

permanent staff, and the remaining fifty rounds at the discretion of the Officer Commanding the District expended in firing at moving and disappearing targets, if possible at an unknown range. This, I hope, will make the work more practical and interesting to the Volunteers.

I am glad to be able to report an improvement in the non-commissioned officer ranks, and I hope they will benefit greatly by the good instruction we are now able to give them. Any increases in the Force will naturally necessitate an increase in the number of Instructors.

#### ENGINEER CORPS.

The strength of each engineer corps has lately been increased by one officer and twenty non-commissioned officers and men, this being a most important branch of the Defence Force. The existing corps take much pains to make themselves efficient, but part of their equipment is still lacking, and I trust that steps will be taken to complete it. I am endeavouring to raise a corps in Wellington, where one is much needed, and I hope that it will shortly be established.

#### CYCLE CORPS.

Up to the present I have not been able to obtain the services of a cycle corps at Auckland, but such corps exist at the other three centres, and in case of war would be of great utility. A supply of 303 rifles with short bayonets has been received for these corps. The rifle-clips manufactured in the colony have been found to be of unsuitable material, and a pattern of clip has been obtained from England which is satisfactory. I have recommended that a supply of these clips should be obtained. On receipt of the clips the special rifles will be issued.

#### MEDICAL SERVICES.

I regret to say that the medical branch of the Volunteer service is not in a very satisfactory condition. We have a large list of medical officers, and whenever a new corps is formed a medical officer is, as a rule, appointed as honorary surgeon to the corps. It is only a small number of these medical officers who seem to take any interest in volunteering, beyond getting the military medical titles and having their names registered on the general medical list. Very few of them attend parades or go into camp with their corps, and many of them even do not go to the trouble of supplying themselves with uniforms. A few of the medical officers take interest in their work, and have given up much time to the Volunteer movement. If we could see our way to properly equip and organize a medical staff, I have no doubt the Volunteer officers would rise to the occasion. To each district we supplied a set of field medical panniers and surgical haversacks, but we had to send some of these off to South Africa with the contingents, and are expecting a fresh supply from Home. Each of our forts should, by this time, be supplied with certain medical requisites to enable first-aid and dressing to be given in case of any accident occurring at drill or practice. To properly equip a medical corps at each centre would be a matter of some considerable expense, and, under present circumstances, in war time we would have to trust to expresses being improvised as ambulances for carrying the sick and wounded, and would have to ask the hospital authorities to give us every benefit they could from the appurtenances at their command.

I recommend that for the future no medical officer should be allowed to retain his name on the list if he has not attended at least six parades during the year and given instruction in ambulance work at least six times during the year, or who has not, without very good reason, attended Easter camps at least once during the past two years. Now that we have so largely increased our forces, the Medical Bearer Company in our centres should be increased to a strength of one surgeon-major, two surgeon-captains, and fifty non-commissioned officers and men, and a bearer company of the strength of the present establishment should be raised at Nelson.

#### RIFLE CLUBS.

The question of the recognition of rifle clubs is now before the Government, and in the amendments to the Defence Act these clubs have been included as part of the Defence Forces of the colony. They should have a military organization, learn sufficient drill to enable them to be assimilated into the Volunteers in war time, and be armed with rifles of the same calibre as the Government arms.

#### NEW ZEALAND RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

No meeting of this Rifle Association has been held during the past year. It seems to me that the time is now ripe for the Government to take over the affairs of the association, and to render it a concern of some practical utility to the colony, and a means of encouraging rifle-shooting in a really useful form. What we want is men trained to use the rifle under the varying circumstances which would arise on active service, and not so much to encourage shooting at standing targets, where every possible advantage is given to the individual, under circumstances which would be but rarely likely to occur in the field. It is quite sound to give men a training in the handling of arms, and to make them good shots at anything that is likely to expose itself and give a good prolonged mark for a man to aim at; but in addition we want a good sound training in practical work, such as snap-shooting and shooting at moving and disappearing objects, which the Rifle Association does not encourage. The Government has offered good prizes for Loyd-Lindsay and field-firing competitions, but hitherto these matches have not met with the success they deserve.

#### CAMPS.—BATTALIONS AND COMPANIES THROUGHOUT THE COLONY.

All corps, as usual, have gone into their training camps during the year, and the usual Easter camps were held. The Easter camp for the Auckland District was held at Auckland, that for the Wellington District at Wanganui, Nelson District at Nelson. A combined camp at Oamaru was held for the Otago and Canterbury Districts. I proposed attending the camp at Oamaru, but press