

There were considerable numbers of absentees from most of the Rifle Volunteer companies. No. 2, Christchurch, No. 4, Rangiora, and No. 9, Woodend, did not muster sufficient men to enable me to judge of their drill. Of the other four companies, No. 3, Leithfield, was the most proficient. No. 8, Heathcote, composed of tunnel and railway workmen, with their arms in perfect order, and with a good band, are a fine body of men; but they are backward in their drill. The clothing and equipment of the whole are good, and the arms generally clean and well cared for, and there is abundant proof that Lieut.-Colonel Packe is both a competent and zealous commanding officer; but the ardour and spirit of many of the Volunteers have evidently been damped by the reduction of their capitation grant, by the withdrawal of local contributions, and by unfavourable public discussions and resolutions. The Lyttelton Artillery and the Engineers have, much to their credit, maintained their strength and proficiency in spite of these drawbacks; but the Volunteer movement will not prosper unless it is generally encouraged and assisted, and it is better that corps should be disbanded altogether than that they should become feeble and apathetic.

Good progress has been made in drilling the boys at the different schools, but there are not sufficient arms of a suitable description for all that are able to carry them. A mounted Cadet Corps of 30 boys, belonging to Mr. Scott's academy, paraded with the Yeomanry Cavalry, and went through their drill in excellent style. These lads, well mounted, and quite at home in their saddles, moving compactly together, under command of Mr. Swinley, who has taken a great deal of pains with them, were a most pleasing sight, and deserve every encouragement.

Otago.

Of the Volunteers of Otago I can speak with more unqualified commendation. Here they have had the advantages of full capitation allowance, liberal provincial grants, and general encouragement from all classes of the community; their success at the Colonial prize-firing has still further stimulated them, whilst the exertions, experience, and tact of Lieut.-Colonel Cargill have in no small degree contributed to the popularity and progress of the movement.

The four corps named in the margin paraded in the first instance late in the evening for my inspection. This was not a satisfactory arrangement, as I could not ascertain the state of their arms, &c., but I was able to form a very favourable opinion of their drill and general appearance.

They attended again at a general parade in the daytime, when three other corps and the Cadets were also present; and I then took the opportunity of inspecting their arms and accoutrements, which I found in excellent order.

Dunedin
Artillery.
No. 1 City
Guards.
No. 2 Scottish.
North Dunedin
Rifles.

The Artillery, whose arms and appointments I had previously minutely examined in their drill-shed, paraded with their three Armstrong guns, taking up their positions and firing with rapidity. This is particularly a fine corps, admirably commanded and drilled, and quite equal in all respects to Lyttelton Battery. Nos. 1 and 2, and North Dunedin, are all remarkably good companies, both in drill and appearance, and I scarcely know to which I should give the preference; whilst the other companies are but little inferior. They went through a variety of evolutions in line column and echelon, skirmishing, relieving skirmishers, preparing for cavalry, and firing by files and volleys, and all were performed most satisfactorily. I had not expected such proficiency from any body of New Zealand Volunteers.

My time did not allow me to see the Dunedin Naval Brigade at gun drill; but they are a numerous corps and a fine body of men, and acquitted themselves well at the review.

I was only able to visit one of the country companies, that at East Taieri. I found a number of the arms of this corps in bad order. It was stated that they had been wet during the recent heavy floods in the valley; but I could not admit this as an excuse, and instructed the officer in command to enforce fines from all who appeared on parade with dirty rifles. The drill of the company was also indifferent; but there was some excuse for this, as the members live at considerable distances from the place of assembly, and had been exempted from instruction parades during harvest time. There seems however to be plenty of *esprit* in the company, which has turned out some of the best rifle shots in the Colony.

I inspected the Cadets of the High and Middle Schools, twenty-four of the former having also taken part in the review, where they made a very good appearance dressed in their uniform and armed with breech-loading carbines; they have taken much pains with their drill. I also saw them firing for a prize at their targets: they handled their arms with ease, and made excellent practice; some of them at 200 and 300 yards equalling the score of the Colonial prize competitors, who however fired at longer ranges.

I inspected the Port Chalmers Naval Company, and a smarter and better drilled set of men I have not seen; they are all sea-faring or watermen, and were equally proficient with their rifles, guns, and cutlasses. Nothing could exceed the spirit and earnestness with which both officers and men set to their work.

I was not able to examine any of the corps in musketry, but the return herewith attached will show the amount of progress made in the Province, certifying to the zeal and qualifications of Captain Atkinson, the Adjutant and principal musketry instructor.

The parade states of the companies are attached. I am not able to give the total number of absentees, as four of the corps were inspected on two occasions, and some of the men absent from the first parade might have been present at the second.

I have, &c.,

T. M. HAULTAIN, Colonel,
Inspector of Militia and Volunteers.

Wellington, 18th July, 1868.