

authority—this is not satisfactory. It is not easy to suggest a remedy, but some system of personal payment in the way of a grant might meet the case.

The training of boys to the use of arms is so important and may save a country so much inconvenience, that the cadet movement should be fostered in every possible way, and if conscription at some future time is to be avoided, it must be so; at present the low rate of capitation is keeping it back.

The arms of the cadets are on the whole kept in good order.

Corps are very deficient in the matter of equipment, and this is discouraging to them; haversacks, too, should form part of their equipment.

It is a matter for regret that a rifle of a different calibre to that in use with the Defence Force has been introduced for the Education cadets. If a boy is not strong enough to fire with a .303 carbine he should be armed with a dummy rifle only.

RIFLE CLUBS.

There are now 117 rifle clubs in the colony, and the services of nineteen have been accepted during the last year.

I have asked captains of rifle clubs to meet me when carrying out inspections at various centres, and they have been given facilities for doing so. I have received no complaints.

During the past year eight rifle clubs have disbanded, and the services of newly formed ones accepted; the causes in each case of disbandment were, I believe, that the members ceased to take any interest in shooting, and not, as is sometimes asserted in some quarters, owing to want of support from the Government.

I have recommended that the grant of ammunition to rifle clubs be increased, and that in return more systematic training be carried out by them; this, I have reason to believe, they are quite willing to do. The price of rifles to rifle club men has been reduced by 11s.

The privileges formerly enjoyed by rifle clubs as regards railway passes have been restored to them.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCES RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

Since last meeting considerable improvements have been made on the range by the Government, which enabled the 1906 meeting to be got over within a week. There are fifty targets now available at distances from 200 yards to 600 yards, twenty-nine at 700 yards, and twelve at 800, 900, and 1,000 yards. The latter was found insufficient, and should be increased to twenty-five, if the men are to fire under equal conditions as to light and wind.

The annual meeting was held at Trentham on the 5th to 10th March. There was a record entry of 433 competitors (283 Volunteers and 150 rifle club men), of whom 180 were tiros—*i.e.*, had never won a prize of £1 at any previous meeting of the Association.

The average of hits gave a much lower figure than that of the previous year. In some respects the long-distance shooting was responsible for this, this being the first year that shooting at any longer distance than 700 yards has been included in the championship.

A "running-man" competition was introduced for the first time, and created a keen competition.

The championship was won by Lieutenant Irvine, of Nelson, with a score of 431. It is worthy of note that the championship of the colony has for the last three years been won by competitors from the Nelson District.

The entries for the different teams matches were also much larger than previous years, no less than thirty-two teams entered for the companies teams match, and fifteen for the field firing and other matches.

The finances of the Association are very satisfactory; the balance of the previous year was not trenched upon, the income of the present year being more than sufficient to carry out the meeting. The receipts were as follows: Government grant, £1,253; disputed shots, £66; and sale of empty shells, £24. Expenditure, £1,173; Ralston targets, £133; wages, £181; material, £96; cartage, &c., £45; other expenses, including loss on catering, £70, leaving a balance on the year's working of £155, against which there are liabilities of about £50.

The marking was most efficiently carried out by the members of the Permanent Force.

The meeting was most successful in every way, the only matter to complain of being the want of target accommodation at the long ranges, as, owing to the number of competitors, it took all day to fire one distance, so that the men who fired in the afternoon fired under different weather and light conditions to those who fired in the morning; this is not desirable, and should be avoided if possible.

I would recommend that huts be erected at Trentham; they would be a great convenience, both for this meeting and for such camps as might be held there, and save a great wear-and-tear to tents. Trentham is practically the only manoeuvre ground available in the vicinity of Wellington.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION.

For the present New Zealand is divided into five military districts. When communication between Canterbury and the West Coast is improved, Nelson District should be absorbed into the Canterbury command.

The difficulty of finding suitable officers to command districts is very great; the pay is poor, and no pension is to be earned. Until by an interchange of officers with England, and the training of officers at the Staff College is carried out, the services of Imperial officers to command districts should be obtained if thoroughly satisfactory officers cannot be found in the colony. Formerly Imperial officers were in some cases appointed as adjutants of districts, but such a system is bad, is subversive of discipline, and weakens the authority of the Officer Commanding the District.