

the arms of almost any foreign country our men would be at a considerable disadvantage wherever the nature of the ground or the light enabled the enemy to open fire at a long range. The introduction of repeating arms will, moreover, add to our disadvantages in warfare, with only old single-shot Sniders to reply. I am aware that it is undesirable to have too many descriptions of arm, and that, while the question of the final arm for adoption by Her Majesty's service is under consideration and experiment, it would be unwise to commit the country to an arm which might soon become obsolete. But there seems to be no doubt that a repeating arm is to be adopted in the British as in other armies, and that an improved barrel is to be fitted to it, carrying a smaller bullet. The experiments designed to discover what arm best reconciles these requisites are in very forward condition, and it seems almost certain that either the Burton-Lee or the Lee repeating and breech action, with perhaps the Enfield barrel, will be selected. One of these, or possibly some other still better pattern, is certain to be adopted this year. In the meantime, you have ordered 500 Burton-Lee American repeaters to be sent out at once for sale to the New Zealand Rifle Association and Canterbury Honorary Reserve Volunteers. I respectfully submit that the Parliament of New Zealand should make provision, if my view is accepted, and that a special vote be taken for at least five thousand rifles of the approved pattern repeating arm, with a supply of not less than five hundred rounds of ammunition per rifle. I think £20,000 would not exceed the cost of such rifles, with bayonet and ammunition complete; and, considering the importance of our submarine defences, and the certainty that any hostile men-of-war would attempt to take up or explode our torpedoes before attempting to force an entrance to our ports, I submit that a suitable smaller vote be taken to put the port Navals in a position to guard our mine fields.

The annual camps of exercise have been held successfully, 5,000 men having attended the three camps. At Pareora and New Plymouth there was some instructive drill, besides the usual sham-fights; and at Auckland the alarm was practised in turning out the troops, though one day's instruction was lost, as, in deference to representations made by many religious persons, further work was not insisted upon on Good Friday.

The manner in which the troops manœuvred in brigades and battalions at the larger camps was excellent, and elicited general praise. The discipline of the men when under arms or on duty was also very good, and not a single police complaint has been made against any Volunteer. The behaviour of the men when on pass has been in some instances unfavourably noticed by portions of the public Press, but I have, after careful inquiry, satisfied myself that, as I find stated in the Taranaki local journals, the strictures passed on the men at the camp there, at all events, were based on information absolutely untrue in most cases, and grossly exaggerated in others. If further camps are held in the colony the force has now attained sufficient familiarity with its duties in other respects to undertake its own cooking, as would be the case with regular troops, and the locality would only need, therefore, to provide raw provisions. Such an arrangement would be, on the whole, more satisfactory to the Volunteers, more instructive as regards their duties on real service, and more economical.

The encouragement offered to cadet corps by you has had the effect of calling a large number of such bodies into existence which are a credit to the colony. Indeed, the Christchurch, Dunedin High School, Wanganui, and Nelson College Cadets (the latter of whom won the bayonet exercise tournament at New Plymouth, open to all Volunteers) are as nearly perfect as it is possible to conceive.

The Cavalry Volunteers labour under great disadvantages. They can seldom meet. It is not possible for the men to keep the same horses always, and these require as much training as the men, so that they can rarely attain the precision of regular cavalry movements, and if they do reach it in any corps it is impossible to maintain it. On the other hand, the mounted infantry organization seems more suited to the country armed with a carbine and revolver instead of a sword. The same exactitude is not necessary in mounted infantry as in cavalry, and looser but quicker movements are required. There are two favourable examples of mounted infantry in Captain Cotton's Canterbury and Major Harris's Auckland corps. The sword is practically of less value than the carbine for the duties mounted men would have to perform out here. Speaking of the force as it exists, the Cavalry of the South Island as well as of the North Island have made great efforts, and have improved their efficiency during the last year. The greatest progress I have noticed has been in the two youngest corps, Heretaunga and Rangitikei (the latter till this year an honorary corps); while the Waverley Troop has improved also on its excellent last year's form. The Cavalry in the Auckland Province have always been employed on frontier service, and are excellently trained to the duties of mounted infantry. In this respect they are very efficient.

The Field Artillery throughout is good, and maintains its high character. The readjustment of the guns has had a good result. Three batteries of garrison artillery are embodied: one (the O) at Auckland has attained great excellence; those at Lyttelton and Port Chalmers have but lately begun the work.

I have, &c.,

G. S. WHITMORE, Major-General,
Commanding Colonial Forces.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

DETAILED REPORT OF INSPECTIONS.

Auckland.—25th September, 1886: Present, 900; absent, 256. Absentees who were neither absent on leave, nor sick, or had other reasonable excuse, ordered to be fined, as provided by the Act. General appearance and drill, good, except the cavalry (Lancers), which has since been disbanded at its own request.

Napier.—October, 1886: Present, 191; absent, 17. Drill much better than last year; attendance, good; appearance of Volunteers and equipments, very good. Of those absent most had reasonable excuse.