutenant F. Symon returned from England in October, 1903, and assumed command of the R.N.Z.E. and control of submarine mining. This officer, during his stay in England, underwent courses of instruction in submarine mining and other branches of engineering. Lieutenant R. B. Smythe left for England in November, 1903, to undergo a course of instruction in submarine mining. Lieutenants E. B. Mickle and R. O. Chesney, R.N.Z.A., have been employed as District Adjutants in the Otago and Auckland District Offices respectively. Although these officers have done their best, it is an unsatisfactory arrangement in every way, and acts detrimentally in the matter of such officers' regimental training. The latter officer has lately returned to regimental duty, and is about to proceed to England to undergo the gunnery-staff course at Woolwich and Shoeburyness.

The work performed by the Permanent Force generally has been the same as in previous years—i.e., artillery and submarine-mining duties, annual courses of instruction, and instruction of Volunteers. Every opportunity is given to non-commissioned officers and men of the R.N.Z.E. on detachment in Lyttelton and Dunedin to transfer to Wellington or Auckland in order to keep themselves up to date in their work. The number of men employed as sentries over prisoners, mentioned in the 1903 report, has been reduced, but there are still many non-commissioned officers and men performing clerical duties and employed as orderlies who can ill be spared. If the establishment is not increased, a clerical section, supernumerary to establishment, should be formed.

The workshop for the regimental artificers at Mount Cook, Wellington, has been put in hand. The workshop at Shelly Bay has been rearranged and improved during the past year, with the result that much expense is already saved owing to the amount of repairs, &c., which are now being executed on the spot. It will be possible to perform more work still when the new lathe now on order is received in the colony. The stables at Mount Cook are in an unsatisfactory condition, and new stables should be built.

The R.N.Z.E. suffer much in their work from the lack of the necessary buildings. Those in existence are very badly sited, and the present arrangement of them is unsatisfactory as regards an efficient minefield defence.