

of these Rifle clubs were, in the majority of cases, the most regular attendants at drill; therefore, I feel bound to say that when a Volunteer corps is censoriously termed a Rifle club, the censure is undeserved.

I speak in general terms on this subject, for I do know of some individual Volunteers who only appear at rifle practice; but these are cases in which the captain of the company, for he has the power to do so, should deprive a man of his rifle until he has satisfied his captain, by his knowledge of his continuous duty in the ranks, that he is eligible to be armed.

#### CADETS.

In another portion of this report I have alluded to the prosperous condition of the colony at large as the primary or chief cause of the decline of the Volunteer movement, and I suppose there is no section of the force which has been more affected by this prosperity than has been the Cadet branch thereof. The period is not yet forgotten when youths of 17, 18, or 19 years of age could scarcely find employment, but now lads of 13 or 14, only partially educated, are eagerly sought for to fill comparatively important positions in offices, companies, &c., and it is generally from schools in which Cadet companies have been established that the supply is procured.

It is, therefore, seeing that lads are not enrolled as Cadets until they have attained the age of 12, almost the rule that such boys do not receive more than perhaps from six to nine or twelve months (exclusive of holidays) military training, and as a consequence of their being now enabled to embark in life at so youthful an age, School Cadet companies change each year in their material, a change perhaps not very gratifying to a drill instructor; but it is a gratifying circumstance, nevertheless, that the lads have been much benefited in a variety of ways by the short period of military training to which they have been subjected.

Then there are Cadet companies composed to a large extent of apprentices to various trades; these also, from demands even upon their extra time, are unable to attend night drill so regularly or so continuously as would otherwise be desirable.

In outlying districts there are also Cadet contingents under partial training: these also are, by reason of the demand for adult labour, employed in daily occupations formerly performed by older hands, and are able only with the greatest difficulty to attend even one drill in a month, and the difficulty is enhanced by their being compelled to walk, in some cases, many miles to their drill-ground.

Under such circumstances, Cadets (lads between 12 and 17) cannot be expected to attain to a very high degree a knowledge of military duties; but notwithstanding all this, I think the amount granted to Cadets, in the shape of capitation, is money well spent.

It is to be hoped that hereafter some system may be devised by which boys of all ages attending school may be enabled to participate, even to a small extent, in the advantages attaching to the practice of military exercises.

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

In the preceding portion of this report, I have endeavoured to report, as impartially and as faithfully as it is in my power to do so, on the condition of the Volunteer Force. I have exposed what I deemed to be grave irregularities, and with a view to prevent a recurrence of them I have suggested the means which I consider should be had recourse to, to either make the Regulations more stringent than they are, or to remove such portions thereof as may be found irksome or oppressive. But the most pleasant portion of my duty remains to be performed, which is, that I must record my respectful opinion—in opposition to the habit, which has become so prevalent of late, of decrying and denouncing, in harsh and unmeasured terms, the services of the Volunteer Force—that the services which have been rendered to the country at large by Volunteers in times of need and calamity which are past, and which still continue to be afforded so far as the recent altered and happy state of things will permit, should not be either forgotten or lightly esteemed.

With respect to those who do habitually attend drill, I am able confidently to state that there could not exist a more intelligent, obedient, and apt body of men, when under proper management—men who deserve every consideration and encouragement. Why they attend drill at all, in view of the contemptuous and prejudicial opinions which, in numerous and influential quarters too, are given expression to with respect to the force generally, is a matter of much surprise.

It can only be from a total ignorance of the subject of which they, doubtless, suppose themselves to be complete masters, that such persons are led to malign a force whose gallantry and patriotism, from the earliest introduction of the system, have been tested in countless instances.

In the recent war, I think it will be admitted that our Volunteers, or irregular troops, contributed not a little, in conjunction with the Imperial forces, to the subjugation of the enemy.

In our more recent campaigns on the East and West Coasts, were not our European forces composed of Volunteers? Subsequently, on the occasion of the murder of Sullivan in the Waikato, there were as many as 200 Volunteers from and around Auckland alone, prepared to move to that locality at the shortest notice, and these were men then serving in our Volunteer ranks.

And on the last occasion, in December or January last, on which a call was made for Volunteers for any service which might be required from them in the Waikato, the response was such from Auckland and the Thames that three strong companies were instantly organized, and as many as 500 men were rejected as not being required.

The spirit of volunteering is not, then, dormant; but upon the measures which may now be adopted will probably depend its utter extinction or resuscitation—so that those upon whom shall devolve the consideration of these two important questions, should be asked to take as the text of their deliberations, the truism, attributed to the first Napoleon, that “That nation stands upon a rock, whose citizens (as distinguished from regular soldiers) are at all times prepared to shoulder the musket.”

I have, &c.,

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