

In Rangitikei the Militia, consisting of 284 men, are divided into six companies, and have attended parade once a month. My inspection of this district took place in November, when the new Militia Act was only just coming into operation.

Some at Marton and near the centres of population had a fair knowledge of the manual and platoon exercise, and in most cases evinced a disposition to learn their duty, but the greater portion of the efficient men had joined the Volunteers. The company at Manawatu paraded in good numbers, and their arms were clean, but they knew little of their drill. They have since formed a Volunteer Corps at Foxton, and more recently one at Palmerston, thus showing a desire to try and improve. The remarks which I have made regarding the Napier District apply in some measure to this, as regards the distances that men have to travel to attend parades.

In Masterton the Militia (270 men) are divided into four companies, of which number two are at Masterton and Carterton, and the remainder subdivided into small detachments scattered over a large area of country. The two former companies mustered well, and had a fair knowledge of manual and platoon exercises. A large number of these men contested for district prizes.

In Greytown the Militia (220 men) are divided into three companies, two of which are at Featherston and Greytown, and the other made up of detachments, as at Masterton. Owing to some mistake about the date of my inspection, the Featherston company did not parade; but that at Greytown drilled better than most Militia Companies, and altogether appear to evince a better spirit than I have generally experienced.

In Wellington District there are ten companies of Militia under training and exercise:—Karori, Kaiwarawara, Johnsonville, Ohariu, Porirua, Pauatahanui, and four at the Hutt—amounting to 370 men.

They have attended monthly parades between July and March, except during the time they were excused from drill for harvest.

Their knowledge of manual and platoon exercise (except one corps at the Hutt) was very fair, and quite equal to districts similarly situated; but, as in other places, nearly all the best men have joined the Volunteers.

The Ohariu Company appeared to have been more attentive and drilled better than others; and they are desirous of forming themselves into a Volunteer Corps.

There were twenty-two competitors for the district prizes; but they have little chance with the Volunteers, as their rifles are much inferior, and, in most instances, old and worn out.

The arms in possession of the Militia generally are very bad, which almost debars that force from any chance of competing with the Volunteers at the Colonial Prize Firing, and in some measure accounts for the very small number of competitors at the annual meeting.

I strongly recommend that an annual allowance of ammunition be supplied to such Militiamen under training as wish to practice, and that the firing take place under the supervision of the Staff. This might tend to encourage men to try and become good shots. To do this, however, it is absolutely necessary to supply more iron targets for each district. Great complaints of this deficiency were made to me at every place I visited.

With the limited means for instructing so many people, I venture to suggest the advisability of releasing the Third Class at once from training, thus affording the Staff an opportunity of giving more attention to the others. In districts called out for "actual service," all classes might be allowed to retain their arms for self-defence, but exemption be given to Third Class from drill. I feel quite confident that the task of imparting instruction to the Third Class men, who have had no previous knowledge of drill, is quite hopeless, being not only a waste of time to the instructors, but a source of vexation to the men themselves.

In the vicinity of the centres of population, I think more efficiency would be attained if a proportion of the people were drilled consecutively for a certain number of days at some season of the year which would least interfere with their ordinary occupations; whilst a less rigid attendance might be enforced in the parts of districts where the population is widely scattered, as in Napier, Masterton, Rangitikei, &c.

This would enable the officers to become better acquainted with their duties, which is much required, and would also give the more attentive men an opportunity of acquiring a sufficient knowledge of their drill to entitle them to a certificate of exemption, in accordance with the Militia Regulations.

At present, those men knowing a little drill are unavoidably kept back whilst the others are under instruction, and thus a feeling of carelessness and indifference is generated, which renders the task of the instructors very discouraging.

The annexed return, marked A, shows the strength, on 31st March, of enrolled Militia who are called out either for actual service or training and exercise, and are armed.

VOLUNTEERS.

In June, 1870, the strength of the Volunteers in the Colony was 5,407, of which number 3,811 qualified themselves for capitation allowance.

This number gradually increased till, on 31st March, 1871, there were 6,568, of which number 4,880 received capitation money, being an increase of 1,069 efficient in the year. (*Vide* Return marked G.)

This excess may be attributed to the increased capitation allowance, which was raised from 25s. for all corps to the original grant of £3 to Cavalry and Artillery, and 50s. to Rifle Volunteers, as well as to the encouragement given to the whole movement by the liberal grant of the Legislature towards the Colonial Prize Firing.

In the North Island, the Militia Act being in operation has also had the effect of increasing the numbers, and especially in some of the country districts.

The annexed return marked C will show the percentage of enrolled and efficient Volunteers in 1869, 1870, and 1871, by which it will be seen that the proportion of efficient has increased from 51 per cent.