

numbers, do not appear to pay sufficient attention to the physique of their recruits, and in some corps men are to be seen in the ranks to all appearances unfit to bear arms, owing to youth and non-development; but these are the exception and not the rule. The attendance at drills during the year has considerably improved, and would be very much better if employers of labour would encourage their employes by occasionally giving them two or three hours' leave, but this is seldom done; and I do not think the difficulty will be got over till statutory Volunteer holidays, or half-holidays, are proclaimed throughout the colony. It is clearly proved from the good attendance given to night parades by the Volunteers, after having undergone a hard day's work at their various avocations, that the same good attendance would be given to parades held during the day if the employers did not prevent their men from attending.

Cadets.—The strength of this portion of the Force at the end of the past year was 2,111, being a decrease of 1 on the previous year. There are 38 corps (North Island 8, South Island 30). The cavalry carbines on issue to these corps are most unsuitable for boys, being clumsy and too heavy, and have a tendency to make the shoulder droop. It has therefore been decided to issue no more of these arms to cadet corps. The services of the members of the Permanent Militia have been placed at the disposal of the various Education Boards to act as instructors in the different schools for the purpose of teaching the children setting up physical drill, and marching without arms, while dressing the boys in uniforms is left quite optional. There can be only one opinion—viz., that these drills must be beneficial to the lads attending them.

Honorary Reserve Corps.—There is one corps in Christchurch, with a total of 57; they are armed with Martini-Henry rifles, and are excellent shots, but I have never had the pleasure of seeing them on parade.

Ambulance Corps.—Almost every corps can now boast of its detail of trained ambulance men, and medical officers deserve great praise for the trouble they have taken in training and making efficient in this particular branch so many men of their respective corps.

Easter Camps.—Three small local camps were held last Easter at Wanganui, Christchurch, and the Bluff, at which about 500 attended; but, owing to the bad weather experienced everywhere, very little drill could be carried out, and as it turned out it was fortunate that arrangements had not been made for bringing a larger number of Volunteers together. There is always a considerable risk of inclement weather when Easter falls as late as it did this year.

Capitation.—As regards capitation, I am of opinion that it should be divided up into so much for each parade, as described in last year's report, and so do away with the hardships that now exist, of the regular attendants of each corps having to continue to attend parades after they have earned capitation, to admit of the drones of the corps becoming efficient. This is unfair, and no doubt must militate against recruiting. The necessity of two-thirds of the corps being present to earn capitation might, I think, be modified to one-half with advantage. Owing to the courtesy of the senior naval officer of Her Majesty's ships in these waters, the Volunteers have had the opportunity on two different occasions of drilling with the officers and men of H.M.S. "Ringarooma"—viz., at Nelson during Jubilee, and at Auckland on the Queen's Birthday. These drills do an immense amount of good, and are much appreciated by the Volunteers, tending to considerably increase recruiting, and arousing an emulation in all ranks to attain a higher state of efficiency.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME, Lt.-Col., N.Z.M.
Acting Under-Secretary for Defence.

REPORT UPON HARBOUR-DEFENCES FOR THE YEAR 1891-92.

Temporary Prisons and Convict-labour.

THERE has been no new departure during the year. The material points deserving notice in connection with the temporary prisons in which the convicts are housed on the works, and with the nature and value of their work, were fully dealt with in the reports for 1889 (H.-16) and 1890 (H.-15), and the remarks therein printed hold good as applying also to the present year; but some additional remarks relative to the subject of convict-labour will be found below.

Designs of Works.

These have continued to be based upon the principle also detailed in the two reports above quoted.

Progress of Year in Land Works.

The work of the year has been chiefly comprised in carrying to completion those works which had reached an initiatory or advanced stage of progress at 31st March last, and in continuing the remodelling of certain of the 1885 temporary works on the lines indicated in last year's report.

The general aim has been to endeavour to close up gaps in the lines of the approved scheme of defence, so far as entered upon or authorised.

In the early part of the year an inspection of all the defence works, and especially those immediately in hand or proposed at the four ports, was made by the then incoming Minister of Defence; and in his Public Works Statement (the Hon. Mr. Seddon also holding the portfolio of that department) the policy to be pursued with regard to the harbour defences was thus referred to: "In order to enable me to decide upon the policy to be pursued as regards the defences, I have during the recess made a minute and careful inspection of the whole of the batteries and other works at each of the four fortified ports, and have also studied the proposals of the experienced officers of the Royal Engineers who have from time to time specially advised upon the defences of the colony. To a very considerable extent I find that the recommendations of these officers have been carried out, and the greater portions of the powerful armaments ordered from England have