

"Ah, but this proposed remedy is wholly disproportionate," replied Sir John. "If carried out at all it would have to go upon a definite basis of universal liability to military service. But that would give us an army immeasurably beyond our real needs, and in doing so would dislocate trade and hamper every industry in the country. There exists no such necessity with us as with Continental countries to have the whole nation armed and liable to military service. We must be very hard pressed indeed and completely worsted at sea for a large standing army to be requisite in this country itself."

"What is your view then as to the principle upon which this country ought to act?"

"The principle of the 'armed nation' is no doubt the sound one if properly applied," answered Sir John. "Only it need not be strained into dragging every man in the country—within certain age limits—from his regular employment for several of the best years of his life, thus lessening his value as a worker and diminishing the country's producing-power. There is a very simple, straight-forward, and official method which virtually secures all the practical defensive advantage obtainable from conscription without the drawbacks of that objectionable system."

"This is indeed interesting. Pray explain."

"My opinion," answered the General, "one which I hold and long have held very strongly is that a certain amount of efficient military training should compulsorily form a part of every boy's regular education. That is to say, he should be thoroughly taught to use a rifle, and as thoroughly trained in military habits of discipline. This should not be any mere 'playing at soldiers,' but should be made an important and essential part of every boy's education. It would not impair his efficiency as a civilian; but, on the contrary, would improve him. Habits of discipline always stand a man in stead, and it certainly would not harm anybody to know how to use a rifle. Thus, if every boy left school a decent shot with the rifle, and with a sound practical knowledge of military drill, and familiar with discipline, there you would have splendid raw material for a future army. Indeed, it would be something much better than raw material, for it would be the best possible material more than half worked into shape. It would be a quick and easy operation to construct efficient armies out of such materials as these."

"I presume you would make this school military training absolutely compulsory?"

"Absolutely," replied Sir John Ardagh. "It should in no case be optional, but should be as much a necessary and compulsory part of every boy's school education as reading, writing, and arithmetic. In public and private schools alike, I would have every boy in every school in the whole Empire thoroughly trained in this way. Then the Empire would never be at a loss for soldiers in case of need."

It seemed to me that the New Zealand Government might do worse than to take up this idea and give it practical effect. New Zealand has led the world in so many things that she might well do so in this matter too. I remember that a similar idea was broached in New Zealand many years ago by the late Mr. Chantrey Harris, who indeed went further, and advocated that girls as well as boys should receive this training at school. "A schoolgirl who knows how to use a rifle," he once said to me, "could kill an enemy's soldiers just as well as any man could, and why should n't she in defence of her country?" Why not, indeed? But at any rate we might begin with all the boys.

APPENDIX II.

STATEMENT showing the NUMBER of RECOGNISED PUBLIC-SCHOOL CADET CORPS in the several Education Districts of the Colony on the 30th June, 1904; their respective Strengths, and the Increase during the Year.

Education Districts.	Number of Corps.	Captains.	First Lieutenants.	Second Lieutenants.	Colour-Sergeants.	Sergeants.	Corporals.	Buglers.	Privates.	Total of all Ranks.	Grand Total.
Auckland	40	36	42	25	36	106	66	40	1,618	2,009	
Hawke's Bay	27	17	29	7	23	66	64	27	950	1,210	
Taranaki	8	7	8	3	7	24	24	8	260	349	
Wellington	31	20	21	8	17	71	52	31	1,179	1,430	
Wanganui	23	20	15	12	19	59	63	23	810	1,044	
	129	100	115	55	102	326	269	129	4,817	6,042	6,042
Canterbury North	14	13	16	6	9	35	30	14	695	832	
Canterbury South	8	7	8	3	6	25	27	8	373	465	
Grey	7	3	6	3	3	37	12	7	174	252	
Nelson	10	3	7	4	4	15	15	10	432	500	
Otago	34	28	26	28	16	86	73	34	1,729	2,054	
Southland	8	7	6	2	5	16	16	8	325	393	
Westland	3	3	3	2	2	5	3	3	95	119	
Marlborough	4	4	4	2	4	12	12	4	155	201	
	88	68	76	50	49	231	188	88	3,978	4,816	4,816
Grand total of all ranks ... ..	...	168	191	105	151	557	457	217	8,795	...	10,858
Total number of corps	217	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	217
										Corps.	Cadets.
Total increase in the North Island										19	888
Total increase in the South Island										16	878
Grand total increase for the year										35	1,766

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