

In conclusion, I may state that in this report I have merely touched upon matters which more or less have come under my own personal supervision or knowledge, and have left Lieut.-Colonel Hume, in his capacity of Inspector of the Volunteer Force, to deal with the particular or individual merits of officers, men, and corps.

I have, &c.,

C. A. HUMFREY,

Colonel, and Under-Secretary Defence.

The Hon. the Defence Minister.

The INSPECTOR of VOLUNTEERS to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Defence Office, Wellington, 4th June, 1890.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in New Zealand, my second annual report on the inspections of the Volunteer Forces made by me during the year ended the 31st March, 1890.

2. *Inspections at Four Centres.*—As Major-General J. B. Edwards, C.B., R.E., with whom I acted as Staff Officer, has forwarded a full and valuable report of what, in his opinion, the organization, strength, and equipment of the Forces at the four centres should be, I feel I need say very little regarding the inspections there. As many country corps, and those at the smaller towns, have been seen as the time at my disposal permitted; but I have not noticed any marked changes which would warrant me in altering the opinion expressed in my last report as to the fitness and qualifications of the officers and non-commissioned officers for their several duties.

3. *Officers.*—The officers, as a rule, seem to be entirely deficient in that control and influence over those under their command, the absence of which must prove disastrous on active service. They are uncertain and nervous when issuing orders they feel may not be entirely palatable to their rank and file; and many are absolutely afraid to inflict fines on their men, as provided for in the regulations, and, consequently, efficiency suffers. Those under their commands are, of course, not slow in discerning these weaknesses, and the result is often too apparent. Again, when called out to drill their companies, many of the officers know neither what to do or what words of command to give, unless the staff drill-instructor is close at hand to prompt them; and in the absence of such assistance, if any movements are executed, they are usually aimless, and too often quite at variance with the instructions in the drill-book. It is quite the exception nowadays, in the Imperial or any foreign army, to see field movements done at anything but the double, but in the colony the movements, after considerable delay in getting markers into their places, &c., are invariably carried out only in quick time, and a movement at the double, if ever contemplated, is rarely ever given effect to. Officers appear to consider that so long as they attend the stipulated number of parades required to earn capitation, and keep their company books and returns as laid down by regulations, they are thoroughly efficient, and should not be expected to be competent to drill their men on parade, regarding that duty as the business of the permanent instructors. It appears to me that there must be something radically wrong in the system of examining these officers, and that sufficient trouble cannot be taken by local Boards in seeing the practical part of the tests vigorously carried out. The theoretical part, no matter how well supervised, cannot give any good results unless the practical side of the examination is of a really searching nature. I can only reiterate what I said last year, and I am glad to find Major-General Edwards laying considerable stress on the point in his report—viz., that the system of allowing the men to elect their officers is the greatest evil in our Volunteer system. I have debated this question with many Volunteers, who admit that the election system has no charms for them; and they desire to see it abolished as unsuitable to our requirements, and the nominated system take its place. They frankly admit that many of their selections have proved gross failures, the officers having been anything but a credit to the corps.

4. *Non-commissioned Officers.*—The non-commissioned officers show a slight improvement generally during the past year. They do not, however, realise to any appreciable extent the necessity when on duty of maintaining their positions, and gaining from those over whom they are placed the confidence, respect, and obedience their stripes demand. The power to command, which is so essential to their positions as non-commissioned officers, is entirely lost by their desire to shield the shortcomings of their subordinates; and discipline is much weakened by their ignorance in drill, military customs, and procedure. In late years far greater responsibilities both in drill and interior economy have been thrown on the non-commissioned officers, rendering it the more obligatory that they should be thoroughly conversant with drill in all its branches, as well as qualified to command, instruct, and correct.

5. *Rank and File.*—Though there has been a small decrease in the numbers of rank and file during the past year, yet the popularity of the Force appears little diminished, and the recruits enrolled are, as a rule, up to the average, except, perhaps, in some of the city corps, where sufficient attention has not been paid to the chest-measurement required by the regulations; but, generally speaking, the men are all that can be desired for making a really efficient Force, provided always that reliable and competent officers and non-commissioned officers are placed over them. The superior physique of the country corps is very marked, and the men composing these corps are capable of performing a day's real hard work, and are unlikely to suffer from exposure either to heat or cold, either of which might probably tell on their comrades from the cities. It would undoubtedly be a short-sighted policy to disband the country corps, or those stationed in the smaller towns; but a system of organization should be introduced which would enable these corps to be drafted in cases of necessity into the four centres with the utmost practicable speed, as they must prove a most valuable augmentation to the town corps. The fact of their being grounded in the rudiments of musketry, and of squad and company drill, would enable them to act on the defensive with the town corps in the shortest possible time; in fact, at the present moment, some country corps could hold their own in drill with any city corps. On the other hand, there are un-