

in the Dominion." The simple fact was that Captain Knyvett had only had three years and eleven months' commissioned service, and part of that was in Australia. What position would the chief of the executive staff have been in if he had improperly recommended the promotion of an officer with such service over the heads of men who had served for many years without reaching the position of major, while well qualified for it? He was led to say this because he saw from all the reports before him a distinct antipathy on the part of Captain Knyvett to Colonel Robin, which had given rise to the whole of the trouble. It was clear to him that neither the deputation nor the people of Auckland had so far had the case put fairly before them.

That Trip to Wellington.

"Now, let us get to the start of the present trouble," went on the Prime Minister in going into the history of the sudden descent on Wellington by Captain Knyvett's company at the end of October last, when it visited the Petone Navals while the latter were in camp. In a letter to Captain Ellis, of the Petone Navals, on 7th October, Captain Knyvett wrote that he had had the utmost difficulty in getting railway passes granted for the trip, but at last was assured of them. He (Sir Joseph) wanted to draw attention to the last expression. In his reply Captain Ellis wrote that the Defence Department knew nothing of the authority for passes, "and furthermore thought it was most unlikely that such an extensive and special privilege would be granted to any special company." The Prime Minister also read the telegrams which passed between the two captains on the 26th October, in which they made final arrangements for the trip south, remarking that no application for passes was received on behalf of Captain Knyvett's company by the Defence Department until 9.30 o'clock on the morning of Saturday, the 30th, when the company was actually on its way south. The next intimation the headquarters received was that the men had started the previous evening without permission of the Officer Commanding Division, Auckland. The fact was that neither Colonel Paterson nor any other man would be given authority to incur the responsibility of a train journey of this sort without permission from the Minister. The permission was never given in this instance, and could not be given to any company similarly placed.

"But we understand that they paid for it themselves," said Mr. Peacocke.

"It is no use any one saying that," rejoined the Prime Minister. "They have claimed £90 from the Government for it." Sir Joseph went on to say that every Volunteer officer in New Zealand knew that he could not take his company out of the district without the authority of the passes. Prior to 28th October the Minister of Railways had been applied to by members of Parliament for permission for the company to travel, but he had refused, and rightly so. On the same date Mr. F. Lawry, M.P., had telegraphed to him (Sir Joseph) from Auckland, urging that the passes be issued, but in his reply he had made it clear that he could not interfere, no formal application having been made.

Impossible to carry on.

But before even this reply had been sent the men were on their way to Wellington. If this sort of thing were to be allowed to continue it would be utterly impossible to carry on any Volunteer system at all. It was unfortunate that in this case there was a want of recognition of the discipline necessary not only for the control of a Volunteer corps, but for the actual administration of the whole service. In any case, why was not application sent in three weeks or a fortnight ahead in the ordinary manner, so saving the improper position of having a corps on its way before authority could be given? After the trip south complaint respecting it was received from Lieut.-Colonel Wolfe, of Auckland, in these terms: "I submit that a grave breach of discipline has been committed, which will be investigated on Captain Knyvett's return and dealt with." The Prime Minister said he wanted to establish that the matter of the trip ended on the 26th November, when a report came from Colonel Wolfe. He also remarked that it was just as well to point out that the whole discipline of the Volunteer service was under the administration of Colonel Tuson, not of Colonel Robin at all. Both officers agreed that the matter had better be allowed to rest with Colonel Wolfe's report, and he (Sir Joseph) concurred.

Colonel Robin's Position.

At some length Sir Joseph went on to deal with the impression that seemed to exist respecting Colonel Robin's connection with the affair. He wanted to make it perfectly clear that the humblest ranker had a perfect right to report any one in a superior position, the only qualification being that it should not be done in such an insulting and insubordinate manner as was shown in the letter which Captain Knyvett had written to him as Minister of Defence, complaining of his treatment and of Colonel Robin generally. Captain Knyvett first sent his letter to the Auckland O.C., with a request that it be forwarded through the proper channels, but the latter officer returned it with what practically amounted to a request that the insulting portions be cut out. Captain Knyvett was thus given an opportunity of couching his letter in proper language, and if he had done that it would have been given consideration. However, he did not, and the letter was sent unaltered. It reached the Adjutant-General—not Colonel Robin—on the 12th November, and was discussed at a meeting of the Defence Council later. Commenting upon it on the 26th November, Colonel Robin dealt with the clauses *seriatim*. Respecting the alleged interference, Colonel Robin said that he had made no interference of any kind, nor was the matter even before him except as shown in the file inquiry by O.C. District.

Connection with the Press.

So far as the newspaper article particularly referred to by Captain Knyvett was concerned, he said, "I did not or have I ever written, penned, or instigated any article on this or any other subject to any newspaper. My connection with the newspapers in the matter was their ringing me