

colonies should have a little more authority over the movements of the Australian fleet of war vessels than they have at the present time?"

"No, I certainly do not; it would only result in confusion in the end. If the Governors of the different Colonies had the right to dictate to the Admiral in command of the fleet in case trouble should break out, each one might say, we want your vessels opposite our ports, and the natural consequence would be a loss of authority and a lack of organisation that would result disastrously."

"I grant you that, but if the Imperial military officers who are sent out here are amenable to our Colonial Governments does it not seem fair that when we pay more than half the cost of sustaining the Naval Squadron that we should have a say as to its doings? What I mean is, that in case of any trouble should not the combined opinion of the different Governors in Council have its weight as against orders direct from the Imperial Government?"

"You are taking a stand now, Mr. FAIR PLAY, that is untenable. If you had a Federal Government and one supreme head, your argument might be admissible, but in the present state of affairs it would be impossible to give a series of orders based on the combined action of the various Governors, therefore, I say that for the safety of the colonies, as well as for the maintenance of the discipline so necessary in naval matters, the absolute command should rest in the hands of the Admiral, who should only receive his orders from the Old Country. The fleet on the Australian station is an integral part of the Imperial Navy, and as such must be manœuvred in connection with the movements of the other fleets from headquarters."

"Well, to drop the subject of the naval defences of Australasia, and to return to our own colony and its military requirements, suppose there was to be some little hitch between yourself and the Government as to expenditure which you thought necessary, what would the result be?"

"As I explained to you before I am, as Commandant, simply a servant of the Government, and if I after careful consideration, come to the conclusion that certain alterations or improvements should be made, my course would be to include them in my estimates. These would be handed to the Minister and brought before Parliament, where they would be either rejected or passed."

"But, to go a step further, suppose there was one particular item in your estimates which you, as a military man, knew was absolutely necessary and that you insisted on being carried, what action would you take if it were cut out or rejected?"

"If matters came to such a pass, which is highly improbable, I should probably write Home placing my position before the authorities there, and the result would be beyond doubt a reply permitting me to resign."

"The position of a military officer and naval officer in the colonies widely differs then?"

"Naturally, for the reason that one is a local officer, engaged by the local Government, and the other is an acting Imperial officer, responsible only to Imperial authorities, and liable at any time to be exchanged to another station. The former draws his pay from the local Government and the latter from the Imperial Government."

"To refer to your military title in New Zealand, Colonel, is it what may be called a brevet?"

"No, a brevet is an entirely different sort of thing. A brevet is a species of honour conferred on a soldier that may be confirmed later on and the actual rank of his brevet given to him; but it sometimes gives rise to curious complications, as for instance, supposing I were Major in a line regiment of infantry with a brevet of Colonel. As a regimental officer I would rank below my Colonel; but if three regiments were consolidated into a brigade, and my brevet ranked the regular commission of any of the Colonels, the command of the brigade would be given to me. When such contingencies occur, however, con-

tinued Colonel Fox, "the ranking colonel usually gets leave of absence."

"Yes, I should imagine it would be rather awkward for him," was the interviewer's reply. "The brevet then is an honour that, until it is confirmed, gives no actual regimental status, but may in a case of emergency be recognised as a brigade or corps pre-eminence?"

"Exactly so, but it is only in exceptional cases that a contingency such as I have described may arise."

"Now, Colonel, to speak of the defences of New Zealand as they are at the present moment, I suppose I must refer to your report?"

"Yes, my opinions and recommendations were plainly expressed there after careful consideration, and will give a better idea than I can possibly supply you with in a brief conversation."

"Have you any reason for changing your opinion since you sent in that report, Colonel?"

"No, none in the least, I am satisfied that it was both conscientious and correct."

"Then I may use extracts from it as emanating from yourself at the present time?"

"Certainly; my report is now public property, as it has been officially published."

"In your report under the heading of 'works,' you say that some of the gunpits more recently constructed are excellent specimens, but that the 7 in. R.M.L. and 84 p. r. R.M.L. guns are nearly all on wooden drums and that the woodwork is decaying and needs renovation."

"Yes; that is quite true, but I am reducing as many of these guns as possible in order to save the expense of alteration."

"You also state there are only 65 rounds of shell per gun for the 9-p. r. R.B.L. guns, and a total of but 106 time fuzes and that the complement should be raised to 150 rounds per gun, with the proper proportion of fuzes?"

Yes, I made that recommendation."

"Your opinion of the sub-marine defences, too, I think, was anything but complimentary, to quote from your report:—'The sub-marine mining defences of the chief ports are at the present time valueless. In each there are vital deficiencies which render them incomplete.'"

"That is quite true; but if you will read a little further you will find that new plans have been made, and that they have been approved by me and passed by the senior naval officer on the New Zealand station."

"You speak very well of the non-commissioned officers and gunners of the Permanent Artillery."

"Yes, they are highly trained and capable of doing higher work than their rank denotes. They are well educated, well behaved, intelligent and drawn from a superior class. I have inspected this branch of the service carefully and am thoroughly satisfied with them."

"Taking the different corps throughout the colony, both volunteer and others, what is your general opinion of their efficiency?"

"Well, a great many of them were in good form, but I am sorry to say that there were many who seemed to have lost interest; they were slovenly in their drill and careless in their accoutrements. Of course some can be brought up to the mark, but there were others whom I recommended in my report for disbandment."

"You state in your report that there seems to be a general feeling of doubt throughout the colony as to the actual necessity of keeping up a defence force?"

"Yes, I noticed that, and I think is a regrettable state of feeling. Surely a prosperous colony like New Zealand, with the commerce it owns, should protect its interests to the best of its ability. After a prolonged period of peace, a proper system of defence may seem superfluous, but if war should break out, its necessity may be felt too late."

"Do you intend remaining long in New Zealand, Colonel?"

"My term of service will not be up for about 8 years. Whether I return or not then, is a question I am not at present able to decide; at any rate my presence here so far has been most agreeable, and if I leave at the expiration of my term I shall regret the loss of my many New Zealand friends, and the