

All the special corps have been trained under the supervision of Major Boddam, who has spared no time to the work that he could possibly devote with due regard to the construction of the fortifications, the progress towards completion of which can best be understood from his report, which I append.

VOLUNTEERS.

On the 31st March, 1885, the Volunteer Force stood as follows: 4,977 of all ranks, exclusive of cadets, in 93 corps. On the 31st March, 1886, the force amounted to 8,253 of all ranks, exclusive of cadets, in 141 corps. These troops, with what was called the Armed Constabulary Reserve, amounted, in all, to 8,606 men and officers of all ranks. The 141 corps of all descriptions were not at first united into permanent battalions or brigades.

It was my duty to inspect and organize this force, and to-day we have at all the chief centres properly-formed battalions and brigades. In each of the larger provincial districts field officers and adjutants have been appointed to each battalion, and the drill-instructors have been increased. The naval corps have been united in divisions under captains commandant, while to the whole of the naval force has been allotted one honorary commodore, and it is intended to have two vice-commodores. The artillery has been subdivided into two brigades, three batteries of which, the L, N, and O, it is hoped will form garrison batteries; while the rest will become field batteries. Appended is a list of the field ordinance now in the colony, six 9lb. breech-loading guns having recently arrived. Twelve more have also been ordered by you, which it is hoped may arrive before next spring. We are still short of practice ammunition for these guns, and have no reserve, but a supply has been long sent for. I think the Artillery Volunteers a splendid body of men, and efficient in the use of their guns, though they have had much to discourage them in the want of enough suitable arms.

The cavalry organization is still incomplete. I think a squadron should exist to the south and another to the north of the Waitaki—the allowance for which is authorized, though the corps are incomplete—and at least as large a force, comparatively, in the North Island. The elements for enregimenting these troops without adding to the capitation exist already, and it only remains to find suitable officers and drill-instructors to make this arm equal to the other arms of the service.

The engineer force is more difficult to provide for, but we have very good material, and three excellent corps. Two of them proved at Oamaru that they were quite able to accomplish any of the duties of field-engineering. I think at present, however, and until the navals have been trained to torpedo-work, it is not necessary to employ the engineers on this branch of defence.

It must be remembered that the equipments available in the colony are mostly from twenty-five to thirty-five years old, a legacy from the Imperial army; and I find in many companies that the officers and men are, not without cause, impatient at being unable to exchange worn-out, useless belts for new ones. Some are extremely bad. We expect more, it is true; but buff belts cannot be got in Australasia, and our orders for these requisites are very long in arriving.

I inspected the Auckland Volunteers, first of the force, on the 15th of August, 1885, when the turn-out was very good, on the whole. The crowd made manœuvring impossible; but, considering how short a time had elapsed since the bulk had been enrolled, the men made a most creditable appearance. The absentees were mostly men not yet clothed; but I requested in future that all should turn out. My next large inspection was at Dunedin, on the 7th of October, where a better turn-out would have been secured if one or two firms, employers of labour, had not forbidden their men to attend. The movements of the battalions (at that time not finally formed) were very good indeed. At Invercargill, which I visited on the 3rd October, there were few absentees, and the parade was in all respects very satisfactory. At Christchurch the number on parade was very large, and absentees unaccounted for very few. The crowd here, as at Auckland, hindered the evolutions of the force, but only from want of knowledge of where to stand, as it was evident great interest was taken in the Volunteers. I especially wish to note that the cadet corps here was a most admirable one. At Nelson, which I inspected on the 17th October, the crowd did not in any way interfere, and Lieut.-Colonel Pitt's Force was admirably handled. He is an excellent officer, though he was not trained in the school of Her Majesty's service. There were, here, less than 3 per cent. of absentees, and all, down to the smallest cadet, seemed to be well trained to their work. At Blenheim, too, on the 21st, the turn-out was good, and the men, considering that many of them belonged to country corps, made a creditable appearance. Wellington, from what cause I cannot say, has hardly its proper number of Volunteers, except in the naval branch. In my opinion, another rifle and a garrison artillery corps are needed—the former to increase the battalion, the latter to serve the guns of position, and to free the Naval Volunteers for their more legitimate work. At the inspection at Wellington, which I carried out on the 29th of October, there was less public interest taken in the Volunteers than elsewhere. The artillery, navals, and rifle corps were excellent, especially the two first named; while the Heretaunga Light Horse left something to be desired, which I hope has since been supplied. On the 9th of November I attended the military display at Auckland, which I reported to you fully at the time, and which was a great test of Volunteer spirit, as the troops were exposed to extremely inclement weather. The inspection of Oamaru I had to delay till the 5th of January, as my time did not admit of my making it on my first visit to the South Island. I found the men well-equipped, and fairly forward in their drill. Here, as at Timaru, the field battery had a reasonable ground of complaint, having but one howitzer to drill with. This deficiency has been complained about so often that I need only say that the men of the battery were, notwithstanding, quite up to the high average of all the other batteries of the regiment throughout the colony. I inspected the Napier force on the 11th November. Though excellent in the several corps, the men had not acquired much facility in acting together—a fault easily overcome by practice, and which, I learn, is being remedied. The last inspection I made was on the west coast of this Island. Here, of necessity, I had to inspect the forces at several centres, and at all, except Wanganui, there were remarkably few Volunteers absent. At Wanganui, on the 19th of March, the movements left nothing to be desired; and the Alexandra Cavalry, though twenty-three were