

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE NEW ZEALAND FORCES

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

The ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY of DEFENCE to the Hon. the MINISTER of DEFENCE.
SIR,— Defence Office, Wellington, 8th June, 1888.
I have the honour to furnish you, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, reports on the New Zealand Defence Force and Harbour Defences to the 31st March, 1888, received from Major-General Sir G. S. Whitmore, K.C.M.G., late Commander of the Forces, and from Mr. A. D. Bell, the Engineer for Colonial Defences.

I have, &c.,
C. A. HUMFREY,
Assistant Under-Secretary of Defence.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence, Wellington.

The COMMANDER of the COLONIAL FORCES to the Hon. the MINISTER of DEFENCE.
SIR,— 31st March, 1888.
I have the honour to send you my annual report—for the information of His Excellency the Governor—of the state of the military forces of the colony.

Since last year the Permanent Militia has been largely reduced, and the two corps, viz., the Field Artillery and Engineers, absorbed in the garrison and regular Artillery and in the Torpedo Corps. Since then, too, Captain Falconer has assumed the position of Instructor of the latter corps, and his knowledge of the practical part of submarine mining has made the Torpedo Corps as efficient as its numbers will allow, and he has done much to render the Devonport and Wellington Naval Volunteers an effective reinforcement to their limited strength.

The Artillery have given as much time to the care and use of their guns as has been practicable under conditions which rendered work on the fortifications their chief duty. I am happy to say they have done their best to become effective, and that no guns in the world could be better kept than those under their charge. I could have wished that they might have had more practice with their arms, but the great cost of ammunition has limited their opportunities in this respect. I earnestly recommend the importation of Morris-tubes for all the breech-loading guns, in order to make it possible to give the men more practice with their own arms, at a much-reduced cost. The cheap ammunition used with the 6-pounder rapid-firing guns, which can be refilled out here, shows how largely the expense of practice can be reduced by having Morris-tubes available.

The Artillery can now mount their own guns, a work which General Harding Steward thought so difficult as to recommend our bringing out experts from Home for the purpose.

The necessity for retrenchment has compelled the Government to reduce the Permanent Militia very largely. But the actually-indispensable portion has been retained, and the opportunity of selection has been made use of; so that the best men, who show most promise in the scientific branches, have not been lost to the country.

The defence of three of our four main ports will depend so largely on an efficient submarine organization that I am in hopes it may be possible to afford further encouragement to the Volunteer Naval and Garrison Artillery Corps to render themselves an effective reinforcement to the Permanent Force in time of war. For this purpose much more practice is required than with other arms, while our Permanent Force is only sufficient to keep the material in order.

I am glad to learn that two more Artillery Instructors have been sent for. Sergeant-Majors Parker and Silver can hardly be improved upon, but similar experts are needed for Lyttelton and Dunedin.

I am sure no colony possesses men of better character, physique, or knowledge of their duties than New Zealand in its Permanent Force.