

them. Corps are on the whole fairly well mounted; the saddlery, however, is in many instances unserviceable. Nosebags have not yet been provided. The service rifle lately adopted by the British army, and which is now being procured to replace deficiencies, is being issued in the first instance to the mounted corps.

FIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The 9-pr. R.B.L. guns have all been withdrawn from the field batteries, but H Battery at Nelson and I Battery at Westport (lately converted to field artillery from being No. 10 Company, Garrison Artillery) are both still armed with 6-pr. Nordenfeldts. I have recommended that these batteries have three 15-pr. B.L. guns each.

The annual practice as carried out by the field artillery this year was good, and the batteries, with one exception, all obtained a high figure of merit and first-class classification.

The maintenance of a small number of horses trained to artillery-work in Wellington has proved so beneficial to the battery stationed there, and at the same time so economical when the saving effected in cartage is considered, that I would again recommend adopting a similar arrangement at other centres.

GARRISON ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

The establishment of many of the companies has been raised during the year in order to meet requirements.

Experiments carried out in Wellington with a view to providing dummy guns for drilling gun detachments in drill-sheds, and moving targets for training D.R.F. detachments and gunlayers both in drill-sheds and in the batteries, have proved successful. Descriptions, drawings, &c., of the various contrivances have been circulated to the other stations, and the same arrangements are being made locally by the Permanent Force artificers at those stations.

The annual practice as carried out by the garrison artillery was good throughout, a high figure of merit having been obtained by nearly all the companies. They all classified as first class.

The concession as regards fort-manning parades by night have been taken advantage of, and good results have been obtained from these parades.

The garrison-artillery corps at Westport, hitherto known as No. 10 Company, G.A.V. (Westport Position Artillery), have recently been transformed into field artillery, and are now called I Battery, F.A.V. The change was considered advisable having regard to the work it may be called upon to perform.

ENGINEER CORPS.

There are four field-engineer and two submarine-mining Volunteer companies in the colony. The field-engineering companies have in the past suffered very much from want of an instructor. Now that an officer of the Royal Engineers is available efficiency will naturally increase.

It has been recommended—(1.) That the companies be increased in strength to 100, divided into a field-engineering section of 50 men, a telegraph section of 25, and a signalling section of 25. (2.) That "siege-works," railways, and telegraphs (theory only) should be removed from the syllabus of the field-engineering section and "hasty demolitions" introduced, the subjects of the telegraph and signalling sections remaining as at present. (3.) That the various companies should go into camp at such times as to allow a trained instructor being present throughout the training of each company. (4.) That the theoretical examination mentioned in the *New Zealand Gazette*, 18th June, 1903, should be done away with, and a *viva voce* examination at the termination of the camp substituted.

The present equipment scale has been revised, and stores should be supplied to render the companies efficient.

The work done by companies is satisfactory, as far as it goes, and all ranks are anxious to become efficient.

INFANTRY.

With the dismounted corps, as with the mounted ones, an improvement in training has taken place. The system introduced of each rank being held to possess more knowledge than the rank below it, and the non-commissioned officers and junior ranks having responsibility thrown on them, is having the desired effect. More outdoor work is, however, required, and every opportunity should be taken to training corps as far as possible in daylight, and away from the drill-halls; the summer mornings and evenings should be taken full advantage of. Infantry corps should be provided with entrenching-tools.

The physique of some of the infantry corps is not as generally satisfactory as it should be. It is to be hoped that improvement in this matter, to which attention has been called, may where required be effected.

CYCLE CORPS.

There are five cycle corps in the colony. While recognising the useful rôle each corps can play where good roads exist, I do not advise, having in view the operations likely to take place in New Zealand, any addition to the present numbers of these.

MEDICAL CORPS.

But little advance has been possible in the matter of establishing an organized medical corps in New Zealand. It is to be regretted such is the case, as the medical corps is also one which is absolutely essential in war. Its organization and training cannot be effected at short notice.

VETERINARY CORPS.

Owing to the new regulations not yet having been approved, no advance towards the establishment of a veterinary corps has been effected. It is important that such a corps should exist, and it is hoped that its establishment may not be much longer delayed.