

CADET FIRING.

Very great interest was taken in the practice of the 17 Cadets who went to Auckland. Their firing was very good, the Champion Belt being won by Sergeant Corry, of High School, Christchurch. In the extra-prize match, the winner, Taine, of High School, Dunedin, in firing off ties at 400 yards, showed great coolness, making three bull's-eyes and two centres out of five shots. Almost immediately after the meeting, about 300 Cadets were enrolled, for the first time, in the City of Auckland.

DISTRICT PRIZES.

For the District Prizes the Colony was divided into 22 districts—13 in the North Island, 9 in the South. There were 2,167 competitors against 1,207 last year, who made an average of 25·89 points this year against 22·43 in 1870, thus showing a general improvement in the average, although the number of competitors was nearly double.

CARBINE PRIZES.

A sum of £50 was set apart for prizes to corps armed with Terry's breech-loading carbine, the result of which appears at page 334 of *Gazette*. The number of competitors (179) is small in proportion to the number (1,200) armed with that weapon; but the greater portion of these arms are unserviceable and nearly worn out, and many have preferred to fire with an Enfield rifle for the ordinary District Prizes. This is to be regretted, as the object of prize-firing is to encourage men to make themselves good marksmen with the class of arm issued to them for service. The Cavalry corps throughout the whole Colony complained much of their arms, and alleged that it was of little use to try and become expert with such bad weapons, whilst at the same time they are placed at a great disadvantage in practising for General Government Prizes with Enfield rifles lent to them for that purpose.

A suggestion was made by several corps, that a Champion Belt should be competed for by those only who are armed with the carbine. I think the proposition a reasonable one; but no great result can be expected until a better arm is supplied.

CADET PRIZES.

A sum of £50 was also set apart for the Cadets of the Colony, to be competed for in their own districts. The number of competitors was 144, the best average being made by Wellington, which Province carried off no less than three out of eight prizes, the first being won by Brandon, of Wellington Grammar School, who made 54 points out of a possible 60.

The arms in this competition were of a mixed character—carbines, short and medium Enfield rifles, &c.; but a supply of new arms will shortly arrive, when no doubt a greater number will in future compete.

ARTILLERY PRIZES.

Some prizes were apportioned for the Artillery corps, armed with howitzers and Armstrong guns. Owing to the great expense which would necessarily be incurred, it was found impracticable to bring the various corps into competition on the same ground, and the firing was confined to the respective districts. This arrangement was made more with a view to encourage the several gun detachments than as a competitive trial, as the Volunteers of this branch of the service are required to devote more time and attention to their various duties, and have generally shown an extra amount of zeal and diligence in the performance of them.

• CADETS.

The training of the youth of the Colony is a subject of so much importance, and one which has hitherto received so little attention, that I deem it my duty to bring the matter to your especial notice.

In March 1871, there were 723 enrolled cadets, of whom 564 became entitled to capitation allowance by the present regulations. If, however, their training is to be made really effective, the regulations must be materially altered and made more stringent. The number of drills is not nearly sufficient, and they should be more consecutive, as boys quickly forget what they have learnt between the periods of instruction, when they are at long intervals. In order to give them a better carriage and generally improve their physical condition, a course of setting-up drill is most essential, before arms are placed in their hands. This cannot be now carried out with the very limited number of drills entitling them to capitation allowance.

Detached corps of Cadets are not likely to succeed; they should be either drilled at school or attached to an adult corps who are interested in their welfare. This latter plan has been adopted in Auckland, where some 160 cadets have become a contingent of the battalion, and are reported to be making steady progress.

If schools are to be drilled, some effort should be made to enforce military instruction as a part of the education of the boys; for, when imposed on them out of school hours, they are likely to regard it as tedious and uninteresting, at all events until arms are placed in their hands.

The return marked E shows the strength, distribution, and proportion of efficient boys who drew capitation to 31st March, also the strength on 31st May, by which it appears an increase of 543 took place in that time; of this number about 400 are at Auckland and the Thames, which is to be attributed to the visit of the Southern representative Cadets to those places during the prize-firing meeting in March. The total number now enrolled is 1,266.

These are the numbers capable of bearing arms, but there are other boys under training at school in Otago not included in this, as the Commanding Officer reports 445 under training, although the strength on the above return is 227.

None of the corps at Auckland, Thames, Rangitikei, Greytown, or Southland, were formed when I visited those districts.

At Wellington I saw a few, attached to the Veteran corps, and some at the Hutt, who give promise of being smart lads. The Grammar School paraded for my inspection immediately before the holidays; but stormy weather prevented my seeing them, and I had no other opportunity. I saw a few at Crofton Grammar School, who were not far advanced.

In Nelson I was informed that the Cadets were formerly in an excellent state, but their present condition shows a great falling off, and few mustered for my inspection.