

THE MILITIA DEPARTMENT REPORT.

In last issue we quoted from the annual report of the Department of Militia and Defence, just issued, the most interesting passages in the reports of the Deputy Minister, the Adjutant-General Commanding, and the Deputy Adjutants General or district commandants. This week we continue the review in the order in which the reports appear.

The Artillery.

The Inspector of Artillery, Lt.-Col. Irwin, after reporting separately upon each of the corps inspected by him, makes the following general remarks :

Field Artillery.—It is gratifying to be able to report that a majority of the Field Batteries continue to maintain the very high state of efficiency which has been reported for several years, and this actually means very constant and arduous work on the part of every officer and man, not only during the annual drill, but for many weeks beforehand.

With a view to enabling a Field Battery to turn out in good order on the first day of camp, I would strongly urge the approval of the recommendation made for the last two years by the Major-General Commanding, viz., that pay be allowed for the officers, sergeants, drivers and horses for the day before going into camp. This would enable horses to be selected and teamed, harness fitted, and all stores packed in readiness.

The range-finding practice was this year carried out in camp by thirteen batteries, and subsequently by the Montreal Battery. This practice has been advanced a further stage this year, and will be still further developed next year. It is found to be most interesting, useful and instructive.

The annual competitive gun practice was held at Kingston between the 16th and 20th September, and was participated in by detachments from twelve batteries and 27 officers. The Newcastle, Sydney and Winnipeg Batteries practised at local camps, and the Toronto and Richmond Batteries were unable to send detachments. The general results of the meeting were very satisfactory. The general accuracy of the shooting was somewhat interfered with by want of practice in the use of the new pattern sight, owing to the delay in manufacturing and issuing them. The sights have, however, proved very satisfactory on further use.

All the arrangements for camping, messing, targets, range duties and transport were very satisfactorily carried out by the officers and men of "A" Battery, under the direction of Lt.-Col. Cotton.

It would add very much to the beneficial effects of this meeting if arrangements could be made by which all officers and men of the detachments could remain in camp for a definite period—which at least should be one complete day—but could with advantage be extended to 36 hours.

With reference to the stores and equipment of Field Batteries, it is recommended by Lt.-Col. Cotton that a Board of Survey should be held annually upon the stores, etc., of each battery. It may be necessary, in some cases, that this should be done, but as these stores are inspected semi-annually by the District Staff, and the Major commanding the battery is held personally responsible for their maintenance in good order, it is to be hoped that sufficient care and attention will be paid by the latter to this very important part of his duties, and that in future the existing General Orders relative to the forwarding of the annual store returns and requisitions to complete deficiencies, will be more strictly attended to.

As previously reported for several years, I am of opinion

that it would greatly add to the general efficiency of the Field Batteries in the Province of Quebec, if arrangements could be made by which these corps could assemble in one camp for combined artillery drills, instruction and gun practice.

Difficulties as to the selection of time and place could doubtless be surmounted were the officers commanding desirous of effecting an agreement on the subject, and the expense of transport could be met by allowing batteries in Ontario, which have joined artillery camps for several years, to perform their drill next year at local headquarters.

Garrison Artillery.—It will be seen in reference to the efficiency returns, that the batteries drilled and inspected this year have maintained, and in several cases very considerably improved upon, the general creditable state of efficiency previously reported. The general meeting for competitive gun practice, etc., at the Island of Orleans, was attended by 29 officers and detachments of 7 men each from 24 batteries. The ranges for both 64 and 40-pounder guns were considerably increased, and the practice was uniformly good and in some cases excellent. During the last two days of the meeting the weather was so unfavourable as to prevent the continuance of the firing and shifting ordnance competitions, and three fine detachments of 19 men each from the Halifax Brigade were obliged to leave camp without being able to participate in the latter. They have subsequently, however, performed similar shifting ordnance operations at local headquarters.

All the arrangements for camping—range duties, etc., etc.—were very efficiently carried out by working parties of officers and men from "B" battery, R.S.A., Major C. Lindsay, Quebec Field Battery, continuing his valuable services as camp quartermaster and transport officer.

Involving, as the attendance at the Quebec meeting necessarily does, a very considerable sacrifice of time and money on the part of officers and men, and bearing in mind, too, that the amount offered in prizes is very inadequate to the result, very considerable credit should be given to those corps from the Maritime Provinces and elsewhere which, for several years past, have so well represented the Garrison Artillery. I should, therefore, be glad if arrangements could be made next year by which the Garrison Artillery practice could be held at or near local headquarters, and that the good feeling and close relationship already existing between our Dominion Artillery and the Volunteer Artillery of Great Britain could be maintained and strengthened by another visit, on our part, to the annual competition at Shoeburyness.

I cannot speak too highly of the good results which continue to be effected by the Dominion Artillery Association in everything that relates to the efficiency of the Field and Garrison Artillery, and in view of the paramount importance of maintaining a high and uniform standard of efficiency for both branches of the corps throughout the Dominion, would urge upon all officers the desirability of giving it their hearty support and co-operation.

Forts and Armaments.—With the exception of some necessary repairs to the walls, buildings, etc., of the Forts at Quebec and Kingston, no alterations in this respect are reported.

Four 9-pr. R.M.L. guns and equipment were ordered from the Imperial Government for issue to the Sydney Field Battery. Only three guns, one being reported as unfinished, have been as yet received.

One 9-in. R.M.L. gun of 12 tons and one 7-in. R.M.L. gun of 7 tons with carriages and platforms have been received on loan from the Imperial Government, and suitably mounted in the Drill Shed at Halifax. The acquisition of these comparatively modern guns has been a great boon to the Artillery Brigade, and being of the same type as the ordnance mounted at the several forts in the vicinity, their usefulness as a means of instruction is at once apparent.