

absent, were the best of that arm I have inspected. I hope that the absence of so many men will not be repeated. I learn that the corps, when nearly all present at the camp, was equally remarkable for its efficiency and good drilling, so that I saw a fair sample at the inspection. The rest of the Wanganui corps were not all present, it is true; but the absentees were not in the same proportion as the cavalry, and many circumstances accounted for them, such as the Wellington regatta. At Marton, on the 20th March, I had the best turn-out in the colony, not excepting Nelson—one corps having every man present, and, in all, less than 2 per cent. absent unaccounted for. The Wairoa Light Horse, at Waverley, on the 22nd March, drilled exceedingly well; and at New Plymouth, on the 23rd March, the corps—principally country corps—moved excellently. All the West Coast corps drilled so well as to reflect great credit on their veteran commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Stapp, who has worked indefatigably, and with marked success, to render them efficient. I have been as yet unable to visit the Hokitika or Wakatipu Lake corps, or the Wairarapa—my time, owing to my detention with Admiral Tryon, C.B., not having sufficed. But I am led to believe that at least all the first-named corps are excellent ones.

New Zealand possesses a very considerable force, being equal in point of numbers and, some tell me, in efficiency to the whole of the recognized forces of the sister colonies put together. Yet neither in respect of expense nor of paid permanent staff is the force so costly as that in Australia.

Our regulations for garrison corps—our most highly-remunerated Volunteers—only prescribe twelve obligatory drills per annum, four of which must be daylight parades. This would be wholly insufficient, if the Volunteers confined themselves to it. But the spirit of the men, and the emulation caused by camps, induces the corps to exceed the stipulated number of drills very considerably in most cases. At Home Volunteers have thirty obligatory parades, and I think at least twenty should be insisted upon here. Country corps cannot be expected to drill so often, having often great distances to go; and the honorary corps are without the least State aid, and are put to great expense. I recommend the absorption of these latter in the larger centres into garrison corps, if they should fail to keep up their numbers, and cannot be made garrison corps. The Volunteer system of New Zealand is most faulty in its officers. We have tried this year to improve it in this respect and to do something towards the education of the officers. But, with no funds to carry out the scheme, it has proved almost impossible to do much. I recommend the Government to make some provision to render the education and examination of the officers a reality, by providing the means of educating them not only in their drill, but in their musketry instruction. The artillery officers have practically no instruction: it is a large field, and artillery text-books of a simple character are much needed. The promotion to the adjutancies and higher ranks should be purely by merit and efficiency, and removed alike from election by popularity and outside influence. This can only be achieved by competitive examinations with competent examiners. I have no hesitation in saying there are officers in New Zealand quite able to lecture to and examine officers, with the best results, if we can apply a moderate sum to recompense them for their time. The torpedo corps and permanent artillery, small as their numbers are, are quite able to instruct at all events the most necessary and elementary parts of their special work. But we lack the means of providing for musketry instruction and the rest of the duties of officers, so as to give them a fair chance. This question, I understand, is to be submitted to the liberality of Parliament; and I think, if the provision proposed is made, we shall be able to make the officers as efficient as the men, proportionately, which is not the case at present at all universally—though, of course, there are many brilliant exceptions through the force who are excellent officers. These gentlemen, however, would feel more encouragement to persevere if promotion hereafter was assured to them not by seniority but by open competition. The election of company officers by the corps is unique in the British dominions: it has its drawbacks, and these can only be removed by insisting on examination prior to the issue of commissions. What is further wanting in a citizen force, which can but rarely get time to drill, is what in military services is usually gained by position drill. This is of less importance for actual service than good shooting, discipline, and movement; but it has its value notwithstanding. I think the establishment of cadet corps, with or without compulsory calisthenics and drills, at the public schools, would produce a body of well-set-up young men as recruits for the Volunteer force hereafter. It seems quite worth while, as the colony gradually reduces its permanent paid forces, to encourage cadet corps.

I have observed that the Naval Artillery Volunteers are always anxious to acquire any experience that may be of use, but prefer work on the water when possible. Naturally they must be the torpedo-men of our harbours in war time, and their boats must form the guard boats to protect our mine-fields. When possible, I think they should be supplied with Nordenfeldt machine guns, and, if arrangements can be effected without too great a cost, assisted to get open steam launches from which to use them. For this year, however, perhaps it will be enough to train them to torpedo-work, and to secure a machine-gun for each port, that they may learn the arm. As the ammunition is not a difficulty in this case, I would prefer a multi-barrel machine gun, even though its range be less, for the special duty of preventing enemy's boats and launches from interfering with our submarine defences.

In conclusion, I have great pleasure in stating that, speaking of the force as a whole, great progress has been attained this year. There are battalions already quite equal to those of the English Volunteers. If the shooting is not quite as good as it might be, it must be attributed to the want of good ranges and proper musketry instruction, both of which are procurable, and are, I gather, to be asked from Parliament. The cavalry is well mounted. The artillery, if one corps at each port becomes a garrison battery, and the guns you have ordered arrive, will no longer suffer discouragement from not having enough guns. The Naval Volunteers, who, as a rule, almost without exception, work admirably, do not seem to require much pressing to learn torpedo-work. The regular infantry are improving everywhere daily, and I trust their equipments may reach the colony before spring to replace the unserviceable belts. The Martini-Enfields ordered by you, when issued to the best shots as an encouragement, and gradual mode of replacing the Snider, together with musketry instruction, will complete all that is wanting in the shooting, if only the