

pointed in finding that no measures of practical utility are suggested or decided upon. Under such circumstances, there is some justification for the utterance of the sentiment held by certain Volunteers in Wairarapa, that they were "just holding on to see what would turn up."

Of late, Volunteers have been looking forward with revived interest to the promulgation of amended Regulations recently referred to by the Hon. the Defence Minister, as those, if found ineffectual to make the force more efficient than it is, will probably be the last attempt with such a view.

If the amended Regulations referred to are those which have been lately circulated amongst Officers Commanding districts for report, then I think it is no harm to say that, in my opinion, they are not calculated to bring about a change for the better; on the contrary, many of the suggestions, if adopted, will have the effect of introducing trouble, discord, and greater inefficiency than at present exists.

Of all the causes, however, which have tended to suppress the enthusiasm of volunteering which used formerly to obtain, is that of the unexampled prosperity of all portions of the colony, and advantage should be taken of so propitious a period (taking also into consideration the fact that the power of any force is quadrupled by the possession of breech-loading arms), to reduce materially, if disbandment is not decided upon, the unwieldy force now on paper only, and substitute small effective forces in populous localities only.

After the annual class and district prize firing is over, and it should be completed by 31st of December next, I would recommend that the whole of the Enfield and Terry rifles, and their accoutrements, throughout the colony, be recalled into store; that for the three succeeding months, drills should be carried on without arms, so as to complete, if necessary, the number of parades to insure capitation; and on the 31st March disband the entire force, all commissions lapsing. Then, on the 1st April allow it to re-enrol, previously having employed an able Commission, not composed of Officers Commanding districts, to visit the various centres of population, and obtain and record opinions from every reliable source, which may happily enable it to add to the present Regulations (or cancel those which may be deemed obnoxious) such improvements as may be found to be necessary. This Commission should commence its operations at once, so as to be able to present to the force, before the 31st of March, a well-digested and possible scheme, in order that, on the 1st of April following, the re-enrolment may be effected; each corps then giving, before its services are accepted, an assurance that it will abide by and conform in every way to the new code.

Then to these new corps let breech-loading arms be issued, but no ammunition until they are reported to be thoroughly acquainted with the firing exercise.

This Commission should also decide or recommend what number of corps shall be recognized, in what localities, and the number of each specific branch of the service, whether cavalry, artillery, infantry, or naval.

By such means an efficient and manageable force will, I think, be obtained.

I do not myself think that the existing Regulations can be improved upon excepting in very minor points, where additions would be desirable. I think they are excellent, so far as they go; but for some unaccountable reason they seem to have been set aside by those whose duty it has been to administer them. As, however, the refrain on all sides is "give us new Regulations," then, I advise, let new Regulations be tried.

To give an example of one of the changes for the better which certain of the officers of the force consider should be introduced, they say, Bring in a regulation "giving power to the captain of a company to dismiss summarily a Volunteer for any sufficient offence whatever."

Such a proposal has been expressed to me, in the course of my inspections, by two or three officers, to whom my reply was, that it would be unsafe and improper to devolve such power upon any other authority than the Governor, who, before he would exercise his prerogative, would have had both phases of the cases submitted for his consideration. No other course would, at all events, satisfy the accused Volunteer.

That the existing Regulations have defects and convey vague instructions there can be no doubt, but an experienced Commission could, in a very short period, remedy and solve them all; and it is with this view that I think the Commissioners should proceed to the head quarters of all districts, so as to be accessible to all ranks, from all localities, and to hear all that can be heard on all matters connected with the system now in force or proposed to be introduced.

This Commission might, I think, also be asked to give its opinion as to whether or not it would be advisable or expedient to permit men who do not desire or intend to re-enrol, to purchase Enfield rifles at a reduced cost, in order that they might be able to retain the knowledge acquired while belonging to the force, for by such an arrangement, the various companies would not be embarrassed by the occasional presence of men who were, although expert shots, in other respects useless as members of a corps.

Such men might be termed "The Volunteer Reserve," and would be able to render effective service should circumstances require it; a register of their names and arms being kept in each district office, as well as by some civil functionary responsible under the Colonial Arms Acts, if such Acts prove to be applicable to such a proposition.

Such a scheme is capable of being so worked out as to lead possibly to the supercession of the Militia Force, but on this point it is not my duty to dilate.

RIFLE CLUBS.

Much has been said in various quarters—and somewhat reproachfully, too—that Volunteers are nothing but rifle clubs. And why should Rifle corps not be Rifle clubs? I confess to not seeing any very great impropriety in each corps establishing within itself, and under the control of the captain of the company, for the arms are his property for the time being, a corps club.

The assertion so commonly made that Volunteers corps are nothing but Rifle clubs is, in my experience, an unfounded one, for in all my inquiries on this subject I have found that the members