

*Infantry and Cycle Corps.*

On paper at the end of the last Volunteer year, there were 111 infantry and three cycle corps in the Dominion, with a total establishment of 7,431, and an enrolled strength of 6,118. I have inspected every infantry corps (except four which were about to disband and were not working at all), and also the cycle corps, and the total number present at my inspections (counting, of course, only one inspection of each corps in cases where I have seen them more than once, as before explained) has been 3,696, or 60 per cent. of enrolled strength and 49 per cent. of establishment. Of those actually enrolled at times of inspection in corps which paraded, 67 per cent. turned out. Thus, less than half the establishment for the Dominion have presented themselves at inspections, and seeing that these infantry inspections have almost without exception been at night in their own halls and at their own headquarters and times, this must be considered most unsatisfactory.

Like the mounted rifles, the infantry corps vary very much in usefulness and efficiency, owing generally to the same causes. A few corps in each district are really excellent in all the work they do, have excellent discipline, and in some cases where they have exceptionally enthusiastic and capable officers every effort is made by the latter to get as much daylight training as possible, but unfortunately the opportunities are very few. At the other end of the scale there are some corps (about twenty) so bad and useless in every way that there is no justification at all for the expense incurred upon them in their present state. The majority of the corps range from fair to good, and there is no reason whatever why they should not improve, even under the present conditions, if all ranks make an effort and mean business. The reasons for the standard of efficiency being lower generally in the infantry than in the scientific branches that do their work almost entirely in the drill-halls (such as artillery, engineers, &c.) I feel sure are—

- (1.) The work the latter learn in the halls and at night is made much more interesting for them.
- (2.) The junior officers and N.C.O.s of the latter have definite and special duties to perform without which the work cannot proceed at all, and they must learn their work more or less.
- (3.) In the former the whole company may be moved about, and I fear sometimes has been for a year, by one man, without any one else being compelled to exercise any authority, or even open his mouth, possibly.
- (4.) The scientific branches have more instructors in proportion to their numbers.

Of course there is plenty of interesting and very useful work that infantry can be taught in drill-halls, but I am convinced that in order to understand what is wanted, and even how to make their indoor work interesting, they must be taken out into the field in daylight and shown what they are for. A few odd hours scattered over the year will never accomplish this, I am certain.

As a result of the foregoing, I regret to say that in many corps the N.C.O.s and sometimes the officers have little or no idea of instructing or handling their men, cannot sometimes carry out the simplest manœuvre (such as putting half a dozen men quickly into any required position), have practically no knowledge of field duties, fire control, or fire discipline, and I have even several times found that they have not been able to sight rifles correctly when instructed to show men who were ignorant.

In turn-out I am glad to be able to report that generally they are neatly and uniformly clothed, and there are not nearly so many corps whose appearance is spoilt by want of attention to this as in the mounted rifles, but in physique they are as a whole below the standard of any other arm of the service.

*Field Hospital and Bearer Corps.*

I have inspected all the corps in the Dominion. In all cases they were neatly and well turned out, drilled smartly, and officers and N.C.O.s and men took great interest in, and, I believe, thoroughly understood their special work.

*Defence Cadets.*

I have inspected forty separate companies of Defence cadets, and the total muster for parade was 1,731, or 81 per cent. of their then strength. In the case of one school company the drill, and of another the drill, manœuvre, fire-control, and indeed all work undertaken, have been excellent. In all the others the work is quite satisfactory, with the exception of two schools, in one of which the whole tone and work of the corps was very indifferent, and far below any other cadet corps I have seen (for what reason I was unable to discover), and in the other it was entirely the fault of the commanding officer, who may be an excellent school-teacher, but was certainly not intended for that work. In all cases they have been uniformly clothed, and neat and clean in general appearance. Of course they vary very much in size and physique, from fine strapping lads in the senior corps to little chaps who are really hardly strong enough to use the arms provided for them in a few of the junior ones. They all appeared enthusiastic and keen to learn and to do well.

*Rifle Clubs.*

There were at the end of the year 140 rifle clubs, with a total strength of 3,369.

The officer who was appointed to superintend these clubs was instructed to make such arrangements with regard to times and places as were found most suitable to the clubs, to inspect them and report to me. After travelling for rather more than a month in his endeavour to carry this out he reported as follows: "Regret to say that very few clubs have any idea of drill, and I am afraid in the past have neglected that part of their training. Numbers of them are of the opinion that it is unnecessary. In most cases I was only able to interview the president." As I did not consider that the expense incurred by this officer would be further justified when the only result