

trading between Melbourne and New Zealand. It does not, however, approach in importance any one of the four principal harbors of the colony, the defence of which has already been considered. The harbor can receive vessels of large tonnage, and is being improved, but the entrance is narrow, and the navigation rather difficult. It would, therefore, be easy, by means of fixed defences, to keep an enemy outside beyond bombarding range of the wharves and shipping.

This is a case where, owing to the narrowness of the channel, about 600 yards wide, probably the cheapest and most effectual way of barring the entrance would be by submarine mines, well covered by artillery fire. In order that the mines should not be disturbed by the rapid tidal current, which flows at from 5 to 7 knots an hour, they would have to be laid at the bottom of the sea, and fired by observation. But this element of defence cannot be adopted at the present time, for reasons which have already been fully explained.

Again, the extent of the trade of the port would not justify the employment of torpedo boats, although—in the event of steam launches being required for commercial and other purposes in future years—they should be designed as far as possible with that object.

In consequence of the smallness of the population at the Bluff, some difficulty would also be experienced in getting the number of men required for manning any defences that might be provided. No reliance could be placed on assistance from Invercargill, as it could not be brought to the port in time to be of service—excepting in the event of a land attack, which would, no doubt, be best met by a field force, held in readiness in that city, to be sent down by railway when an attack was apprehended.

Looking to the future, however—when fixed defences will be required—the best site for a battery will be found on Te Wae-wae Point on the north shore—its armament being composed of five powerful and two medium rifled guns, the latter having a sufficient lateral sweep to command the rear of the work and flank the beach outside the entrance.

Although it is obvious that the Bluff is not at present of sufficient importance to justify any large expenditure for its protection—such as that proposed for the defence of one of the large harbors of the colony—yet it stands in a different category from Nelson, for example, for its harbor is capacious, well sheltered, and not difficult to enter. Moreover it is much exposed to attacks by sea and land, whilst the harbor at Nelson is small and not easy of access by sea. At the Bluff an enemy might land on the north shore and fire into the town and shipping from Te Wae-wae Point; or he might land in a bay to the westward, from which a position, commanding the port at a range of 1,000 yards, could be reached.

The occupation of Te Wae-wae Point, with the defensible work already referred to, would render the first operation very difficult and hazardous; whilst the field force from Invercargill would be available to repel the other mode of attack.