

1889.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON THE NEW ZEALAND FORCES.

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

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 30th May, 1889.

I have the honour to forward herewith, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, reports from Lieutenant-Colonel Hume, Inspector of Volunteers, and Mr. A. D. Bell, Engineer for Defences.

These reports cover the subjects these officers directly responsibly supervise, and are therefore transmitted as usual without comment or remark. I, however, desire to touch upon one or two points to which attention should be directed, and which are not directly dealt with in the reports above mentioned.

During the past year ammunition for the guns in position has been placed in the magazines where ready to receive it, and the equipment of these guns has, as far as possible, been completed.

Four breech-loaders have been mounted, and a fifth will shortly be in position.

The work of mounting these guns has been successfully performed by the non-commissioned officers and men of the Permanent Artillery, under their officers, without accident or hindrance; and, from the difficult nature of some of the work, it reflects the highest credit on those employed.

Instructions have been issued for the care and preservation of the guns, which are strictly adhered to; and although the "hydro-pneumatic" mounting for the breech-loading guns belongs to a class of which no practical experience has yet been gained, even in England, it seems probable that, although slight difficulties may from time to time arise, by constant care and attention to the smallest detail a proper efficiency can be kept up.

The progress made in the development of artillery power within the last few years has added many new weapons which will, no doubt, in the future play an important part in the defence of a country.

The "high-angle fire" guns, the "Zalinski dynamite" gun, the new "rapid-firing" guns, and the "Maxim" automatic machine gun are at present attracting much attention, and, from the reports, official and otherwise, which have been received about them, there is little doubt that they will prove valuable weapons for coastal and harbour defence.

Permanent Militia, Garrison Artillery.—The officers and men of this branch of the Force have until recently been engaged on duties in connection with harbour-defence work, convict-guards, &c., which materially interfered with their work and instruction as artillerymen; but, as these drawbacks have now to a great extent ceased, the men are enabled to devote more time and attention to their legitimate duties. A course of drill and instruction has been laid down, which comprises the specific subjects in which men are to be trained, with the result that the training is now of a more uniform and practical nature than has hitherto been the case. The services of two Quartermaster-Sergeant Instructors from the Royal Artillery were obtained in June, 1888, and the batteries of the South Island have had the benefit of their services, with the most satisfactory results. It is proposed shortly to transfer these Instructors to the North Island, in order that the men of the batteries at Wellington and Auckland may derive similar advantages. During the year examinations, practical and theoretical, have been conducted under the personal supervision of the Staff Officer; and men who passed satisfactorily in the various subjects have been advanced to higher grades. The institution of these examinations will have a salutary effect on the general efficiency of the Force, as it is now apparent to the men that advancement depends upon their own exertions and capabilities; and this, while creating emulation and efficiency, at the same time promotes only those who are thoroughly qualified to the higher grades, an absolute essential when the numerical strength of the Forces is considered. The men have undergone a certain amount of target practice with the Morris tubes for the Nordenfelts, and, when circumstances will permit, the practice will be extended to the heavy guns. The instruction of the Volunteer Naval and Garrison Artillery