

A temporary staff has been appointed to districts, consisting of Volunteer officers who give part of their time to this most important work. These officers have necessarily but little knowledge of their duties, and but little time to learn them; but if my recommendations regarding military educations are carried out, they should in course of time be able to qualify themselves sufficiently to discharge their duties satisfactorily in such situations as are likely for the present to occur.

#### SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF.

At present no school of instruction exists, the officer lately in charge of it having left the colony at the expiration of his engagement.

The late system of conducting the school was unsatisfactory, in that few centres were visited in the course of the year, and a very small proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers benefited by it. I have recommended that the services of two Staff College officers be applied for from England to carry out this most important duty. One would be appointed to each island, and he would carry out courses of instruction all through the districts, and also by means of correspondence. I have shown, too, in my proposals for this, that the cost to the country would be no more than under the late system.

During the past year 154 officers and fifteen non-commissioned officers presented themselves for examination; of these 139 officers and fourteen non-commissioned officers passed. There has been a distinct improvement in the knowledge shown by candidates. The recent revision of the syllabus for examination will have a good effect.

As regards the staff instructors, it is found that the system of appointing those from the Permanent Force is unsatisfactory. "It could not well be otherwise, for a man trained as a Garrison Artilleryman cannot have the necessary knowledge to act as an instructor for Mounted Rifles or Infantry. I have always urged the employment of ex-Imperial non-commissioned officers, plenty of whom are available in the colony, for these duties, and the Volunteers themselves would prefer them.

Instructors should not be allowed to remain too long in one district; there were till lately cases of men being ten or twelve years in the same district—this could not be but detrimental. Where also an instructor through age or inefficiency becomes unfit for his position, his retirement should be carried out. Unless sound education of officers and proper instruction of non-commissioned officers is carried out, no force can be efficient.

#### SIGNALLING.

The new equipment mentioned in my last report has arrived in the colony, and has been issued. The following companies have been increased by two officers and thirty-four non-commissioned officers and men, this increase being specially trained as signallers: College Rifle Volunteers (Auckland), Wellington Post and Telegraph Rifle Volunteers, Nelson Rifle Volunteers, Christchurch Volunteer Cycle Corps, Dunedin Volunteer Cycle Corps.

"Qualifications for earning capitation and personal payments and efficiency badges" have been published, but it has not as yet been practicable to hold examinations for these sections.

#### ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

There are sufficient guns, were all mounted for such defences of ports in New Zealand as the country can afford to maintain; and as regard rifles there is a satisfactory reserve now established. The guns and rifles for the most part are kept in good order.

With regard to rifles, a supply of the short rifle has been received, and as those of the mounted corps require to be replaced, this pattern should be issued to them. The rifles have not been converted into clip loaders as in England, and it is not considered, having regard to the service they would be required for, that the expense of doing so would be warranted; but when new rifles are ordered, the clip-loading ones should be obtained.

A satisfactory reserve of gun and small-arm ammunition has been created.

The ammunition supplied by the Colonial Ammunition Company continues to be very satisfactory. During the past year there have been four cases of burst rifle-barrels, but in each case I am satisfied obstruction was the cause, and as it has been found ammunition other than that supplied by Government has in some cases been used, the Colonial Ammunition Company can in no way be held responsible for this. Orders regarding this matter have been issued, and if carried out, I do not anticipate further accidents.

#### CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT.

The Defence Forces are now with very few exceptions clothed in a service dress, in which, however, there is still a considerable want of uniformity; most corps are also in possession of a full dress. The principal wants now in the matter of clothing are greatcoats, and these should most certainly be supplied.

As regards equipment, mess-tins, and nose-bags for mounted corps should be also supplied; also haversacks to cadets. The question, too, of saddlery for the mounted corps must be considered. No entrenching tools are available; it is most necessary that Infantry should be in possession of these, and instructed in that very important portion of their training—entrenching. The bandolier equipment approved in 1903 has not yet been issued to all corps. One or two representations have been made that the ammunition-pouches of this equipment are defective, in that rounds of ammunition sometimes drop out; but if the magazine of the rifle is charged and only packets of ammunition used this could not occur.

A supply of camp equipment is on order, and when this is received there will be sufficient for present needs.