

on their skill with the rifle, and the story of the Boer father handing his son three cartridges and promising him a thrashing if he did not bring in three buck has more than the element of fiction in it. The Boer practised at moving and living objects continually, and now that the Transvaal is more settled and the game has been driven further into the interior, his skill as a marksman has very much deteriorated.

The rifle-club man practises simply at a standing target, under conditions as favourable as he can make them to himself. He has no experience of field-firing under Service conditions, no sense of discipline, and knows nothing about drill. I have no hesitation in saying that rifle clubs formed in towns where Volunteer companies exist, do harm to the companies and take recruits away from the ranks. The only way in which I think they should receive encouragement from Government is in turning them into Reserve Corps for the Volunteer Force.

After serving for four years in the Volunteers a man should be qualified to join a Government Rifle Club, formed in a station where a Volunteer Corps exists. He should be allowed fifty rounds of ammunition annually, provided he turns out once a quarter for drill and inspection. The whole club should turn out together for this quarterly drill, if possible, men not able to attend being allowed to put in a drill with the Volunteer company. In places where Volunteer corps do not exist rifle clubs might be formed consisting of old Volunteers, who would receive the same grant of ammunition, provided they put in their four quarterly drills in the year; rifle clubs so formed to be brought under the conditions of the Defence Act as part of the Defence Force of the colony.

A large number of men leave the Volunteer Force every year, and I am of opinion that if rifle clubs were put on the footing I now recommend, we would retain a fair proportion of the trained men as a Volunteer Reserve.

Unless a rifle club devotes a certain time to military training as well as perfecting its members in shooting, it will be useless to the Defence Force, and a lot of untrained and undisciplined men being included in the Force at the outbreak of hostilities would be a source of anxiety and hamper the utility of the Force. If a man gives no service to the State I fail to see why he should expect to be subsidised by the State for the purpose of carrying out his own pleasure and amusement.

NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

I attended this year the meeting of the New Zealand Rifle Association, at Oamaru. The Government granted this association 50,000 rounds of ammunition and free railway-passes to all members of the association. They further helped the association by allowing men from the Permanent Force from Dunedin and Christchurch to act as markers at a payment of 2s. 6d. per head per diem, and provided and paid carriage on a large number of tents to the scene of the meeting. The numbers attending the meeting from other parts of the colony were: of Volunteers, 144; rifle club men, 52; lady members of rifle clubs, 7; total, 203. These numbers were further increased by the men from the two rifle companies at Oamaru. Amongst the Volunteers, eighteen officers attended, thus making an attendance of 126 rank and file, out of a total of about 4,500. To make the meeting more of a practical nature, and to encourage Volunteers to practice firing under service conditions, the Government gave substantial prizes for the Lloyd Lindsay competition for the mounted troops, and a field-firing competition for the dismounted troops. It was hoped that teams from the different districts in the colony would compete, but unfortunately only four teams came forward for each of these competitions, and these practically were local teams.

Complaints had been received that in many matches the Volunteers had to come into competition with rifle-club men, who were armed with superior weapons purchased at their own expense, and this gave an unfair advantage to the rifle-club men. On account of this representation, matches were arranged to be fired with weapons issued solely by the Government; and also a match was put in to encourage the young shooters in the Volunteer Force who had never won a prize before. From a defence-point of view, the results of the meeting were disappointing; and I cannot recommend that in future any assistance be given to the New Zealand Rifle Association. The money, I consider, would be much better spent for the benefit of the volunteer fighting force, if a certain amount was allotted to each district for prize-firing during the year. Each district should have its own rifle-meeting, the majority of the competitions being confined to Volunteers, and good practical matches forming a great part of the programme. One or two matches might be set apart exclusively for rifle-club men. Free railway-passes should be granted to the men in the district taking part in these competitions, which should be entirely under the management of the officer commanding the district.

One district should be selected annually which should form a competing centre for the colony. That is to say, that in this district certain matches would be fired, open to the whole Volunteer Force; and a small extra grant should be given annually to this one district. The men taking part in the several rifle meetings should live in camp and be under military discipline. At the last year's Oamaru meeting, although a large number of tents were provided by the Government, no one but the permanent-force markers lived in the camp, and the tents were only utilised as shelter for the competitors in case of rain. Many more tents were provided than was necessary for this purpose. Towards the end of the meeting bad weather came on and several tents were damaged, the cost of this having to be met by the Defence Department.

CAMPS.

During the past year I have encouraged the Volunteers to go into camp in as large numbers as possible. The mounted corps in the South Island, and those in the Wellington District, went into combined camps—the former at Dunedin, and the latter at Wanganui. At places where there are more than one infantry corps, I tried to get all the corps to go into their annual camp at the same time, and I hope to carry out this system more thoroughly this year. In each district in the colony the camps were held at Easter. The men left their homes on Thursday night, arrived on Friday,