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## REPORT ON THE NEW ZEALAND FORCES.

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

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for DEFENCE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 1st July, 1891.

I have the honour to submit, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, Commander-in-Chief, the annual report upon the Permanent Militia and Volunteer Forces of the colony, together with a report from Mr. Bell, Engineer for Defences, dealing with the general progress and construction of harbour-defence works. Before proceeding I must point out that, as I only took charge of this department on the 1st April last, after the expiration of both the financial and Volunteer years, I am unable to furnish as complete a report as I should have wished.

*Permanent Artillery.*—The officers, non-commissioned officers, and gunners of this branch of the service have been brought up to a good state of efficiency in gunnery, small-arms drill, and theoretical instruction, signalling, &c., and the state in which the batteries, guns, and appliances are kept reflects credit on all concerned. All available non-commissioned officers and gunners at Dunedin and Lyttelton were, during last summer, brought to head-quarters for the purpose of undergoing a course of scientific gunnery, and attending lectures on guns, explosives, &c., with a view of their acquiring such technical knowledge as is indispensable for the proper performance of their duties. This experiment was attended with very satisfactory results, and at the conclusion of the course of instruction the men rejoined their batteries. The usual annual target-practices have been carried out during the year without accident, and the Force have generally proved themselves accurate shots, but the limited amount of ammunition fired on account of the expense attending practices with service-ammunition is calculated to interfere with efficiency. It is hoped, however, that ere long the Morris tubes which have been ordered from Home will arrive for the 6in. and 8in. B.L. guns when a considerable saving should be made annually by the use of these tubes for ordinary target-practice. The services of the officers and non-commissioned officers have been extensively utilised in instructing the Volunteers, and I am pleased to be able to report that the best possible feeling exists between these two branches of the Forces, the Volunteers freely admitting that the teaching imparted to them by the Permanent Artillery has been most valuable and beneficial, while they are loud in their praises of all ranks of the Permanent Forces for the trouble, patience, and forbearance they have shown at all times when instructing them. A detachment of the Permanent Artillery was detailed for duty, with the Volunteers, at the Easter Camp, at Palmerston North, which was duly appreciated by the Volunteers and produced good results as furnishing an example of drill and discipline which many corps will endeavour to follow, as well as supplying a want, that the Volunteers hitherto have had no opportunity of seeing a thoroughly-efficient and well-drilled corps which they might be stimulated to emulate.

*Transfers.*—During the past year twenty-four gunners have been transferred to the Police Force, ten to the Prison Department, and two non-commissioned officers to the Volunteer Force as Staff Instructors. These officers have given satisfaction in their new departments, and during the labour-troubles the Permanent Artillery rendered very valuable service to the Police, by assisting them in street-patrol duties, and maintaining order generally, which undoubtedly saved the colony considerable expense and trouble.

*Torpedo Corps and Submarine Miners.*—This branch of the service during the past year has been kept up to its usual state of efficiency, under Captain Falconer, by constant instruction and drill in the various duties appertaining to this particular and important corps. The appliances in charge are kept always ready for use, and, in the event of necessity arising, minefields would be laid out at the shortest possible notice. The torpedo-boats and torpedoes are in serviceable order and carefully and well kept. It is with deep regret that I have to report a fatal accident in connection with this corps by an explosion of gun-cotton, whereby two torpedo-men lost their lives and a third was seriously injured. Every endeavour was made to ascertain the cause of this accident, and the thanks of the department are specially due to His Excellency the Governor for his