

ing within range of them, and the harbour would then be defenceless. The port of Lyttelton is, from an Imperial point of view, the most important harbour in New Zealand, for the following reasons:—

1. On the completion of the West Coast railway it will be in direct and secure communication with the vast and unequalled coal deposits on the west of this island, and must therefore be the most important coaling station within the dominion.

2. It is the principal port in New Zealand for the shipment of grain and meat, the supply of which will be of supreme importance to the Mother Country in event of war.

3. It is the most easily defended harbour in the dominion, being situated about five miles from the ocean, and with reasonable armament would be secure against raiding attacks.

Holding public meetings and passing resolutions calling upon either the New Zealand or the Imperial Government to do something is of very little use if the crisis is as grave as it appears to be. We must realise the fact that, even if the strengthening of the defences of the port were authorised, it would take at least a year to import and mount the guns that would be required, so there is no time to be lost.

My object in writing this paper is to make a definite proposal as to the action that might be taken by the people of the North Canterbury district with regard to local defence, so that on Parliament meeting in October there may be a definite proposal from the district. North Canterbury is exceptionally favoured as regards defence; indeed, it may be affirmed that the de-

fence of Lyttelton is the defence of North Canterbury. There is no place between Lyttelton and the Hurunui River on the north or between Akaroa and the Rangitata River on the south where a force could be landed and retain communication with its ships; indeed, I confidently assert that, should the defences of Lyttelton be sufficiently strong to resist an attack, an enemy would most probably select Akaroa as the best base obtainable, none of the other bays in the Peninsula being equal to Akaroa for the purpose.

The defence of North Canterbury depends upon two conditions:—

1. Upon the port of Lyttelton being sufficiently strong to repel attack.

2. Upon our possession of a field force strong enough to defeat an enemy landed in Akaroa or one of the bays on the Peninsula.

To strengthen the defences of Lyttelton I suggest mounting a 9.2 gun on Sumner Head. Any vessel attempting to enter either Lyttelton or Port Levy would come under the fire of this gun, which is capable of penetrating the armour of any vessel except a first-class battleship. Inside the harbour I propose to strengthen the defences by the addition of six six-inch quick-firing guns of the latest pattern. These weapons fire a 100lb shell, and can discharge eight aimed shots in each minute. There would also be six 12-pound quick-firing guns to repel boat attacks. All these guns would be in addition to the present armament, and with these additions it would require some very powerful vessels to force an entrance into the harbour. The second condition for the effective defence of North Canterbury is the possession of a field force, which I would suggest should consist of 2500 Volunteers and