

confined to individual corps; and I must therefore ask your indulgence for yet a short period, in the hope that I shall be held free from censure in having exceeded the limit of the instructions conveyed to me and to the Officer Commanding in Otago.

That the Volunteer Force of the colony is not in the condition in which it has been represented to be from time to time by officers commanding districts, in the capitation returns signed by them and transmitted to your office, cannot be denied; that it has been in a very inefficient condition for some years past, is to me very obvious; and I regret to have to record my conscientious belief that the amount of public money expended as capitation on the 31st of March last is lamentably in excess of the sum which should otherwise represent the state of efficiency of the force in general, so that immediate and effectual measures should be had recourse to, to arrest for the future the useless and wanton expenditure which has for so long a period been carried on, and for which officers commanding districts are primarily accountable.

It would be unfair and unjust to attach much blame to the Volunteers themselves (for most of them know nothing of the regulations of the service in which they are enrolled), when many of the officers appointed by the Government to administer the Volunteer Regulations, and who are commanded in their commissions carefully and diligently to discharge the duties of their rank by exercising and well-disciplining the force under their charge, habitually ignore the directions given to them for their guidance.

The Regulations are very clear and emphatic in describing an efficient Volunteer as one who obtains a certificate (form annexed) showing that he possesses certain simple qualifications; that he cannot be deemed an efficient Volunteer otherwise (see clause 36 of the Regulations), and without this certificate capitation cannot be granted; but I have shown that instances abound in which the Government officer has recommended and procured capitation for men who have not earned their certificates, and who have not so much as even heard of such a document.

(I may here, in parenthesis, give expression to the fear that Provincial Governments have been similarly imposed upon with respect to remission certificates in the acquisition of land under "The Volunteer Land Act, 1865.")

I have also brought to your notice cases where no monthly parades are held, as the Regulations direct—and yet it has been certified that these parades have taken place; and again I have placed before you instances in which efficiency certificates have been thrust into the hands of men, and capitation thereby obtained for them, who did not (admittedly) possess the knowledge which their certificate affirmed that these men did possess. Can it be wondered at, then, that Volunteers will be lax in the way in which they perform their irresponsible duties? I think not.

Then, with respect to the Government drill-instructors. I think that Volunteers should be provided with the best men that can be procured, and there are many very excellent men employed in that capacity; but there are some very indifferent ones too, like those at Napier. I know it is very difficult to obtain qualified drill-sergeants, and this is because the pay in the present state of things is wholly inadequate to their maintenance, in which respect it would be but fair to place them on an equality with sergeants of the Armed Constabulary.

There is one point in connection with these drill-sergeants which has been brought by them under my observation, which is, that it has been ruled by the Government that they are not entitled to capitation. To them this deprivation is somewhat of a grievance, seeing that the 11th clause of "The Volunteer Act, 1865," classifies them with "efficient Volunteers," and the 24th clause of the same Act sanctions the issue to efficient Volunteers of capitation. On your reconsideration of their request, perhaps you will be good enough to obtain for them what it appears to me, by the authorities I have quoted, they may justly claim.

In the first place, lax and incompetent commanding-officers, and unqualified drill-instructors may then, I think, be held accountable for the unsatisfactory state of Volunteer matters, submitted perhaps in too forcible terms to your notice.

As a second cause, I must blame captains of companies, but in some measure only, for arming members of their corps without any preliminary drill, and placing them in the ranks beside their better-drilled comrades, when the 28th clause of the Regulations enjoins upon them that they shall, before enrolling new members, subject their recruits to a prescribed amount of rudimentary drill; for if this regulation were attended to, I am confident that larger attendances at drill than at present of the more competent members would result.

As a third cause, the Press exercises a most pernicious and detrimental influence on the Volunteer movement, sometimes by enlarging in most laudatory terms upon the manner in which Volunteer corps go through their movements on parade, when, as in some cases which I could instance, no parade has taken place at all, and at others by condemning what had taken place when attendance was large and movements very creditably executed indeed.

The Press also incites, no doubt unwittingly, in a large degree to acts of insubordination amongst Volunteers, by the publication of statements mendacious in the extreme, and eminently calculated to bring the force into disgrace. I could record instances, but perhaps that which is already before you, and attached to this report, will suffice. I allude to the Press publication of the proceedings alleged to have taken place at a meeting of the Artillery Company at Napier in April last; for when the statement of what was said to have occurred is referred by you to the chairman of the meeting, Captain Routledge, for explanation, his testimony is that the statements in question had no foundation in fact. These false proceedings having been accepted as facts in the case of the Napier Artillery, no doubt incited a certain company at the Thames to hold an insubordinate meeting, which, as is shown in correspondence attached hereto, resulted in the disbandment of the corps.

Another cause of the great decline in the efficiency of the Volunteer Force is the constantly recurring assurance that new Regulations are being prepared for introduction; but the anticipated improvements are slow in presenting themselves. Reports and propositions are sometimes prepared, even by Defence Committees, with results equally unsatisfactory and unworkable withal, probably because their sittings and researches are confined to Wellington; so that the force, after looking with some degree of interest and anxiety for the improvement of which they hear so much, is much disap-