

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND CONTINGENT (No. 1):

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS BY MAJOR ROBIN, COMMANDING NEW ZEALAND CONTINGENT,
TO OFFICER COMMANDING NEW ZEALAND FORCES.

(INTERIM REPORT.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

LEFT Wellington 21st October, and arrived Albany 1st November. During voyage two horses died—one the property of Private Ellis, and one belonging to Captain Madocks. Left Albany 2nd November, and arrived at Port Elizabeth 21st, but only communicated with shore by boat, and were ordered to Cape Town at once. Arrived Cape Thursday, 23rd November, at 1 p.m. Commenced disembarking at 6 a.m., 24th November, and had all cleared out of ship by 11 a.m., and marched out to Maitland Camp. Between Albany and the Cape ten horses were lost.

STATUN CAMP, NAAWPOORT, 1ST DECEMBER, 1899.

Since arrival at Cape we have been on the move from Maitland Camp. Got fore shoes on, then ordered to De Aar to draw equipment there. On arrival at De Aar sent direct on to Naawpoort, as the Boers were down within twelve miles of same. Of course we have had to pack, pitch, and take up our own camps, and I am glad to let you know the authorities here have expressed themselves well satisfied with the manner our men work. While here I have been kept very busy drawing equipment, &c.—fifty-seven mules, sixteen oxen, buck-wagons, saa-carts, water-carts, and the exercising of these to suit. The conductors and niggers are not well up to their work, but the Imperial authorities are most kind. The people in New Zealand can never know what it is to go on foreign active service—the transport, &c., and the amount of unseen and unknown work that has to be done. We are now finishing the greater part of the southern section of the outposts for day-work, parading our reliefs at 3.30 a.m., and returning just after dusk.

Yesterday some men of the A.S.C. grazing mules were fired on, and we had to patrol early this morning. One Mounted Infantry man had four bullets through him the day we came in; strange, he is almost better. A reconnaissance in force went from here yesterday. The horses are now fast improving. The 6th Dragoon Guards and 12th Lancers are very taken with our horses. We have now lost fourteen altogether. General French inspected the horses last night, and expressed his pleasure. I cannot say too much in praise of the manner our men are working; they mean it. We are daily exercising over the veldts, and they are rather better in their work than the Mounted Infantry, and the riding is good. The heat is very great, and the soldier ration rather puzzles the New-Zealander, but every day he discovers how to make it run further. We cook for ourselves, and have no trouble.

The officers are now all armed with carbines. I have issued brown bone buttons instead of the brass. Webley revolvers have been given us. All bright parts—lion-heads on hats, N.Z.M.R., &c.—are off, and spears, bayonets, &c., are painted khaki; haversacks dyed brown; and altogether we look very ruffianly. There were no Magazine '303's to give us, but it is acknowledged the weapon we have is good.

General French inspected part of our posts, and I am glad to say was well pleased. He has ordered a special parade for the Contingent to-morrow. The work done at this special parade was very fast, and of a cavalry nature, and am glad to report the General was well pleased.

Another day spent on outpost, and on Monday (4th) we were on an extended reconnaissance covering six miles of front towards Arundel. This occupied from 3 a.m. till dark. On returning we had orders issued to us to form route and march with the division covering same at 7 a.m., striking camp, packing all transport, mules, oxen, &c. A tactical operation was given the independent cavalry at the head of the column, which was given over to my command, and consisted of the New South Wales Lancers, New Zealand, one company Imperial Mounted Infantry, Berkshire Regiment, detachment Engineers, and Telegraph section, to precede the division, a three-mile column, from watering-place at Valshfontein, and protect same while the division fed and watered. The commanding officer, Colonel Eustace, expressed his satisfaction.

It is impossible for any of us to write connectedly or regularly. We have been kept busy from daylight to dark with reconnaissances, outposts, transport, kits and gear, defence prepara-