

RIFLE RANGES AND DRILL-HALLS.

The position as regards rifle ranges and drill-halls still continues to be satisfactory.

In the Auckland District a new range has been gazetted at Paeroa, and a new range will be formed at Thames on land recently taken. In the Wellington District the Trentham Range has been very much improved. These improvements were very greatly appreciated at the N.Z. D.F.R.A. meeting. In the Nelson District new ranges have been taken at Hokitika and Grey-mouth. In the Canterbury District the range accommodation is to be increased on the Sumner Range.

A large number of reserves have been vested in trustees.

The situation as regards drill-halls is as follows: In Auckland a new hall has been erected at Paparoa. A new hall is in course of erection at Waihi. At Thames the Volunteers have secured the title to a drill-hall site; this site will be vested in the Department, and a new hall will be erected. In the Wellington District a new hall is to be erected at Pahiatua; the site of the hall at Napier is being enlarged, and plans have been drawn for a new hall in Wellington. In the Nelson District a new hall has been erected at Nelson, and the area of the Westport drill-hall site is to be enlarged. In the Canterbury District the Christchurch drill-hall has been completed. In the Otago District a mobilization store and offices are to be built at Dunedin at a cost of £1,350; a new drill-hall has just been erected at Oamaru; a new hall is to be erected at Winton; and that at the Bluff is to be improved.

A large number of drill-halls in the various districts have been improved, and several fresh sites have been gazetted and placed under trustees.

While drill-halls and rifle-ranges are necessities, they entail a very large expense to the country, and in the scheme for reorganization which I have referred to elsewhere an economy is shown in these respects.

CONCLUSION.

I have endeavoured since my arrival in New Zealand to point out what I consider is required to render the Force of the colony an efficient one. It does not appear to me that the colony takes the question of defence seriously, or gives due attention to a subject that is so important, and one that may at very short notice become of vital interest to her. It will be well for New Zealand if by any means she can be persuaded before it is too late to look seriously upon and also to thoroughly appreciate her Defence Forces, and to listen more attentively than she has yet done to the advice of those whose duty it is to offer it as to the measures necessary to render such Forces really efficient.

J. M. BABINGTON, Major-General,
Commandant of the New Zealand Defence Force.

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

APPENDIX I.

CONDITIONS FOR THE COMPETITION FOR THE "NEW ZEALAND GARRISON ARTILLERY CHALLENGE SHIELD," 1905-6.

The shield will be awarded to the company that obtains the highest number of marks in the examination for efficiency as laid down in these conditions, and is therefore by examination found to be the most efficient company of Garrison Artillery in New Zealand.

Any infringement of these instructions will disqualify a company.

The Artillery staff officer will depute officers to carry out the examinations at the various stations, and he will decide the results and make his award, which will be final.

The award will be published in "General Orders," and the shield will be held by the winning company until the publication of the next year's awards.

On the results of the examinations Garrison Artillery companies will be graded thus:—

- A grade, for each company that obtains 70 per cent. of the total marks allotted if the company has not classified lower than second class in its annual service class-firing.
- B grade, for each company that obtains over 60 per cent. and under 70 per cent. of the total marks allotted, providing the company has not classified lower than third class.
- C grade, for all companies that obtain over 50 per cent. and under 60 per cent. of the total marks allotted, irrespective of the classification, for shooting-companies that obtain a less percentage than 50 will not be graded, whatever their classification may be for practice.

Discipline.

A corps is to be considered as under examination from the commencement to the termination of its annual training-camp.

Special attention is to be paid to the discipline of the corps, and marks will be deducted by the Artillery staff officer, or the officer deputed by him, for any slovenly work throughout the camp, such as—

- (a.) Late falling-in on parade.
- (b.) Bad discipline on parade, or lack of smartness.
- (c.) Bad discipline in camp, such as disturbance after "Lights out," camp routine not properly carried out, tents and lines or barracks not clean, &c.
- (d.) Men improperly dressed when outside the precincts of camp.
- (e.) Lack of smartness in saluting officers, &c.