

ordinary maintenance and repairs of Government buildings throughout the colony, and £900 on keeping in order the Government Domains at Auckland and Wellington.

Under the Public Works Fund provision has been made for a vote of £7,500 for school buildings, to supplement the vote for the same purpose already provided for on the Consolidated Fund Estimates; for enlarging the Government Printing Office, to provide accommodation urgently required to take the place of that destroyed some short time since by the fire at the old office; also for completing the Lunatic Asylum at Porirua, and for some additions and improvements at the asylums at Auckland, Sunnyside, and Seacliff; for a new telegraph office at Invercargill, new Courthouses at Hastings, Danevirke, and Mongonui; for a grant-in-aid towards the cost of a new hospital building at Dunedin, and sundry other smaller works.

### HARBOUR DEFENCES.

Provision was made last year by a vote of £3,000 out of the Public Works Fund for *matériel* of war from England (partly in fulfilment of contracts entered into by previous Governments, and partly to complete equipments), as well as for certain miscellaneous charges which could not properly be debited against the vote on the Consolidated Fund for prison-labour and material in connection with the defence works. The expenditure out of this vote during the year amounted to £2,477.

The liabilities on the 31st March last were £3,710 upon *matériel* and miscellaneous charges, which will require to be covered by a vote out of Loan Fund; £1,600 of this amount is represented by an award of the Compensation Court for land taken for the Torpedo Dépôt, at the North Shore, Auckland.

The value of lands acquired, owing to the exigencies of negotiations, in excess of actual requirements, and of the engines, plant, &c., on the works, amounts, at a low valuation, to about £10,000. This sum is an asset against the cost of the defences, and against the liabilities at any date at which the works may be discontinued.

The total expenditure out of both Consolidated and Public Works Funds on harbour-defences up to the 31st March last, together with the liabilities at that date, amount to, in round numbers, £475,000, of which £240,000 represents cost of *matériel* of war from England and miscellaneous charges connected therewith, and £235,000 the cost of works in the colony. Of this latter sum about £36,500 represents cost of land, and the balance, £198,500, the cost of forts, batteries, submarine defences, steam-launches, and all other charges.

A return giving, in tabular form, particulars of the total expenditure upon the harbour defences of the colony, from the first steps taken up to the present date, will be separately laid before Parliament.

In order to enable me to decide upon the policy to be pursued as regards the defences, I have during the recess made a minute and careful inspection of the whole of the batteries and other works at each of the four fortified ports, and have also studied the proposals of the experienced officers of the Royal Engineers who have from time to time specially advised upon the defences of the colony. To a very considerable extent I find that the recommendations of these officers have been carried out, and the greater portions of the powerful armaments ordered from England have been emplaced in well-constructed batteries, with proper magazines, casemates, and other accessories, while satisfactory progress has also been made with the dépôts, equipment, and preparations for the submarine mining and torpedo defences. The vote proposed for the present year provides only for those works which it is absolutely necessary to carry to completion in order to put the defences of the harbours in a fairly-sound position. In this connection Auckland has been specially regarded by the Imperial authorities as a possible naval base in these seas; and it is therefore advisable that the colony should, as far as possible, endeavour to justify the selection by providing such efficient defences to the harbour as will enable Her Majesty's ships to confidently take advantage of it. The same argument to a