

enable this to be done, however, some arrangement will have to be made either for hiring or providing suitable steamers for carrying the men to and from the forts. It is impossible to train men as gun-layer—one of the most important of artillery duties—unless the training can be carried out by daylight.

There are now two corps in the colony, one at Auckland and one at Wellington, whose duties are entirely confined to submarine-mining work; but, owing to the want of proper submarine-mining vessels their instruction cannot be thoroughly carried out. In my last year's report I strongly recommended that two efficient submarine-mining boats should be procured, and it is imperative for the efficient training of the men and the proper laying-out of the mine-fields, that such boats should be purchased at as early a date as possible.

A portion of the Petone Naval Artillery Volunteers are supposed to be trained as submarine miners; but as we have no reliable seaworthy vessel which can take the men over from Petone to Shelly Bay in rough weather, or in a short space of time, the men have never had any thorough training as miners. I propose, therefore, after this year to confine the work of the Petone Navals to purely artillery work, and employ this corps in the artillery defence works of the inner harbour at Wellington. The submarine-mining work for Wellington will be done by the newly-formed corps from the Star Boating Club.

The regulations as to the musketry course for all naval corps are being revised, and these corps will earn their capitation on their qualification as artillerymen and submarine miners, and not be dependent for it on their skill with the rifle.

I recommend that the money hitherto given for prizes for rifle-shooting to the various artillery corps should be lumped together and given as a prize to the company who scores most points in a competitive artillery practice, which should be instituted yearly in the four centres.

More ammunition should be allowed annually to the artillery corps for their practice, as it is only by carrying out the actual firing that the practical results of the training can be ascertained.

During the past year the naval corps at the Bluff, the Thames, and Nelson have been turned into infantry companies, and the corps at Napier, Wanganui, and Greymouth have been disbanded, so that now we only have naval corps at the four centres; and the fallacious system of having artillery corps at out-stations, at which there were no guns to work or no means of training the men in artillery duties, has disappeared, never, I hope, to be revived.

INFANTRY.

During the past year the organisation of the infantry has been changed, and all the corps in the colony either have been or are about to be organised into battalions.

This is a simple matter in the centres, where there are several corps in the one town, and others grouped on the railway system in close proximity to the towns, and the battalions so formed will have a reality of existence. As regards the country corps, however, there are rarely more than two companies of the battalion in one town, and the other companies are dotted about at different stations along the line of rail, so that the battalion only comes together as a whole at Easter camps or on special occasions.

To carry out the battalion system thoroughly in the country districts an extended use will have to be made of the railways, and I must urge that this should be done, so that battalions if possible, and most certainly half-battalions, should be brought together for daylight drills. The railways belong to Government, and the money spent by the Defence Department in this way would go to the Railway Department—a simple transfer from one pocket to the other, without any real appreciable cost to the State. At the present a considerable portion of the money voted for defence is paid in hard cash to the Railway Department.

Every opportunity should be taken for getting corps to work together in battalions. This will give the corps mutual confidence in each other, supply the stimulus of emulation, accustom them to their battalion officers, and give those officers the practice in command and drill which will enable them to use their battalions to the best advantage in the field.

Under this system the company remains intact as regards its financial position and interior economy, but becomes part of the battalion for the purposes of drill and discipline. If this system is only properly and judiciously carried out I am sure that the advantage over the old system under which companies were isolated and had no interests or sympathies in common will be very soon apparent.

The infantry corps are, considering the amount of training they get, fairly efficient in drill-hall work, but sadly deficient in their knowledge of practical soldiering. This is not the fault of the men, but of the system of Volunteering in force in the colony.

With the exception of the time spent in company camp no daylight parades are insisted on, and consequently the men get very little out-of-door training. In some districts advantage is taken of moonlight nights to take the companies out, but this is not nearly sufficient, and I trust that the six daylight parades, with a personal payment to the men of 2s. 6d. each parade, recently sanctioned, will go some way to remedy this defect. Of course these parades, and the conditions they are to be held under this year, are only experimental, and till we have gained some experience of how the men turn out, and what effect the training has on the Force, no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down.

The present regulations say that, to earn the 2s. 6d. personal payment, three-quarters of the strength of each corps must be present on parade, and that in stations where more than one infantry company exists all the companies are to turn out at the same time. I am informed in some places that three-quarters is too high an average to fix; in others, that there will be no difficulty in getting the required number. It all seemingly depends on the constitution of the various corps, and as to whether they are composed of men who have their weekly half-holiday on the same day. My idea in instituting these parades was, in addition to giving the Force some field-training, to impart a