

perhaps, it would be well to apply the physical test, but these are the exceptions. Their desire for drill seemed strong, and the amount of attention given to it very commendable, while their behaviour during the inspections was admirable.

11. *Equipment*.—I have been struck by the enormous expense which has followed each corps being allowed to select its own particular uniform. Take one example: Some companies have provided themselves with the full valise equipment, the greater part of which could not possibly be required on service in this colony. Again, some have adopted a most expensive Highland uniform, and have thereby seriously crippled their company funds. There was not one company that I inspected with sufficient pouch-accommodation to take the field, even armed with the Snider rifle; whilst several are not provided with greatcoats, leggings, water-bottles, or haversacks. The shoes of the various ranks on the inspection-parades illustrated every variety of a fashionable boot-shop window, and a large proportion of them were quite unserviceable for anything like hard work or inclement weather. This matter of correct shoeing is one to which officers commanding corps should pay special attention. The materials of the equipment on issue to some of the cavalry corps would not stand any wear and tear—e. g., the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry pouches and sword-belts are in a particularly rotten state, and dangerous, and have long since served more than their time, having been originally on issue to the Otago Gold Escort. The Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry and Otago Hussars are without sword-knots, which might also prove dangerous. I am strongly in favour of substituting revolvers for swords in the subordinate ranks of all the mounted corps. This matter of providing the Force with a simple, comfortable, efficient, and economical uniform, shoes, and equipment should receive due consideration and be firmly taken in hand without delay.

12. *Officers Commanding Districts and the District Staff*.—These gentlemen and their staff in every instance afforded me material assistance in carrying out my duties, and they appear to me to work zealously to promote efficiency in their commands. The system of having a divided authority in the four centres—viz., an Officer Commanding the District, and an Officer in Charge of the Permanent Militia, entirely independent of each other—is unique and unworkable, and a dual command of this kind, which must lead to disaster, is to be deprecated. As it stands now, the Officer Commanding the District is entirely ignorant of the numbers of the Permanent Force actually stationed within his command, or of the amount or description of ordnance and ammunition available in case of need in his district. On the other hand, the Officer Commanding the Permanent Force would be totally unable to work his guns without the assistance of the Volunteers, from the District Commanding Officer. This system does not tend to bring about that true *rapprochement* between the two branches of the service which ought to exist, and who would be entirely dependent on one another in the event of attack. These branches of the service are never paraded together, and annually at the Queen's birthday parade the Permanent Forces are conspicuous by their absence.

13. *Shooting*.—In this there has been considerable improvement during the past year, which is mainly due to the pains taken by district adjutants to properly instruct all ranks under their charge. With the locally-made ammunition which is now on issue, there is every hope that this progress will be maintained. I have seen this ammunition subjected to several various severe tests, and have no hesitation in reporting it to be superior to what has been on issue in the colony within the past few years.

14. *Battalions*.—I have heard some comments on the policy of disbanding battalions, as they were falsely designated. In my opinion, this step was absolutely necessary—the battalions were merely battalions while on parade, and the present independent companies can at any time be made similar battalions for the purposes of drill. The system just discontinued took the individual corps entirely away from their legitimate instructors—viz., the district adjutants and their staff sergeants-major—and gave them over to their own amateur officers and non-commissioned officers. Often in winter battalions of six companies were assembled in drillsheds capable of only holding one, and if it was a wet night nothing but inspection of arms and accoutrements could be carried out. Then, in many instances, the field officers were incompetent to perform their duties, several never having passed any examination, while in some cases the commanding officers, immediately on assuming command of their battalions, thought it right to show their entire independence of the Officer Commanding the District. The system now in force allows quite as many opportunities for battalion drill as in the past, but under competent instructors, making the parade one of instruction for all ranks, instead of an inspection of buttons and pouches, followed by a march round the town, as was too often the case under the past system. It is generally admitted that when the corps were formed into battalions and handed over by the district authorities to the officers appointed to command battalions they were far better drilled and stronger in numbers than they were when these battalions were recently abolished; indeed, had the latter been continued much longer, it would have utterly disorganized the infantry corps at the four centres.

15. *Medical Officers*.—As a rule, medical officers paraded with their corps, and appeared ready and willing to perform such duties as might be required of them. Some, however, absented themselves, and, I understand, have never performed any duties, and have not even provided themselves with the prescribed uniform. I was not much surprised at seeing very little ambulance-work or appliances, seeing that medical officers are not permitted to draw capitation, nor are they supplied with ambulance-equipments or given grants in lieu thereof. Many medical officers express their willingness to give ambulance-instruction and training to the men, provided they received the necessary appliances. Such an equipment is an essential to the efficiency of the Force; and if medical men are patriotic and self-denying enough to give their valuable time to the work they should be rewarded with something more than rank and position.

16. *Signalling*.—I am pleased to find this important matter is being generally taken up; and, as provisions have been made in the new regulations dealing with this, it is to be hoped this year will see every corps with its quota of trained signallers.