

REPORT ON THE DEFENCES

OF

NEW ZEALAND.

Before entering upon the question of the measures which should be adopted for the protection of New Zealand against foreign aggression, in the event of the mother country being at war with a foreign power, it is necessary to consider the nature of the attack to which the colony is likely to be exposed.

Probable nature and degree of attack to which New Zealand is exposed.

His Excellency Major-General Sir. W. Jervois has pointed out, in his reports on the defences of the Australian Colonies, that “there is” “no probability of an expedition on any extensive scale being” “despatched against Australia. In the improbable event of Great” “Britain ceasing to hold the command of the seas, such an expedition” “might perhaps be undertaken with a view of subjugating the Colonies,” “finally annexing them, and instituting some form of despotic govern-” “ment. The very existence of the British Empire, however, depends” “upon her naval supremacy, and the question must obviously be con-” “sidered on the assumption that that supremacy is, as it undoubtedly” “will be, maintained.”

Sir W. Jervois' views on the subject.

“In the event of Great Britain being engaged in hostilities with” “any great maritime power, the enemy would retain the most powerful” “portion of his fleet in European waters, or in the Atlantic, for the” “protection of his country or for operations in the immediate neigh-” “borhood of hostilities. If he sent his fleet, or any considerable portion” “of it, on an expedition against the Australian Colonies, a sufficient” “part of our Home fleet would in turn be set free to intercept it, and” “squadrons in the Pacific, on the China, the Australian, and Indian” “stations, might, if necessary, be concentrated to oppose it.”

“But whilst the bulk of the enemy's naval forces would be” “occupied in the immediate scene of action in Europe or America, he” “might no doubt despatch one or more cruisers” and possibly an iron-clad “to operate against our maritime commerce, or make a descent” “upon” one of the New Zealand ports, which “from being undefended” “or insufficiently protected, would offer a tempting object of attack.” “Eluding our cruisers, and appearing suddenly” on the coast of New Zealand, “the enemy might capture the merchant vessels in the harbors;” “or—under the threat of bombardment, or after actually firing into one” “of the towns—demand and obtain a payment of money ; or this object” “might be attained by an enemy landing a small force in the vicinity” “of a town, if steps were not taken to meet such a contingency.”