

REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR

NELSON.

The movement in this Province has been gradually declining for some time, and I cannot say that I observed any improvement since last year. On the 31st of March there were one corps of Artillery, two of Rifles, and three of Cadets. I must here remark that the latter are more nominal than real; for of 155 enrolled, only 20 received full and 59 half capitation allowance, showing that their attendance was anything but regular.

The muster of the Wakapuaka Artillery was unsatisfactory, and I felt it my duty to recommend the corps to resign its services, if they could not induce their members to be more attentive. This has since been done. The "City Rifles," which were lately formed from the old Company and City Artillery, do not appear to have made much progress, nor had they attended any parades for two months prior to my inspection. I was unable to see the "Waimea" Company or "Motueka" Cadets, as, on the days I visited those places, the severe weather quite prevented any attempt at a muster. On inspecting the books of the latter, I found their attendance had been very small. On the whole, I regret to say that my inspection of this district was anything but satisfactory, and unless some marked improvement takes place during the ensuing year, I should feel it incumbent on me to recommend the disbandment of all the corps. There was no class-firing, but there are some good shots in the district; as will be seen on reference to the district firing in the *Gazette*, two representatives were sent to Auckland, one of whom won an extra prize with a good score.

MARLBOROUGH.

I was prevented from visiting this Province, as I had left it till the last; and on my return from Nelson in June, I found that the continual bad weather and uncertainty of communication would have occupied more time than I felt justified in devoting to it.

In consequence of the small amount voted for the Province, the Volunteers have been debarred from receiving the same advantages as others in the way of capitation, drill-instructors, &c.

The Commanding Officer reports that the companies have attended parades fairly during the year, but only 78 out of 241 have qualified for capitation. With the aforementioned disadvantages, little more could be expected.

On reference to the return of prize-firing in the *Gazette*, it will be seen that there was a good proportion of competitors for district prizes, and the average was fair. This Province also sent three representatives to Auckland, who won the second highest aggregate amount of prizes of any district in the Colony; one of these representatives carried off the second prize in the sixth set, the leading event of the meeting.

CANTERBURY.

This Province contains one troop of Cavalry, three Artillery, seven Rifle, and five Cadet corps, amounting to about 730 Volunteers, of which number 616 qualified for capitation. In January, about 300 members of the various corps were encamped at Sumner for five days, during which time I remained with them, and took the opportunity of making my inspection of each corps separately. The Cavalry were well mounted, but their drill showed that they require more constant exercise together. Several new members have joined, and with the assistance of a new drill instructor, are reported to be making more progress since my inspection.

The Christchurch, Lyttelton, and Timaru Artillery, all worked their guns well, and a spirit of rivalry exists which tends to be of service to all. They made excellent practice with shot and shell at three ranges.

The Engineers and Rifle companies were not so proficient, except No. 6 Company, who appear to have paid more attention than the rest.

Both officers and men derived benefit from the encampment; all cheerfully obeyed orders, and seemed desirous of making themselves acquainted with their various duties. Their conduct in camp was very good; and, in addition to the opportunity afforded them of being instructed on many points of duty which cannot be learnt at their ordinary parades, a spirit of harmony and good feeling is created, which cannot fail to contribute to the success of the whole movement.

I think some credit is due to Lieut.-Colonel Packe for having established an annual encampment in his district; and also to the officers and men who have so readily assisted him in carrying out all the arrangements successfully; many of them having come long distances,—and in the case of the Timaru Artillery, no less than eighty miles.

About one-fifth of the several corps have attended a course of class-firing; but the want of a suitable range near the town has been a serious obstruction to the shooting in this district, which furnished only two competitors out of six allowed for the Colonial Prize Firing at Auckland.

OTAGO.

The Province (exclusive of Southland) contains one Artillery, thirteen Rifle, and two Naval corps, besides Cadets, amounting together, on 31st March, to 1,140, of which number 845 were qualified for capitation allowance.

The spirit of volunteering does not seem to have diminished, but, on the contrary, has extended to all parts of the Province. During the year new corps were formed at Hampden and Clutha; these have been succeeded by offers of services by the residents of Mount Ida, Tuapeka, and Queenstown. As the acceptance of these proposed corps so far inland would involve a considerable extra expenditure, their applications still remain under the consideration of the Government.

At my inspection I found the Dunedin Artillery had lost none of their former efficiency either in appearance or drill, whilst their excellent shot and shell practice showed that they had not relaxed their attention to this practical part of their duties. With regard to their rifle practice, it will be seen, on reference to the attached return marked I, that they are one of the best shooting corps in the Colony.

The Dunedin Naval Volunteers make good practice with their howitzers, and the Port Chalmers Naval Corps were steadier than last year.