

what has to be guarded against, the towns will be called upon to supply that defence which country settlers in their own interests were obliged to take up in times past.

Easter Encampments.—During the year 1889 encampments were held at Auckland (Hamilton), Nelson, Hokitika, Christchurch, and Oamaru, and, with an exception as regards Auckland, the reports furnished commented favourably upon the general conduct of the men and the duties performed. Although the encampments of the present year do not, practically, come within the scope of this report, yet as there has been some comment with regard to their limitation to the four centres it may be as well to detail the circumstances under which they were formed. Camps were ordered at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and, except as regards Wellington, the attendance was confined to corps whose headquarters were within a ten-mile radius of the town. This course was adopted for the purpose of testing the effect of a direct order for the assembly of corps, and to ascertain in what manner Volunteers would respond to it. The detail below gives the result, and the excessive proportion of absentees practically proves what has been virtually stated before, viz., that unless it suits the Volunteer he is not prepared to turn out without being compensated for his time.

				Strength.		Attendance.
Auckland	...	...	...	723	...	370
Wellington	...	...	...	480	...	270
Christchurch	...	...	...	869	...	456
Dunedin	...	...	...	800	...	307

Officers from other districts were detailed to attend these camps, and reports were furnished by them on the drill, discipline, order, &c., maintained. These reports, on the whole, were more favourable than was anticipated; but the various defects to which attention was drawn, though not of any great magnitude, proved that in many duties a closer regard to the recruit instruction of both officers and men was required. The excuses furnished by absentees for non-attendance embraced every conceivable plea, from *la grippe* to the attractions of the Dunedin Exhibition; inability to obtain leave from employers was noticeable by its frequency.

While the excessive number of absentees proves that some stronger stimulus than a £2 capitulation is required to ensure regular attendance, it is satisfactory to state that in every instance the excellent conduct of officers and men, both in and out of camp, was specially referred to by reporting officers. There is a unanimous opinion that a four days' camp, such as can be held at Easter, is not of sufficient duration for men to settle down steadily to their work, and that if it was extended to eight or nine days the training received would be more effective and lasting in its results; but, while there can be little doubt on this point, the proportion of absentees at the recent camps makes it apparent that it would be utterly useless to attempt any innovation of this kind under the present system.

It has been advocated that camps extending over a period of some days might be formed in convenient localities on the same lines as adopted by Naval Artillery Corps, viz., that men should sleep in camp, attending drill and instruction morning and evening, but proceeding to their work daily. I am still of opinion this proposal is better in theory than practice.

Arms, Stores, &c.—The force is still armed with the obsolete Snider rifles, many of which, from fair wear-and-tear, are in anything but a satisfactory condition, and it is to be regretted that this cannot be remedied until Magazine rifles are obtainable. The guns on issue to the field batteries of Artillery, consisting of 12-pounder and 6-pounder Armstrong and 9-pounder breech-loading, are all of old and obsolete pattern, and, while they have lasted admirably (some of them having been used by the Royal Artillery when stationed here), it is becoming daily more difficult to obtain stores, ammunition, &c., for them, as their manufacture at Woolwich has for the most part been discontinued; and I strongly recommend, when circumstances will admit, that weapons of later date be procured, with a proportionate supply of ammunition. Major-General Edwards draws special attention to this point in his report, and specifies the reserve of ammunition which in his opinion should be maintained. If the 12-pounder wire gun, weighing 5½ cwt., which is at present under trial by the Imperial Government proves a success, it would be thoroughly adapted for service in this colony.

On the 11th February, 1889, the Agent-General was communicated with and requested to transmit to the War Office a requisition for 2,000 Magazine rifles when the pattern adopted for Her Majesty's Forces had been decided upon; but, although it was expected that delivery would be made in March of this year, it has subsequently been notified that issues to Colonial Governments are not likely to be made until the beginning of next year. While this further delay is disappointing, it is consoling to know, from advices received from the Agent-General and Major-General Harding Stewart, R.E., that it is all in favour of a better weapon being procured, as, although the pattern has been finally decided upon, several minor alterations and improvements are being effected which will eventuate in a more perfect weapon being obtained than at present would be possible.

It has been suggested that, to save time, the new rifles might be procured through private firms; but this is a course which I do not think should be adopted, past experience having been by no means favourable to the experiment. Although the time which occasionally elapses before the War Office can comply with our requisitions is not seldom vexatious, yet when the stores do arrive they are, as a rule, of patterns which are easy to replace, and, from the supervision exercised, of a quality which cannot be impeached.

Cadets.—The strength of this portion of the Force on the 31st December, 1889, shows a slight decrease (103) since last year, but it is satisfactory to report that out of forty-one corps no less than thirty-three were favourably reported upon by officers in command of districts, and drew the grant, varying according to their efficiency, as provided for by the regulations.

I recommended in my report of last year that greater attention should be paid to the military training of the youth of the colony, and I trust that the consideration which this subject merits will be ere long accorded to it.