

VOLUNTEER NOTES

(By RIFLEMAN.)

The No. 1 Natives' signallers will hold the annual examinations at the Drill Hall on Monday, February 22nd.

The Victoria Rifles have this season won the Kauri Cup, the Gordon Shield, the Walsh Hooster, and the South Auckland Bauer, in tennis matches.

Colonel Tison, one of the Defence Council, is at present in Auckland in connection with the mounting of the new mark 7 guns at the North Road.

No. 1 Company Garrison Artillery put up a Dominion record at Fort Takapuna from the quick-firing gun, and the figures are causing keen competition.

There is a possibility of the Rangatira Mounted Rifles being considerably strengthened in the near future by the formation of a troop at Kawhia.

The No. 1 Natives are still in a flourishing condition, and new members continue to enrol, three more new members throwing in their lot with the company on Monday night.

It is many years since the rifle championship came to Auckland. It. Douglas, of the A. Battery, being the last winner; Capt. Cox, who won the coveted star, by killing fourth place, in 1904, and Carlsen and Patrick, who filled sixth place, have been the nearest to it since Douglas's win. This year Auckland will have about 35 representatives, and should make a bold bid for the championship.

A combined field day for the King Country rifle clubs has been arranged for the 24th February, when the Upper King Country Rifle Club, Ohura, Kakahi, and Kio Kio Clubs will assemble at Kakahi, where field firing will be practised. A meeting will be held after the field exercises to consider the question of providing a trophy for annual competition, and also consider the question of adopting a uniform.

The Newton Rifles will be represented at the New Zealand Defence Forces Rifles Association's championship meeting at Trentham in March by 7 members, viz., Sergt. MacKerras, Corp. Mudge, Privates Murphy, Boys, Sorrensen, Lyford, and Hall. The team is a fairly strong one, and its members should give a good account of themselves in the event. As well as this, as well as in the championship series. Sergt. MacKerras is manager of the team, and Corp. Mudge captain.

Speaking on universal military training, in the House of Lords, Lord Roberts concluded thus: "We are locks in a living chain pledged to transmit intact to posterity the glorious heritage we have received from those who have gone before us in this place. (Cheers.) We know the world is altering, and, indeed, that the conditions of international politics in both hemispheres are changing with unexampled rapidity. Upon the one hand, it is agreed that naval development, in many countries simultaneously, is bringing about a fundamental change to the conditions of sea power. Upon the other hand, we as an Empire have the means of making land frontiers exist, although our military resources are insignificant by comparison with those of the Great Powers of Europe and Asia. It is the most vital necessity of our situation that we should have in the future, as in the past, not only the strongest and most powerful Navy, but complete strategic freedom for that Navy. (Cheers.) Under these new conditions, we can never again enjoy that freedom without a total change in our military arrangements. The Navy, under present circumstances, is fettered to Home waters as it never was before, and without a military force sufficient of itself to make the British Empire safe and to keep these Islands secure under the initial circumstances of war, it surely must be plain to everyone who will give the matter a thought that our military weakness, if continued, will be the primary cause of the loss of our naval supremacy. It is my absolute belief that without a military organisation more adequate to the certain perils of the future, our Empire will fall from us and our power will pass away." (Cheers.)

In the competition for representatives at Wellington rifle meeting, held in the Victoria Rifles, the following succeeded in winning their place: W. Cox, McIvor, Jones, Jack, Yoo, McCarthy, Brownlee, and J. St. Preston. The following members are also attending the meeting: Sgt. Marks, Sergt. Anderson, Corp. Patrick, J. J. Preston, John Preston, F. Preston, Carlsen, Rowe, and Tobin. The corps will be very strongly represented, and should give a good account of this shooting.

The Engineers have come out of camp after undergoing a course of 16 days' training. The camp was held at Fort Calety, and looking at it from a working standpoint, it is without doubt the hardest and most successful camp the corps has ever held. The engineering staff officer for the Dominion, Lieut. Dixon, was with the corps throughout the camp, and with him was Sergt. 2nd Major Middle. Enough praise cannot be said of the untiring efforts on the part of both the officers in giving instruction. Nothing was too much trouble for them, and to a large extent the success of the camp was due to them. One evening the electrical section went out with the cable cart, and had about 4 miles of wire, and connected up the telephones. This section has made wonderful progress, and was under the command of Lieut. Butler and Sergt. Marks. The field sections did some particularly good work in laying out wire entanglements, both high and low wire in lines. The sections were under Lieut. Hewson, Sergt. Burgess,

and Sergt. Fricker. The signalling section got in a lot of good work with the flags in the morning and helios on Saturdays and Sundays, and used the line lamp and Meghite lamp at night. They got into communication with the H.M.S. Cambrian in the stream, Fort Bastion, and a party of the College Rifles at Mt. Eden. There were a good many recruits in this section, and the work done by them was particularly good, four of them who only joined a month ago qualifying for a badge; this speaks well for instruction received from the staff officers. The section was under Sergt. Love. The corps is only wanting a few more men, and next year will probably see the company making a big bid for the Engineer Shield of the Dominion. It is hoped that this year it will secure second place. One word about the discipline: This was a particularly good feature about the camp. During the whole camp there was no need to reprimand one man, and the lights went out together as soon as the first note of lights out was sounded, there being no disturbance afterwards. The corps should secure 100 per cent for discipline.

The Sink of the Seas.

It lies between the meridians of 40 deg. and 75 deg. west, and between the parallels of 20 deg. and 35 deg. north, and Columbus first brought back to Europe the story of its being. Yet the old-time navigator's account was very hazy and uncertain.

He spoke of a vast stretch of marshy weed, spreading from horizon to far horizon; a place of dim, uncertain horrors, reaching out grasping tentacles toward the broad seas, luring by its uncanniness unsuspecting ships into its rapacious maw, from which no craft might ever hope to win freedom.

And to-day, more than 400 years since

Columbus voyaged forth, but little is known of the weird Sargasso Sea.

Long ago, in the backwaters of time, great rivers poured their mighty floods toward the sea, and on their swift currents were borne vast fragments of vegetation, clinging driftweed, ancient tree trunks, the amazing litter that throngs a river's tide. From the far south, like a river in the sea, great currents swept, all-conquering, lashing the verdant South American coasts, tearing from thence great clumps of weed, long matted tangles of grasses, more driftweed, more vegetation. These currents rebounded from the Mexican Gulf and swept circling out to the broad Atlantic, but other currents met them there, and a gigantic maelstrom ensued. All floating debris was swung into the vortex of this huge floating conflict of rushing water, and little by little, yet resistlessly, the various detached portions of weed took hold one upon the other, until in the slow progress of time a great bed was formed—a floating island—lashed on its borders by the seas, but tranquil and unmoved in its midst. Centuries added to its bulk, the rivers of the Americas contributed their quotas to the whole, and now the entire stretch is one swaying, floating continent, without foundations, treacherous, awful immutable.

Mariners know it, but they shun it as the plague. It is an unhallowed place. Its grasp spells slow and lingering death. Woe betide the unfortunate sailing ship that once gains a position near it, for insidious currents run sub-surface to drag the helpless, windless craft into its maw, where enticing channels open up to allow the inward passage of a vessel, only to be followed by the closing in of the weeds—to lock the unfortunate in a grip that naught can loose.

Even the steamers of high power give the Sargasso Sea a wide berth, for the long, clogging weed binds itself draggily about the strongest propeller, and jams it tight, so that though hundreds of horse-power be called upon to free the useless screw it is all of no avail.

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