

The Annual Militia Report—II.

Below will be found our second instalment of the interesting matter contained in the annual report of the Department of Militia and Defence just issued. This instalment comprises the report of the Inspector of Artillery and his assistants.

The Inspector of Artillery.

FIELD BATTERIES.

Niagara Camp.—These three Batteries, as before detailed, were brigaded under command of Major King the senior Artillery Officer, and were inspected by me on the 21st and 22nd June. The Hamilton Field Battery was in a very efficient condition; but the other batteries had only two officers present with each and suffered in consequence—Major Mead of the Toronto Battery met with a severe accident just before camp and was unavoidably prevented from being present.

These batteries performed their annual gun practice at a range on the lake shore about three miles from camp—further reference to which will be found under the head of "General Remarks."

The Artillery Camp was not quite so well arranged as it might have been, and the plan pursued of picketing the horses to a rope stretched along the ground in front of the camp lines, was found very inconvenient, likely to cause accidents, and unsuited to the conditions which usually prevail at these camps of instruction, and during excessively hot weather.

Stratford Camp.—Lt.-Colonel Peters, London Field Battery, was in command of the three Batteries in this camp, which were inspected by me on the 26th June. The Artillery camp was very well arranged and all three batteries were well turned out. Owing to the impossibility of obtaining an artillery range anywhere in the vicinity, the gun practice of these batteries had to be subsequently performed by detachments at Toronto.

Sydney Field Battery.—Inspected at Camp Sydney, C. B., on 25th July. The drill of this battery both mounted and dismounted was very much improved since my last inspection, and the gun practice, which I superintended on the same day, was very well carried out with fair results considering the nature of the guns used. The battery has still a good deal to learn as regards the proper care of stores and equipment, fitting of harness and camping arrangements, but with their present zeal and *esprit de corps* will doubtless soon become efficient in these particulars.

GARRISON ARTILLERY.

New Brunswick Brigade.—This brigade was inspected by me on 22nd August, on which date they were also mustered by the Deputy Adjutant General. I also inspected the gun practice of two batteries on the previous day. The brigade well maintains its previously reported efficient condition, and the state of general efficiency attained by No. 1 and No. 4 batteries reflects great credit upon all concerned.

Halifax Brigade.—Inspected at Halifax on the 27th August, and superintended the gun practice of three batteries on the 25th. I am glad to be able to report that my expectations as to the improvement in the general efficiency of this brigade were realized. There was a very creditable attendance at the muster held by the Deputy Adjutant General, and the attendance and efficiency shown by the detachments at gun drill was a great improvement on previous years. There is, however, a good deal more to be done in this direction, and I trust that next year every battery will be able to furnish at least three well trained gun detachments.

Prince Edward Island Brigade.—I inspected Nos. 1 and 2 batteries at Charlottetown, on the 30th August, and so far as regards the attendance, general appearance and drill of both batteries, am glad to be able to report that, as usual, they were extremely efficient. As a result of recent and uncompleted changes in organization, No. 1 battery was left practically without officers, but its instruction was well looked after by the Adjutant, Captain Morson.

The Georgetown and Montague batteries formed part of the annual brigade camp at Charlottetown, and were inspected and very favorably reported on by the District Staff. No. 4 battery, Souris, was not called out for drill.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Field Batteries.—I am glad to be able to report that with a few exceptions these corps have maintained the state of efficiency so favorably reported upon on previous occasions.

I regret that it was apparently not possible to assemble more than three batteries at the Niagara camp. The excellent facilities for combined manoeuvres, and also for a certain amount of instructional gun

practice at this locality lead me to recommend strongly that, even if the dates should not exactly correspond with those selected for the brigade camp, yet that this consideration should not prevent the assembly there of six batteries for annual drill.

The duties in connection with the command, instruction and interior economy of a field battery during its short period of drill are so varied and onerous as to require the active co-operation of every battery officer, and therefore I consider it very advisable that when it is possible for field batteries to be assembled in brigades, the general command of the whole should always be entrusted to an artillery staff officer.

The field artillery gun practice of three batteries at Niagara camp, of four at Gananoque camp, and of the Newcastle and Woodstock batteries at local headquarters, was carried out this year more nearly under service conditions as regards the presence at the firing point of the whole battery, than can be possible when the marksmen alone are assembled. As, however, owing to the impossibility of finding a suitable range at all the camps at which artillery are assembled, it is recommended for next year's practice that limited number of rounds for instructional practice only be fired when possible during camp, and that a field artillery meeting for competition gun practice only be held at some suitable range such as the Island of Orleans, Quebec, at which a certain limited number of officers and men from every field battery should attend.

The inspection reports of the Shefford and Richmond batteries indicate no improvement in efficiency, and it is to be regretted that although owing apparently to their being no suitable range near the camp at Sherbrooke they were unable to practice during annual drill, yet that they did not avail themselves of the facilities offered to all field batteries to send detachments to gun practice at Quebec.

Scott's revolving sights were not used for practice this year, only two additional sights have been granted by the Department, they were issued to "A" and "B" batteries of the Canadian Artillery Regiment.

When a field battery is called out for actual service or annual drill a considerable time is necessarily occupied in the selection and adjustment of horses for gun teams—the harness and saddlery has all to be given over, and fitted, and each gun carriage and limber has to be carefully packed for service—and the careful performance of the above duties is rendered all the more necessary by the fact that in most instances the battery has to march some distance before reaching camp. I have therefore to recommend for favorable consideration that the officers, sergeants, drivers and horses, be allowed pay for one extra day before camp, in order that, on the day fixed for its assembly the battery may be able to move off at an early hour fully equipped.

The maintenance in a complete and serviceable condition of the varied and costly equipment of a field battery, has always been a matter of great difficulty, and one requiring the closest attention, not only on the part of officers commanding batteries, but also of inspecting staff officers.

It too frequently happens that requisitions to supply deficiencies are not made until a short time before the annual drill when the time is too limited to complete them, and it is therefore of the greatest importance that the provisions of general orders, 26th November, 1887, No. 2, and 13th January, 1888, No. 6, should be strictly adhered to.

Garrison Batteries.

When the difficulties necessarily attendant upon the maintenance of these corps in an efficient condition are considered, it is gratifying to be able to report that in most of those inspected the attendance at voluntary drills has been so frequent that not only are the officers and men fairly well instructed in both the theory and practice of artillery, but are also able to compare favorably in purely infantry drills with their comrades of the line.

It may be advisable, however, to remind commanding officers of garrison artillery corps that the proficiency of the latter in artillery rather than infantry exercises is the main criterion of efficiency.

During this autumn two 64-pounder R. M. L. guns have been mounted at Pictou, N. S., and Digby, N. S., thus affording the batteries in these localities an opportunity of actual drill and practice with rifled ordnance. Two 40-pounder R. B. L. guns are also expected to arrive from England for the use of the five garrison batteries in Prince Edward Island.

The garrison artillery meeting for gun practice and shifting ordnance at the Island of Orleans, Quebec, was attended by 32 officers, and detachments of seven men each from 22 batteries. The practice was conducted on the same general principles as in the previous year, and the several competitions were entered into with great zeal and emulation. A considerable improvement in gun drill was noticed and a much more intelligent interest displayed on the part of officers and men in the objects and benefits proposed to be gained by this and similar meetings.

The conduct of all ranks throughout the meeting was uniformly good, and as a means of stimulating the interest of the garrison artillery