

Having given a faithful report as to the efficiency or otherwise of the various Volunteer corps I inspected, I shall now refer to their equipment.

ORDNANCE.

Some of the artillery corps in the Middle Island have the 24-pounder brass howitzer and 24-pounder battery guns on issue to them. These I would recommend should be taken into store as soon as possible, to be replaced by 6-pounder Armstrong guns, at the rate of two to each battery.

The gun-carriage of the Dunedin or B Battery is in a very rotten and unsafe state from long use. I would suggest that a new one should be supplied, as I do not think it possible the one they have could be repaired.

SMALL ARMS.

I heard great complaints from many of the officers and men with regard to the inaccuracy of their rifles as to the sighting, rendering it almost impossible to make good scores when at target practice.

The Terry carbines, with which most of the cadet corps are armed, are completely useless. I could not have credited their perfectly worn-out state if I had not examined them, scarcely one of them being complete in all its parts. Two of the corps, the Oamaru Grammar School and the Wanganui, are armed with two different descriptions of carbines—the Terry and the muzzle-loader. This is a great drawback to the efficiency of these corps, as the firing drill varies considerably. I would therefore recommend that the whole of the carbines at present on issue to the corps mentioned should be replaced by new ones with as little delay as possible.

ACCOUTREMENTS.

The majority of the Volunteers I inspected had their own accoutrements (corps property); the remainder were supplied with the plain brown-leather belts and pouch issued by the Government.

I think too much importance cannot be attached to the uniforms of Volunteers. At present each corps is allowed to choose the colour and style of its own clothing: the result is an almost endless variety, which is never so forcibly seen as when large bodies are massed together, as was exemplified at the late Invercargill demonstration, where three or four different-coloured uniforms were displayed in each division of a battalion. I scarcely need add that the effect is most unmilitary and objectionable.

I would venture to suggest that each arm of the service should have a special uniform: for instance—cavalry, blue jumper with cord breeches and leggings of leather, with hunting spurs, and forage cap similar to that worn by the Waikato Cavalry; artillery and engineers, blue; infantry rifles green, with scarlet facings; the naval brigade as at present.

With regard to the various corps I inspected I must in justice state that I consider the majority of them very efficient—that both officers, non-commissioned officers, and men understood their duties, and evinced great interest in their work; and, if circumstances should ever occur requiring their services in the defence of their country, I am convinced they would be found both able and willing to respond to the call.

By referring to the states it will be seen that the numbers on parade were in many instances very small. This is wholly attributable to the fact of the inspection taking place during the harvest time, when many of the men were employed at long distances from their homes, and all were unusually busy; and I would strongly urge the advisability of future inspections taking place at least two months earlier, beginning at the South and working northwards: the South would then be seen before the harvest commenced, and the North after shearing was over.

I cannot conclude this report without mentioning the favourable impression made on me by the Sergeants Drill-Instructors in each district. I found them zealous, intelligent, hard-working men, well fitted in every respect for their positions.

Should there be any necessary information omitted I shall, if called upon, be most happy to supply the deficiency.

When I had finished my inspection of the Lake District, I returned to Invercargill, where I arrived on the evening of Good Friday, and as the great Volunteer demonstration was to take place on the Monday following, I deemed it advisable to remain there, that I might be present on the occasion. As it was in no way connected with my duties as Inspecting Officer, I took no part in the proceedings. I propose, however, to give my impression of the review, together with a few particulars. As a whole, I consider it was a great success, and calculated to be of vast advantage to Volunteering in general throughout the colony, as a means of stimulating others to follow so laudable an example, at the same time giving them some idea of how large bodies of troops should be manœuvred.

As will be seen from the following statistics, there were more than 1,000 of all ranks on the ground. These were divided into three battalions of six divisions: No. 1, commanded by Captain Jack, of the Dunedin Artillery; No. 2 by Major Wales, of the Otago Rifle Volunteers; No. 3 by Major Lean, of the Canterbury Volunteers. These officers exhibited considerable skill in the manner in which they handled their men.

The Brigade was formed into line of column at deploying distance. They then deployed into line on the leading divisions of battalions at the double, and took open order to give the general salute. The Brigade was then inspected by Lieut.-Colonel Stanley; the ranks were then closed. They then performed several other movements, among the rest moving off in echelon of battalions and forming square. This was rather well done, particularly by No. 3 battalion, which had the advantage of having its divisions equalized. They then reformed quarter-column and marched past, first in column; counter-marched, returning in mass of quarter-column; counter-marched again, returning at the double, which finished the day's proceedings.

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