

serviceable figure of merit. Volley- and independent-firing have also been carefully attended to, and have produced very satisfactory results. I regret that so few stations in the colony have ranges suitable for these practices.

During the past year the Lyttelton Navals and Garrison Artillery have begun to qualify themselves for work with heavy guns and submarine mining, and I am in hopes further instruction may be possible during the current year. The Engineer Corps, under Captain Webster, has exerted itself very much to qualify itself in the several branches of military bridging, field fortification, and signalling, while some attention has also been given to submarine mining.

The 1st Canterbury Rifle Battalion made a very creditable appearance, and moved well. Since last year this battalion has improved considerably, and deserves commendation, especially for its steadiness under arms. The Field Artillery (Captain Martin) was admirable.

The last of this series of inspections was held by me on the 9th, at Oamaru, 315 being present, under Lieut.-Colonel Sumpter. The whole of the men moved and looked well, though there was some inequality in the manual firing and bayonet exercise. The battery showed great proficiency with its new arm, and the guns were exceedingly well kept. The Navals, as at other stations, have only to retain their present efficiency in order to perform any service required of them. I noticed much greater steadiness in the ranks and much more smartness among the men than last year; but some of the country corps then present could not this year arrange for trains to come in.

I then returned to Wellington, and, after waiting on you, proceeded to Auckland, where I happened to be at the ceremony of the opening of the Calliope Dock by His Excellency the Governor on the 13th February.

I have reported to you specially on the apparent falling-off of the Volunteer spirit in Auckland, and have made suggestions which may have more or less effect in restoring it. But I regret to say that I believe to a large extent this has arisen as one consequence of the prevailing depression in the city. I feel assured, however, that the military spirit I have so often had occasion to admire at Auckland in critical times would instantly revive at the prospect of public danger; and that a large force of Volunteers, with experience and training gained during the past three years or before it, would be available directly their services were required for the defence of their homes and city.

I must, however, except the Navals and the A Battery of Artillery, which show no signs of falling off. It is to be regretted that a few members of the former corps misbehaved at the opening of the Calliope Dock, and forgot the respect due to their uniforms. Inquiry into this matter established considerable palliation for the men's misconduct, and made it evident that it had been confined to a very few men. Two have been dismissed in consequence. I am obliged to say that I believe if more prudent precautions had been taken the occurrence would not have taken place. At my inspection of the Auckland garrison—though, to facilitate a good muster, I consented to the parade being ordered at an unusually late hour in the afternoon: when, in fact, it was getting dark, and in the drillshed yard, where there was little room to move—only 677 men paraded. As Auckland is the most exposed of our ports, and the most difficult to reinforce, I think it is desirable, if possible, to maintain a proportionately larger force there than elsewhere.

On the 3rd March I inspected the Nelson Volunteers, and I may remark that, although every man was present who was not either sick or absent from the province, Nelson was the sole station at which the Volunteers could be assembled at the usual hour in the afternoon. Nevertheless harvest and hop-picking was at the time in full progress. Although the purely show-movement of marching past was not executed as well as last year, chiefly through the country corps having been rather out of practice for a month or two, the movements of the force, both in battalion and skirmishing in the new manner, could not have been surpassed. Several difficult movements were carried out with an exactitude unusual in Volunteers; the officers, markers, non-commissioned officers, and men evidently knowing their drill very well. Not a single file was ever out in forming or re-forming line, there was no hesitation in changing front, and the marching of the whole force in line was admirable. The Artillery were not as smart as most batteries in dismounting their guns, which Lieut.-Colonel Pitt accounted for by saying they had lately changed their drill, and many recruits were in the ranks. In other respects, changing wheels on wounded guns, marching past,—where their line of guns was very good,—and in the mode in which they co-operated in the four-deep attack, the battery was smart enough; and its guns were beautifully clean,—a decided improvement, as I had had reason to complain of some neglect in this respect before. The Cadet corps and Navals were both most creditable, and at no place that I have inspected have I found the men so generally good in the manual, firing, and bayonet exercises. Lieut.-Colonel Pitt labours under unusual disadvantages in the scattered nature of the Volunteer battalion, and deserves the highest praise for the successful manner in which he has overcome them.

I do not purpose to inspect the West Coast Volunteers of either Island, having, in fact, rather exceeded what you wished me to do in the way of inspections already. But, as the West Coast corps of both Islands are chiefly isolated country corps, it would have been difficult to assemble them under present circumstances. I may, however, observe that all of them possess the good physique and good average shooting distinctive of so many country corps in this colony.

I inspected the Napier Volunteers on the 21st March, and found the Navals and Artillery excellent in their attendance and movements. The Rifles and Cadets were not fully or even sufficiently present. The Rifles are at present without a captain, Captain Blythe being in command of the district, and have recently lost another officer, which may account for there being an insufficient attendance.

In conclusion, I venture to recommend that some plan may be devised by which a certain number of the Navals and Garrison Artillery Volunteers at the four ports may be afforded encouragement to devote more time to the practical part of harbour defence. It would be unreasonable, otherwise, to expect those corps to do more work than other corps drawing the same capitation, and the prescribed number of drills does not suffice to make either artillery-men or submarine miners