

The results as regards heavy-gun drill, as will be seen, are almost absolutely nil, only one petty-officer, of the Peninsula Naval Artillery, Dunedin, having qualified and obtained the efficiency-capitation and badge. When it is considered that the manning of our forts and batteries in war-time would have to be undertaken by these branches of the service, it is evident that some radical change must be effected if any practical results are to be obtained, and I strongly urge that vigorous measures be adopted with regard to those corps which do not qualify for the duties for which they have been selected.

It is argued that the time it takes to proceed to batteries renders it impossible for men to attend practice and instruction; but, while this, to some extent, may be admitted, the batteries in most places are easily accessible; and, as passages by train, ferry, or departmental launches have always been authorised, it cannot be urged that efforts to meet the convenience of officers and men have been in any respect wanting.

The want, or rather absence, of any progress in the discharge of their duties by these corps I attribute in a great measure to the fact that officers commanding districts are not adepts in this branch of instruction. Heavy-gun drill is not one in which they take an active part themselves, and consequently the turn-out of the corps has been relegated almost entirely to its own officers; and the latter, with the exception of some of the subalterns (who were obliged to pass before they could get their commissions), have never, in most cases, made even the slightest effort to master the drill for which they have been detailed, and have not—as far as I am at present aware—at any time undergone the practical drill which can alone make them efficient to instruct and command.

In the case of O Battery at Auckland, the attendance of officers and men was all that could be desired, and some of the detachments, at actual gun-drill, were thoroughly efficient; but when it came to an examination of their knowledge of artillery questions and of their duties with regard to the ammunition, stores, &c., in connection with the guns they used (which are essential points in the training of an artilleryman), it was found that these subjects had not received the attention required to ensure proficiency in them.

Major Douglas, the Staff Officer of Artillery, has, when able to do so, attended drill and given lectures on gunnery; but his experience has been that the attendance of officers and men was so variable and irregular that it was quite impossible to expect any useful result, until a material improvement in the present unsatisfactory state of affairs had been enforced.

I may add that in Auckland and Lyttelton 64-pounders have been mounted in the drillsheds; so the drill of the gun might be carried out without going to the batteries. At Port Chalmers a similar gun, which was in the court at the Exhibition, has recently been mounted; and it is intended to place a 7in. gun in position at the drill-shed at Wellington.

Lithographs and diagrams of guns and ammunition, as well as samples of all ammunition in use, a full submarine-mining plant, &c., have also been supplied for the use of Volunteer corps, together with the various treatises on ammunition, equipment, &c., in use in Her Majesty's forces; so that every facility has been afforded to carry out the instruction of the members of these corps, with however, only the meagre results above stated.

It is true that at Wellington, Auckland, and Taiaaroa Heads camps were formed, at which there was a fair attendance; but, as all drill and instruction took place before 7 a.m. or after 6 p.m. (the men going to their ordinary work daily), an undue strain was placed upon both officers and men, with comparatively little result; so that, although these encampments may be considered better than nothing, I do not think they in any way compensate for the trouble and expense they entail, or that they can be considered, except in submarine-mining training, which is carried out on the spot, a success; and I feel confident that two or three full days' drill would give results which a fourteen days' encampment as described would not attain. While compelled to acknowledge that the attendance at these camps displays, on the part of all concerned, a readiness and willingness to undergo both inconvenience and discomfort, with little results, I am still of opinion that it would be a wiser and more practical expenditure of time and money if officers and men were remunerated on a scale which would permit them to devote the full day to their training and instruction.

There are some defects in our present system which, however, cannot be remedied until the existing Defence Act is amended. The election of officers by members of a corps is the most prominent, and as long as this prevails so long will practical discipline and efficiency be absent. At present the officer who really *commands* his men is the exception. The difficulties experienced in maintaining discipline in the various corps are not only in themselves by no means light, but are also increased by the easy-going proceedings and deficiencies in the qualities necessary for its enforcement; and those who have these qualities are, in consequence, heavily handicapped in carrying out that discipline which should be the first duty of every officer to uphold.

The public generally do not look upon volunteering with any special favour. The movement consequently suffers from this apathy, and, although these remarks may not apply with the same force to every district, yet there are very few in which great difficulty is not at times experienced by the Volunteer in getting the necessary leave from his employer to attend to his duties; I am even credibly informed that it is the rule in many large business firms to make it a condition of employment that the employé should not belong to the Force.

As long as the present Volunteer system exists this will be a difficult matter to remedy; but I feel confident that if a Volunteer-Militia system were introduced, as in some of the Australian Colonies, under which both employer and employé are liable to training in case of an insufficient number of voluntary enlistments, the difficulty would absolutely disappear.

It is to be remembered that our Volunteer Force is with us practically the first line of defence, and not, as at Home, the fourth; and it therefore behoves every citizen, in his own and the public interests, to submit at least to the temporary absence of his employé, if not to share and take his part in a movement so manifestly for the public welfare. Hitherto, for many years past, volunteering in the large centres has been looked upon merely as light amusement, not as a serious and practical service; but it is time these views were abandoned. Now that external aggression is