

Invercargill itself is not exposed to attack, as it is situated eighteen miles by railway from the Bluff, and the only approach to it by water is up the New River, which is not deep enough to admit vessels drawing over 7 feet.

I am of opinion, therefore, that the present requirements will be met by the maintenance of a field force at Invercargill, composed of field artillery and infantry of the strength I shall hereafter detail.

Nelson,
Timaru,
Oamaru, and
other places.

For the defence of Nelson, Timaru, Oamaru, and other places—which are not large enough to require local defences—I propose that small bodies of riflemen, provided with field artillery, should fulfil the double purpose of keeping hostile vessels at a distance from the shore with their guns, and also of resisting predatory attacks on land, undertaken with the object of levying contributions. The fact of such organizations being in existence would probably be in themselves a security against any attempt of the nature contemplated being made.

Possibility of
vessels pass-
ing into har-
bors at night.

It is sometimes advanced as a weak point in a scheme of defence by coast batteries that an enemy could pass them at night. At Wellington, Auckland, and Lyttelton this would perhaps be practicable, but at Port Chalmers and the Bluff there is much less likelihood of its occurring. At all events electric lights should be provided at each port, to illuminate the channels and approaches, and the entrances should be patrolled by means of one or more torpedo boats, which in time of war would always have to be kept ready for action. As regards the suggestion that an enemy might pass in thick weather, there is not the least probability of his attempting to do so, considering the difficulty he would experience of finding his way and the risk he would run of being attacked by the torpedo boats. When submarine mines are added to the proposed defences, the electric lights would prevent the enemy attempting to remove them without being seen from the batteries; and in foggy weather the hostile vessels would be exposed to the additional risk of being blown up.

Removal of
buoys and
beacons and
extinguishing
lights.

It has also been urged that a sufficient protection could be obtained by the removal of the buoys and beacons, and by extinguishing the lights at the several ports, during time of war. No doubt without lights an enemy would not attempt to enter the ports at night; but the removal of buoys and beacons is not a measure upon which much reliance should be placed, for hostile vessels could pass in without them in day time; or they would lie off the port until they procured the services of a pilot or of the captain of a merchant vessel, captured for the purpose. The inconvenience and increased difficulty friendly vessels would experience, if such measures were adopted, are points not to be lightly disregarded.

The defensive measures adopted for the New Zealand harbors should not be dependent upon chance, but they should be well con-