

company appeared on parade. The only purpose which has been served by the construction of these three battalions is, that three officers have been advanced to the rank of major, neither of whom have, in my opinion, complied with the injunctions or orders of His Excellency the Governor, enjoined upon them in the commissions appointing them to their present very responsible positions.

The disbandment of the companies I have before enumerated will effect the dissolution of these battalions, when the commissions of the majors commanding them will necessarily lapse.

The cause of the unsatisfactory condition of the Volunteer Force of Otago and Southland I attribute to two general reasons—firstly, to the exceptionally prosperous state of those portions of the colony, in which time is truly money, and when the spare moments of the inhabitants are spent to more pecuniary advantage to themselves than in attending to military duties; and secondly, to the circumstance that the officer commanding has hitherto been an unpaid and consequently an irresponsible officer, and whose business avocations have precluded his giving that time and attention to his important Volunteer duties which, on the one hand, the Government has a right to expect and demand, and to which, on the other, the Volunteers themselves are entitled; whereas, under him, is the Adjutant, the paid Government officer, without any authority whatever.

I consider that the paid officer of the Government should be the only accountable officer, and that, therefore, he should hold His Excellency the Governor's warrant to command.

The district of Otago and Southland is of such magnitude, and has hitherto contained so many companies (37), that a staff of even 12 drill-sergeants could not perform the duties required from drill-instructors, but at present there are only 2 sergeants available for drill purposes throughout the district, who, with the adjutant, are continually travelling.

If the reductions which I have recommended are effected, I consider that the staff should consist as follows, viz. :—

- 1 Commanding Officer (Major Atkinson),
- 3 Staff-Sergeants (exclusively for drill),
- 1 Bugler and Messenger.

Before action is taken on this interim report, I would ask that it be submitted to the Officer Commanding in Otago for his remarks.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM GORDON, Major,
Inspector of Volunteers.

The Under Secretary for Defence, Militia and
Volunteer Branch, Wellington.

No. 2.

Lieutenant-Colonel READER to the Acting UNDER SECRETARY for DEFENCE.

SIR,—

Militia Office, Wellington, 24th December, 1873.

With reference to Major Gordon's report on the Wellington City corps, dated 10th December, 1873, forwarded for my information and remarks, by order of the Hon. Dr. Pollen, I have the honor to state I should have felt considerable diffidence in offering remarks and commenting on the justice of that report had I not been instructed by a Minister to do so, from the fact that Major Gordon having been appointed Inspector of Volunteers for the current year, is for the time being my superior officer; but having been so instructed, I am bound, in the interests of the corps under my command, and in vindication of myself, to make the following statements respecting the inspection of each corps.

The first inspected was the Volunteer Artillery. The parade took place in the shed liberally placed at the disposal of the Volunteers by Captain Pearce. Out of a total strength of 55, only three men were absent without leave. Major Gordon, attended by myself, was received with the usual salute, and afterwards inspected the ranks. It was explained to him, both by Captain Pearce and myself, that there had been considerable changes in the corps during the past few months, which would be apparent to any one from the fact that few members except in the front rank could appear in the full dress of the battery. After inspecting the ranks, Major Gordon proceeded to put the corps through countermarching by ranks, wheeling into line and back into column, finding fault that these manœuvres (which I had always looked upon as only adapted to rifle corps formed into a battalion) were not familiar to the men; and further stated that the most important part of their duty was to learn ordinary company drill, gunnery drill being a secondary consideration. The men then manned the guns and took them out to the reclaimed land, where, on a vacant section of about 80 yards by 40 yards (the only available ground within reach), Captain Pearce succeeded, notwithstanding, in working his guns very creditably. Major Gordon found no fault beyond that, in doubling, the men did not bend their elbows. I may be wrong, but my impression is that armed men—that is, men wearing side-arms—do not bend their elbows in doubling.

The next corps inspected was the Wellington Veteran Corps, which paraded on a piece of ground at Te Aro which I had for the first time been able to procure for out-door drill—a vacant section I occupy on sufferance, and which is liable to be fenced in at any time for building purposes. The corps mustered 50 men out of a total strength of 53; the three absentees being temporarily away from Wellington, two in connection with their trades. After Major Gordon had been received with the usual salute, I pointed out that there were a considerable number of recruits in the ranks, who had joined within the last three months. However, they were allowed to remain in the ranks, and a subaltern officer placed in command. Over-anxiety on the part of the officer, and the rawness of the recruits, conduced to make the company work anything but steadily, and led to mistakes which would never have occurred if the recruits had been drafted out and the remainder drilled by their commanding officer, Captain Crowe.

The third and last city corps inspected by Major Gordon was the Wellington Highland Corps. I explained to Major Gordon that some five months ago, Captain Carey, who commanded it, through