

In Canterbury a good number have become efficient this year, but I did not see the schools, as I was there during the Christmas vacation.

At Otago I saw about 100 boys of the district schools who had a fair knowledge of some of the preliminary drills, but they all require more frequent parades.

There is a great scarcity of arms for Cadets at present, but 800 carbines will soon arrive from England, which, with those now in the Colony, will be sufficient for the present number of boys. If, however, any considerable addition is made to their strength, more arms must be obtained.

From the interest taken by the representative Cadets in their firing at Auckland, it was evident they had already acquired a taste for rifle practice, and were all most anxious to do their best. This spirit of emulation should be encouraged as far as possible, as it must tend to create a feeling of confidence and self-reliance, which increases year by year.

It is scarcely necessary for me to point out, that the Cadets are the real source from whence our best Volunteers will be recruited in future; and that lads who, at such an early age, derive practical proofs of the benefits of their training, will enter the ranks of adult corps with zeal and earnestness.

ARMS.

The Enfield rifles on issue to the Volunteers are very much better than those in possession of the Militia, but it would be desirable if an improved arm could be supplied to the whole force. The Commanding Officer of Otago reports that the arms in his district are "unserviceable for accurate shooting." This might be considered correct if comparison were drawn between the merits of the Enfield and Snider or other improved breech-loading rifles; but the results reported to have been attained by the men who went through class-firing in that Province, and the performance generally of the Otago Volunteers at the General Prize Firing shows that their rifles can scarcely be considered "unserviceable for accurate shooting," and would bear favourable comparison with those issued to Volunteers throughout the Colony. I have already remarked on the bad state of the breech-loading carbines of the Cavalry, who also require at least 300 swords.

CLOTHING.

By the regulations issued last year, it was provided that there should be a similarity in the dress of the several branches of the Volunteer Force, that of the Rifles being grey cloth. Mr. Webb, of Nelson, undertook to supply by contract a serviceable article, manufactured in the Colony; with which twenty-two corps have been furnished, to the amount of 6,000 yards. Several corps, however, have objected to the colour, and have requested to be allowed to wear a uniform of their own selection, subject to the approval of the Government.

I consider the new uniform to be not only a neat but a very serviceable dress. The Dunedin Battalion are still wearing scarlet, whilst the Auckland retain the blue.

CAPITATION.

The return marked D shows the strength on 31st of March, 1871, with the number of "efficient" for the last "Volunteer Year," by which it appears there were then 6,568 enrolled, of whom 4,880 were qualified for capitation, the percentage in North Island being 75, and that of the South 73. As there has been a considerable addition to these numbers since, I append Forms G and H.

The return marked G shows the number of corps in their several districts on 31st of May, amounting to 164, including 35 of Cadets.

The return marked H shows the number of Volunteers to be 7,633 including 1,266 Cadets.

In order to compare the numbers in 1870 and 1871, I attach Form K, showing the strength in the several Provinces in each of these years, by which you will perceive that the increase in 1871 over 1870 amounts to 1,408 adults, and 818 cadets, the greater proportion of whom are in Auckland and Wellington.

The restoration of the old rate of capitation last year has materially contributed to the increase in the number of the Volunteers as shown in Form C. It will again be seen, on reference to Form K that notwithstanding the increase of enrolled members, the percentage of "efficient" is also largely increased.

In his Annual Report, the Commanding Officer of Otago has suggested a change in the qualification for capitation allowance, by giving a small proportion of present rate to those who only attend parades as now, and the balance to such as attend a course of class-firing, in certain proportions according to their final classification. This might perhaps be done in the case of corps in the large towns, where a range is easily obtained in their vicinity; but I do not think it would be fair to enforce this system, as proposed, in many of the country districts, for the reasons I have already given in a former part of my report.

CLASS FIRING.

Without doubt, a system of class-firing would tend much to improve the general efficiency of the force, but the adoption of some modified course would be necessary to make it equitable to all corps, whose local circumstances are so widely different.

A small Manual of Squad and Company Drill, adapted for the use of the Militia and Volunteers, has been lately issued, which will be of great service to those under instruction.

I cannot conclude my report without favourably mentioning the general zeal of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the permanent staff of the various districts, on whose exertions so much of the general efficiency of the Force must depend.

I have, &c.,

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The Hon. Donald McLean, Wellington.