

Navals met us in mufti, and informed us that the Chief of General Staff, Colonel Robin, had taken it upon himself to inform them that we would not be allowed to travel to visit the corps, and consequently they had abandoned the preparations to receive us.

4. That these officers were certainly astounded to find, after what the Chief of General Staff had told them, that we had arrived. Under the exceptional circumstances, they made strenuous endeavours to cover up and prevent any possibility of a scandal leaking out to the public of the want of tact and the interference of the Chief of General Staff.

To my officers' and my own intense astonishment, on Monday morning the *Dominion* newspaper, published in Wellington, came out with a most scurrilous and untruthful article as to the object of our visit to Wellington; in addition to which they imputed and stated that I and sixty-five officers and men of my corps were a surprise party to the Petone Navals, that we had come down there in defiance of all military regulations and usage, and altogether we had committed a very grave breach of military discipline, and burlesqued the whole Volunteering movement throughout New Zealand.

On applying at the office of the *Dominion* for the writer of the article, we were introduced to a Mr. Plimmer, sub-editor of the paper; and in the presence of Dr. Murray, Lieutenant Greenhough, and myself we found to our intense astonishment that the informant of the writer of the article and the whole of the matter of the article had been supplied to the *Dominion* by the Chief of General Staff, Colonel Robin. (Article marked.) [See Appendix No. 1.]

I am prepared to submit an affidavit from the three officers who were present at the interview as to my authority for saying the matter above was supplied by Colonel Robin.

The result of this article in the *Dominion* has been, sir, that the Volunteer movement, and my corps in particular (which is the largest, without question, in the whole of New Zealand), have been belittled and burlesqued to an astounding extent. Article after article has appeared in the Wellington papers, and interview after interview has been accorded by the Chief of General Staff, and the statements made by him in these interviews I am prepared to prove are absolutely false.

In addition, it seems to me that the Chief of General Staff has personally gone out of his way to belittle, discourage, and damp the enthusiasm of the whole Volunteering movement.

Since these articles have appeared I have been approached by many officers throughout the whole of the North Island, who have had similar experiences of the unwarranted interference and unexampled officialism of Colonel Robin. Not only have Volunteers themselves been subject to his interference, but many prominent Force officers have told me (which I am prepared to prove at any inquiry) that he has many times had private interviews with persons, from privates to colonels, to the undoubted disadvantage of the discipline of the Forces throughout the Dominion.

5. That in the duties laid down for the Defence Council I find the duties for the Chief of General Staff are—Field organization, military operations, staff duties, military training, military education, military intelligence, mobilisation, and war regulations. No mention of any kind in this to the duties of discipline. If any member of the Defence Council had any complaint to make about the action of myself and the corps, it was Colonel Tuson, A.G.

I respectfully submit that at no time have my officers or myself committed the smallest breach of the Regulations. I have been under provocation owing to the many articles which have appeared last week in the *Dominion* from the pen of Colonel Robin, but I have withheld writing to the Press, well knowing that I should obtain from you justice.

I have documents in my possession which, if published, would have created a grave scandal in Volunteering throughout the whole Dominion.

I most respectfully ask for an official inquiry into the conduct of the head of the Defence Department, Colonel Robin, an officer who has a private channel of communication with an Opposition paper (the *Dominion*) in Wellington, and gives articles and information of a nature calculated to be contrary to the best traditions and interest of the service.

I most respectfully request that an inquiry be held at the earliest possible moment.

I have, &c.,

F. B. KNYVETT, Captain,
Officer Commanding No. 1 Company, Auckland Garrison Artillery.

10/11/09.—O.C.D.—Forwarded.—G. W. PATTERSON, Lieut.-Colonel.

No. 2.

The OFFICER COMMANDING AUCKLAND MILITARY DISTRICT to the OFFICER COMMANDING AUCKLAND DIVISION GARRISON ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.

Auckland, 12th November, 1909.

WITH reference to the attached communication making specific charges against a superior officer, I feel it my duty to call upon you to inform Captain Knyvett as follows:—

(1.) This letter should have been addressed to the Officer Commanding Division, with a request that it be forwarded through the proper channel to the Right Hon. the Defence Minister.

(2.) The tone of the letter is not such as should be used, according to military discipline and the usages of the service, when referring to any officer, and especially one of superior rank.

(3.) The letter contains matter which is irrelevant, for, besides dealing with the affair in connection with the visit to Wellington, it calls into question and criticizes the administration of the Defence Department, expressly forbidden by General Regulation 175.