

MEDICAL SERVICES.

A better organization of the medical service is much to be desired.

At present there are five Volunteer bearer companies in existence. Their equipment is incomplete, but I am informed the requirements are now under order. Four ambulance-wagons have lately arrived from England. There is no organization at present for field hospitals. Had such means to this end, as I have now recommended, existed during the last three years, not only might organization have been looked for, but a very great saving of public money in matters connected with the South African contingents would have been effected.

VETERINARY DEPARTMENT.

The question of the establishment of a Veterinary Department should receive consideration, and would cost little or nothing. Veterinary officers, if encouraged to join corps in that capacity, would prove useful in the advice, &c., they could afford, and in the lessons regarding care of horses they could teach. The necessity for the latter cannot but exist where horses are as cheap and plentiful as they are in New Zealand.

CADET CORPS.

There are now thirty-six corps under the Defence Department. Twenty-one corps have lately been transferred to the Education Department.

Cadet corps should be encouraged. So far the Empire has been fortunate in escaping the necessity for conscription. Events may, however, as they have done in other countries, force this upon her, and a means of gaining immunity therefrom would appear to be the training of the youth of the country to arms. I have recommended that all boys under thirteen shall be under the Education Department, and instructed in the elements of military knowledge; that after thirteen, and while still at school, or, say, till seventeen years of age, they be cadets under the Defence Department. Very few hours per month would so far educate a boy that after he passed out of the cadet corps he would very easily be rendered fit to take his place in the ranks of an organized force should necessity arise. The training of cadets should form part of their education, and not be made irksome to them by interfering with their play-hours, &c.

RIFLE CLUBS.

Ninety-three rifle clubs now exist. They are to be encouraged where they do not influence recruiting for corps; but in no sense can an untrained man, however good a shot he may be, compare on service to an even partially trained one.

Rifle clubs are allowed to purchase magazine rifles at cost price.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCES RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

The Government has lately taken over the New Zealand Rifle Association, and good results may be looked for. Shooting on service principles only, as far as possible, should be allowed, and all else discouraged. A considerable advance in this direction was made at the meeting held at Trentham last February. Carbine matches will be instituted in future.

CAMPS.

The necessity for the training of the smaller units, before attempting instruction of the larger bodies, induced me to submit recommendations suspending for the present combined camps, and limiting the work to company training. A very considerable advance in efficiency of corps under this system may be looked for.

The so-called Easter camps have also been suspended. Little real work was done at them, and the argument that they encouraged recruiting is a superfluous one in New Zealand at the present time, where such great interest in military matters is manifest. Corps are now allowed to go into camp at any time suitable to themselves.

CAMP EQUIPMENT.

There are now in the colony 1,650 tents and 70 marquees that are serviceable. I do not consider that more are required.

In the event of war men would be billeted as far as possible, which is a much more preferable method of sheltering them than placing them under canvas. It affords better protection, and effects a large saving in baggage-trains, &c.

ARMS AND EQUIPMENT.

All mounted rifles and rifle corps are now armed with the magazine rifle. A lighter rifle will probably shortly be introduced in England, and future wants here should be considered in connection with this weapon—at any rate, so far as mounted men are concerned.

An adequate reserve of rifles should be maintained.

In last year's estimates £4,000 was voted by Parliament for the construction of armouries. I have informed the Hon. Minister of Defence I do not propose this service shall be carried out. In my opinion, each man should keep and look after his own rifle, and from what I have seen at inspections of corps I consider they are quite capable of doing so.

Two armourers are now at the disposal of the Commandant, and these will be utilised to inspect the arms of corps, and bring to notice any cases of damage, want of care, &c., that may occur.

The equipment scale requires revision. Certain articles, such as nose-bags for mounted corps, have not been considered. The care of horses is an important part of the mounted man's duty, and having to go many miles to parade, as the majority of mounted Volunteers do, without the means of feeding his horse does not inculcate good horse-mastership.