

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, detachinent 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-

tions of Naawpoort, and getting ready to move at any minute. The horses are fairly well in heart, but seem to feel the climate and do not feed well; trust this will mend: we have lost fourteen in all, and ten are more or less sick, but we have plenty of mounts yet for our men. Trooper Hunt is being returned to New Zealand from the Cape. Just received orders to advance on to the Arundel Plain, bivouac all night, as the enemy has been reported in that direction. Sergeant-Major Rogers and the farrier-sergeants have done excellent work. The work done by the men, considering all, is very good. The field rations are not at all a welcome, but they are settling down to it. They must get used to it. There are no means of transporting any extras for them.

I must recommend to your notice the great amount of work done by the shoeing-smiths: they have under great difficulties done a great amount of work, and are shoeing our mule teams. Bandoliers and Webley revolvers have been issued, also reins instead of head-ropes, and many other articles which you will learn of in due course.

ARUNDEL, 21ST DECEMBER, 1899.

I have the honour to report to you that we have worked our way up to Arundel, and have been here now since the 8th December, having been pushed up from Naawpoort to cover the advance to occupy Arundel, bivouacking at nights. On the following morning advanced in support of the Carabiniers (6th Dragoon Guards), the New South Wales Lancers coming up afterwards, and pushed on to Taaibosch, held by the Boers with riflemen and four guns. A general advance was made on this. The Imperial Mounted Infantry mistook some directions, and I had to order fifty men of No. 1 Company, under Captain Davies, to extend and line a low-lying line of kopjes. This was done, and, as the event developed, they were ordered to change their position and occupy another higher kopje. From there the enemy held on oblique to their right. About 900 yards a fire was opened on the Boers, who replied, but retired to another post about 1,200 yards. Three Boers were either killed or wounded as they retired. These positions were maintained during the day, a dropping exchange of fire being kept up while the reconnaissance continued. In the meantime the guns opened a long-range fire on the supports. Several shells fell quite close while we were moving into cover. All were steady and cool under the fire, and Colonel Porter, 6th Dragoon Guards, who was in command, expressed his satisfaction. General French was also present in the afternoon, and was much pleased.

Saturday.

Another advance was made to work round the enemy's right, but very little work was done from then to the 18th, the time being taken up with active patrolling, rapid turnouts with Artillery and mounted men to shell points, &c. Patrols several times fired on, one wounding a horse on leg ridden by Saddler-Sergeant Harris.

The Contingent has been kept very busy, and the horses have somewhat fallen away. On the 18th, at 3 a.m., the two New Zealand companies, with eight guns R.H.A., started to move on a reconnaissance round the left of the Boers on Taaibosch. The General Officer Commanding (General French) and his staff accompanied the reconnaissance. At about 6 a.m. the guns opened fire on Jansfontein Farm, where a sergeant had been killed and a trooper wounded and left by the 6th Dragoon Guards a few days before. During the shelling it was necessary to dispose No. 2 Company to protect the rear and right of Artillery by occupying a line of kopjes in that direction. Part of No. 1 Company had to be pushed on to a big kopje on extreme right of farm. After shelling, the farm was occupied by enveloping it by about seventy men of No. 1 Company. The Artillery, being then under shell fire of enemy, drew back. General French and staff now came up to farm to view the laager and camp, which could be plainly seen on the high hill of Taaibosch in the distance, 4,000 to 5,000 yards away. While in this state numbers of the enemy were seen moving rapidly from kopje to kopje to envelop our position. Shortly afterwards a heavy fire was opened, and our men held well to their positions; but as more of the enemy kept coming up and enveloping us, the General, having satisfied himself, ordered us to retire on to the guns. This was no easy task, but, thanks to the steadiness of the men, we got the division from the far kopje retired on to the farm. Lieutenant Lindsay was in charge of it, and behaved well. I placed a small party to open a covering fire to assist this retirement; this did some damage to the Boers. The fire from the enemy was a perfect hail by this time, and they fired four shells (which, fortunately, did not burst) into the farm at this time.

Whilst these parties were coming in a horse in a group held by a No. 3 was shot dead. Private 44 (S. R. Bradford) was reported killed in a nullah close by a wire fence, which latter hampered us very much. I collected the men under the best cover available, and from there we attempted to occupy another kopje, but while doing so the scouts reported more Boers on that flank rapidly coming up. The General ordered me to retire the whole. This was done in an open interval, and at a steady pace. We moved to flank so as not to mask our guns, which opened fire to cover us. Trooper Maunder was slightly wounded in the wrist, and four horses had slight bullet-wounds. It is simply marvellous that ten or twelve were not killed. On rejoining the Artillery the reconnaissance was marched back to camp, and we have been resting since, as the General said we had been overworked for the past fortnight.

On the Red Cross going out to recover the body of S. R. Bradford, it was found he had been badly wounded, and had been removed to the Boer hospital. Information was also gained that the 6th Dragoon Guardsman was also there and getting well. The staff remarked that the affair was evidently a trap, and that it was only the excellent scouting of the New-Zealanders that enabled us to withdraw in safety, and still allow them to gain the information they did.

On return to camp General French directed me to inform the men how entirely satisfied he was, and that, as he had personal opportunity of seeing them under fire, he had every confidence in the Contingent.

Where all are working well it would be invidious to name any in particular. Captain Davies and Captain Madocks are working splendidly. All the lieutenants have had patrol and party commands, and carried out their duties well. The non-commissioned officers do good work, and altogether the colony should be well pleased.

Re the above engagement at Jassfontein three Boer ambulances were observed to come down from their position to the farm, so they must have suffered considerably. The enemy's position has now been well determined.

ARUNDEL, 22ND DECEMBER, 1899.

We have great trouble with the saddles, the D's continually drawing out, and many articles are lost thereby. It seems necessary for our New Zealand Defence Department to adopt the forms used by the Imperial service. At first it was most bewildering, and caused an immense amount of work, our not being acquainted with them. Captain Ward is engaged on the staff as a sort of colonial staff officer for information, and greatly assists. The horses are not doing so well as they should; they do not take kindly to the forage, and green forage is out of the question; but as we are likely to rest for some days they will probably pick up. There are not so many sore backs as might be expected. We have now 230 horses, having lost twelve *en route* by sea and nine on land; four had to be shot by order of V.D. officer (lung trouble); one shot in action, Jassfontein; one lost in a small runaway (other companies lost more); the rest died from various causes, one from eating tulip-grass while out on cossack post.

The health of the men is good, an average of about five being in field hospital for a few days at a time, diarrhoea, strains, and minor complaints being the cause.

The boots are not good; many pairs are already worn out in the soles, although we have just been one month ashore.

The men are now accustomed to the field rations allowed, the cooks having picked up the method of making the most of them; the complaints of the first week ashore as to shortness or want of food have disappeared. There happens to be plenty fresh mutton, as the New Zealand patrols have brought in several mobs taken from the enemy's position, and to-day also brought in fourteen horses.

ARUNDEL, 23RD DECEMBER, 1899.

We are still resting, and, judging from appearances, will be here for some time to come yet. Even these three days' rest have improved our horses. It is a great pity the enemy will not come and attack us; they get every chance, but will not take it. The stony kopjes are terrible affairs to tackle, and the plains to cross to reach them offer no cover at all. The moment any party comes within gun-range they get shelled; and to come within rifle-fire draws volley upon volley.

Please tell the Treasury people the New Zealand money is in the Standard Bank, Cape Town. I sent last mail the abstract and statement. There has been no draw on the New Zealand moneys since, as I think the Imperial rate will suffice for the men while on the field.

ARUNDEL, 23RD DECEMBER, 1899.

A point has just arisen about our hats. I will probably have to requisition for helmets. Several cases have occurred where colonial troops with hats have been fired upon by our troops in mistake.

ARUNDEL, 29TH DECEMBER, 1899.

Since my last report (in which mention was made of the reconnaissance at Jassfontein, and with which I enclosed an eye-sketch) very little has been done; a much needed rest has been enjoyed, especially for the horses. This has enabled me to complete a great deal of necessary returns and book-work, exercise and drill of transport, &c. Of course, our regular turn has been taken on outpost and patrolling, both by night and day. The Contingent are getting old hands, and turn out to what comes along. You will also be glad to know they have earned a good name for punctuality, no matter at what hour they are required.

To-day was of a most severe description; a heavy thunderstorm, with the heaviest hail I have ever seen, fell and completely swamped the camp. Many horses stampeded. The Contingent stood well to their horses, and none got away. A greater part of the afternoon has been taken up with units collecting loose horses. Lieutenant A. C. Neave, who sat for examinations at Christchurch, has been ordered to join the 1st Battalion Yorkshires at Cape Town, and left to-day. As we are really short of officers I recommended Sergeant J. Hughes, who already holds a commission in New Zealand, Napier, to be appointed to fill the place. The G.O.C. here approves, and states we are lucky in having a commissioned officer available, so I have to-day put Mr. Hughes in orders as a subaltern to No. 2 Company.

The health of the men is good, considering everything. By cable I am informed that another Contingent leaves on 15th January. Hope they are mounted. One hears a great deal in New Zealand about crack shots wanted for this. Now, sir, you cannot get a sight of the enemy to aim at. The rocky kopjes are just perfect cover, and its only the guns bursting and the mounted men threatening their flanks or rear that stirs them out, and then they just travel like deer to the next. Of course, good shooting is necessary; but I mean that Infantry do not get the chance to aim at the Boers, as is the general opinion. The latter never show themselves, and never attack unless they get you trapped, or have greater numbers than you have. Plenty guns, and lyddite if possible, with Mounted Infantry and Cavalry, are necessary to move them out.

The officers and non-commissioned officers have now the work quite at their finger-ends, and it must be satisfactory to you, as it is to me, to know that while other colonial Contingents here have committed several serious errors in regard to duties, such as not being to time, and mistaking routes, this Contingent has so far always been ready.

RENSBURG, 2ND JANUARY, 1900.

I am afraid this war will last longer than people imagine, but the number of troops and better guns to arrive will, or should, help everything. Our force here is about 2,800 all told. You know the proportion that camp routine takes off. The Boers are nearly of equal strength opposite us, and in position, so that we should have 2,000 or 3,000 more troops here. Picked shots have little show. There is nothing to see to shoot at until you get very close, and the new weapons any one can shoot.

RENSBURG, 2ND JANUARY, 1900.

Last letter was cut short, and had not even time to write home an account of an early start on the 29th December, with 48 tons provisions and forage, for Taaisboch (shown in my last sketch), to find it evacuated. We then started off (the three squadrons—6th Dragoon Guards, two companies Mounted Infantry, and section Royal Horse Artillery) down and over the position, and thence as hard as we could to catch up the retreating force. We caught up to its tail going into Colesberg, but they had better artillery than we, so we could only occupy the kopje, shown in front of the sketch enclosed, which the G.O.C. intrusted to us, giving me the personal order that he had faith in us, and the position must be held until relieved. That night a company of Mounted Infantry came up to assist, and an outpost was formed to suit this awful country. During the late afternoon some slight firing was exchanged to keep back cheeky Boer patrols. They always bolted at once. We held this position for thirty-eight hours before relief came, as the main camp was being moved from Arundel to Rensburg. This is the time we learned that a scrap of hard biscuit and the remains of the contents of a bully-beef tin, with a sip of water, was sweeter than any meal ever before tasted. As we were not relieved till evening on the 31st, we had completely run out of food. Our men are just learning if they eat everything up at the first two meals there is none for the next six or eight meals, or even for the daily evening meal. The bed on a rocky kopje is too difficult to describe; it must be experienced. However, all ended well, and by arranging alternate companies we now have a night in camp and a night on fore-post.

As escort to the two guns before mentioned, No. 2 Company got a fair amount of shelling, but as this experience has now fallen to our lot on several occasions it creates no feeling, but it was peculiar the first time the Maxim-Vicker, or some such repeater, opened. These Maxim-Vickers fire five to ten shots in succession, and have been nicknamed "ten-a-penny."

The 1st January was spent on fore-post, and before dawn an attack was made by our whole force under the G.O.C. All day our 12 (? pounder) guns boomed, and succeeded at about 11 a.m. in silencing the Boer guns. The "ten-a-penny" went in about three-quarters of an hour. We could from our flank position see the shield and gunners blown up by the shells. I cannot at present give details, but the result of shrapnel falling among men and horses is terrible.

After us a flank party under Colonel Porter (6th Dragoon Guards), and two squadrons Carabiniers, with two guns, shelled a kopje held by the Boers on enemy's left. His instructions were not to commit himself to any attack or get held, but merely to prevent the enemy getting away in that direction. About 10.30 it was supposed the kopje was empty, and twenty-five New Zealand men, with forty Mounted Infantry, were sent to feel up to it, dismount, and see. I sent the New Zealand men out in wide interval to work from one kopje to another towards the big kopje. The Mounted Infantry were called up from another part, and thus came into support. They gained the first kopje all right, but on occupying the second the fire from the enemy's big gun became heavy. Our two guns at once moved forward and shelled to help us. The good pluck of the New Zealand men carried them on to another kopje, between which was a 400-yards open space. Colonel Porter directed me to go up and extricate the New-Zealanders, as more than what was required had been done. We had no infantry to support the party, nor keep the Boers from working on to our right flank, except the two guns, which had only nine rounds each left (the ammunition column not being expected until 2 p.m.). The "double," from about 1,500 yards to a mile, under fire, to catch them up, had better be told by some one else.

Thanks to the extreme steadiness with which the men behaved, the retirement was executed by rushes back by alternate parties from cover to cover. A regular cross-fire was kept up all the time on us. The Carabiniers in the meantime had been dismounted, and occupied a high isolated kopje, marked ⊕ on sketch enclosed, and opened a fire to cover us. Colonel Porter had a number of horses sent to meet us, and even at this point, about 3,000 yards from the kopje held by the Boers, the spent bullets fell. No casualty occurred, although there were a hundred marvellous escapes. Thus did half of the New-Zealanders spend New Year's Day; the other half were exhausted, and having a spell in camp. To-day (2nd) I am having the same, and it is just a relief. Want of sleep, with short food, and hard rocks, soon tell, unless one can get a rest occasionally. Again I must tell you that Colonel Porter, commanding Brigade 1st Cavalry, of which we are now a part, was very much pleased, and most anxious during the period we were engaged, as all who witnessed it felt sure the loss would be twelve to sixteen. Since we have been in South Africa, the loose formation of our work has been admired and commented upon.

I am pleased to recommend to you the services of Dr. Burns since he joined us from the Cape eight days ago. They are very short of medical officers. He is most attentive and willing.

During the time all the above was happening the main body were finely engaged on the enemy's right. The Berks Regiment ousted the Boers from one kopje. I have just heard that the Boer loss has been great. It must have been, as the R.H.A. got behind them, as well as in front. We, from where we were, saw much damage was done to the enemy. All the officers are working well, and so are the non-commissioned officers and men. No one could wish for a better lot. Many officers have asked the question where we get the men from.

SLINGERSFONTEIN, 13TH JANUARY, 1900.

Since last writing from Rensburg we have been twice on artillery escort and under shell-fire, one shell, which luckily did not burst, landing about 2 ft. from one of the No. 1 Company (Private Enderby). On Tuesday, the 9th, the 1st Cavalry Brigade, of which we form a part, left Rensburg at 5 a.m., 6th Dragoon Guards, two squadrons Household, one battery R.H.A., one section R.E., one squad N.S.W.L. two companies N.Z.M.R., and, making a long detour, arrived at Slingsfontein about midday, and occupied same. This is directly on the enemy's left flank, and threatens his rear or line of communication, and since the 10th both sides have kept one another very lively, every man and horse being now very tired. On approaching Slingsfontein a long row of kopjes, which run from south of our camp toward flank of enemy, was found necessary to be occupied. No. 2 Company were ordered to occupy it in three divisions at good distance, files at open intervals. Captain Madocks took the company at a smart gallop under cover of the kopjes, and No. 2 occupied the desired point. About forty shots sufficed to keep the Boers from advancing on to this point, and it has been retained ever since, the New Zealand men being relieved next day by a company of Yorks, who continue to hold it. The following day it was necessary, on account of the extreme activity of the enemy, to occupy a high kopje overlooking and commanding the camp. This was intrusted to the New Zealand men, and we are just now true mounted infantry, and hold this kopje, one company relieving the other, and when the other is in camp it acts in defence or reserve if required. This morning the necessity of this was apparent, as shortly after dawn the No. 2 Company, being on the hill, had to open fire on end of it, but they galloped off to their old point when fire was opened. During last night we were stirred up by the report that an attack might be expected which kept us all on the "go," but the advance, checked as above reported by No. 2 Company, was all that occurred.

We are away twelve miles from Rensburg, and off the railway-line, all our supplies, &c., having to be by supply column. Some Infantry came up last night, and it will now be a difficult job for the enemy to turn us out unless he gets well reinforced. General French has similar camps in front and on the right flank of Boers in Colesberg, so they must think they are getting bottled up. If we had more men and better guns we would, I think, take them all prisoners. This fills in the heads of what the New-Zealanders have been doing since leaving Rensburg to date, with plenty of hard work in between the advances.

Lord Roberts is supposed to have arrived at Cape two days ago, and we all hope some movement will shortly result. It is simply wonderful the smartness of the Boers in occupying sound positions quickly, and shifting from them; also, when necessary, holding them. You never can tell whether they are in force or only a few.

Horses have improved with the past three days' spell. Two have died since last writing, and, as they were both weakly ones and not likely to improve in time to be of any use, they are best away. One thing you can rest assured of, sir, they receive every attention. Captains Davies and Madocks pay great attention to their respective companies, and the subalterns are now doing good work. The non-commissioned officers and men work with a will. There are, as may be expected, a few growlers, but, getting no support, they are settling down.

I am glad to be able to state that up to date both General French and Colonel Porter, Brigade Commander, have continued to express their satisfaction at the behaviour and manner the work has been carried out.

The mails from New Zealand are very erratic, and very few letters have reached us yet.

KLEINFONTEIN, 21ST JANUARY, 1900.

This is Sunday, and late last night a slight affair, described in report, kept Mr. Boer in his place, and as unless you meddle him on Sunday he does not meddle you, and gives one a chance to write. Sir, this is no picnic. Many people in New Zealand laughed at us. Many people said we would never get past the Cape, or be put on a bridge, but we have never stopped. Even officers of the regulars say we have had more than our share. It is a good thing; it will help to make New-Zealanders serious in defence; and, if spared, you can depend on Davis, Madocks, and self doing all in our power to assist you on return. The knowledge we have gained is already immense, and I hope it will get Madocks some recognition.

It is sad to part with the three brave fellows who have met their death. I hope in the cathedral of each town they came from a tablet will be placed on the wall to their memory.

The heat of midday on these hills, the bivouac between the stones, and the cold of 3 a.m. to 6 a.m., wants feeling to be understood. With regard to the water, you can tell the hotel or temperance people that there will be no run on whiskey-and-soda on the return of the Contingent to New Zealand; it will be good, cold, wholesome water that will be asked for. One never missing the water till the well runs dry is now understood by two hundred New-Zealanders.

One thing troubles us all, and that is the slow process of getting mails from New Zealand. Only twice have we got any; that cannot be helped, but the worst is, some come one day, and four or five after the rest, and those who receive no letters look so glum.

I am sorry that I could not send you an eye-sketch or two of the past five days, but it is impossible; it was move all the time, sleep in clothes. Oh, for a jolly good swim in cool water! We are all so grimy and shabby. I am certain I shall have to purchase uniforms for all ranks to come back in. Feet are sticking through boots. Transport is so slow that many things I have ordered up from the depot have not reached us yet.

There was hope that we might get back to New Zealand for Easter, but that is not possible now. If we had, I guess Davies in the North and self in the South would rouse the picnic camps a bit.

Since last writing you from Rensburg much has happened, and a deal of ground been covered, with consequent hard work, with night and day reliefs, &c. My last report told you of our

occupation of Slingsfontein, from which a good deal of reconnaissances, &c., were executed. On Wednesday night (10th January) a key position in the defence of the camp, now called "New Zealand Hill," was handed over to me with the two companies, to hold and relieve until infantry arrived. From that time I organized the reliefs and posted same, our two companies relieving each other in twenty-four-hour reliefs. The enemy were on the other end of the kopje, and came up to long-range fire, despite the artillery. For three or four days the sniping continued at each other. On the morning of the 13th a company of Yorks Regiment arrived and reinforced No. 1 Company. On the night of the 14th No. 2 Company relieved No. 1, and from early morning a heavy fire was kept up by the enemy, rather more than on the morning before. About 10.30 the enemy began to rush up a dead piece of ground just where the New Zealand and Yorks pickets joined. Captain Madocks made his way down there and did most excellent work, the Yorks having had their officer badly wounded, sergeant-major shot dead, and other losses. Little fire had been used by our men at this time, as little is ever seen of the enemy. By this time the enemy had come up to about 30 yards below the sangars we always build when having to occupy any kopje. The York men fixed bayonets and seven or eight of them rushed up to the front breastwork, whereupon the Boers retired to some boulders and breastworks a short way off, and fire was exchanged, the enemy's bullets going through the York sangar, wounding and killing some. The New-Zealanders then came running up, and, fixing bayonets, were led by Captain Madocks to a second charge. Sergeant Gourlay and Trooper Connell fell, shot, but the Boers bolted from all their positions, showing large numbers in flight. Captain Madocks estimates from forty to fifty Boers rushed the sangars. A heavy fire was kept up between the two parties, our men firing 2,450 rounds. There is no doubt that the action of Captain Madocks saved the hill, as the Yorks, from loss of their officers, were fast becoming disheartened. This action ended about 11.30. Reinforcements of another company of Yorks, and the guns going out to flank of hill, kept matters as before, and the pickets were relieved as usual that night.

General French was delighted, and the following morning addressed the New Zealand men, saying he had once before reported their conduct to the Commander-in-Chief, after the action on the 18th December, at Jassfontein, already reported to you, and he had greater pleasure in again reporting the New Zealand men to the Commander-in-Chief.

I trust that the services of Captain Madocks on the 15th January will be recognised by the authorities. Both companies have now been well tried. The companies are just now separated. No. 2 is at Slingsfontein, and four days ago No. 1 was told off as part of a flying column to occupy a rebel post at Potsfontein. I accompanied the party on Colonel Porter's staff, Captain Davies commanding the company. Potsfontein was occupied with four guns, one squadron Guards, two squadrons 6th Dragoon Guards, and ourselves. The New Zealand Mounted Rifle men had again to occupy the key position, and hold it for the day and night. Next evening, at very short notice, the New-Zealanders and two troops of Life Guards had to march out and join Major Rimington, at Kleinfontein, right under the Boers. This was done.

Yesterday afternoon, about 3 p.m., a general turn-out at short notice was necessary to keep the enemy back, he showing signs of aggressiveness—and no wonder, as we are near his line of communication. No. 1 had a 'go' for a kopje, but it was too strongly held, the patrol and covering-scouts only being engaged, as the fire showed it to be widely held. I directed Captain Davies to occupy the kopje covering it, and also one that would prevent him turning our flank and cutting us off. This was successfully done, in conjunction with the Rimingtons and Guards, and two guns, hastily sent up from Potsfontein Camp: the Boers were checked, and after dusk retired. To-day there are no signs of them, and yesterday the main part of the division started with two howitzers with lyddite, and caused great stir and commotion among the Boers. We suppose they are back on the Noropont Road. We cannot go much further, as we are connected in the air by Potsfontein, and the keeping up supplies is difficult.

Both horses and men here know what it is to be short of food, and we are all dead tired, but willing. We have only heliograph communication, and by an occasional orderly. I hear that No. 2 Company is still at Slingsfontein, and doing light patrol duty. The country round here seems fairly clear of rebels and Boers, but they still hold out at Colesberg. General French and General Clements were up this morning for a couple of hours, and we will probably rest for a few days.

I regret to have to report that on the 15th January, 1900, at Slingsfontein, two men were killed: (1.) Sergeant Samuel Gourley, No. 104, No. 2 Company (Dunedin, Otago), was shot in three places in head about 11 a.m.; he was still breathing, and brought to camp, but expired at 10 p.m. same night. All that was possible was done for him by the medical staff. A first-rate sergeant, most popular with the men; a sterling soldier, and one whose loss will be felt by all during the remainder of the campaign. The sympathy of Sergeant Gourley's glorious death should live in the minds of all New-Zealanders. (2.) Trooper John Vaille Douglas Connell, No. 119, No. 2 Company (Auckland), was killed on the same day and time. He was a steady, painstaking, and excellent soldier. His name will be remembered by all, with the sergeant he died beside, and most heartfelt sympathy of us all is felt for his mother in Auckland.

There were no more casualties to-day, though many marvellous escapes. I have at all times tried to ingrain into our men the necessity of taking or making intelligent cover, and am glad to say this is well attended to, and, although they have been many times exposed to fire, none have been hurt while in cover. The loss of the two men named was during the charge.

By the time that sick, casualties, cooks, batmen, horse-holders, transport guards, and other necessary orderlies and details are deducted I always am short of men when dismounted duty has to be done, and have continually to remind the Brigade Adjutant and Staff Officer that our company does not mean the same strength as the Imperial companies. Again, sir, you will agree with me that the present companies have gained a great amount of experience, and know what both shell- and rifle-fire is.

Please thank His Excellency the Governor for his kind cable, and say that Captain Ward is well and of great value, always cheery and happy, and in his position gets many items of news for us.

KLEINFONTEIN, 27TH JANUARY, 1900.

I have the honour to report to you that since last writing matters have been more or less at a standstill, waiting for some developments, we know not what. The No. 1 Company, with the Rimington Guides, and one squadron Life Guards, still hang on to this advanced post—in the air, so to speak—and No. 2 Company are still at Slingersfontein, some eleven miles away.

Since my last letter I am sorry to have to state that on the 25th, during a reconnaissance when a portion of the N.Z.M.R. were on escort to four guns, two orderlies (Troopers H. Booth and Cullen) were detailed for the General. While on this duty a shell burst among the horses of the staff, held by above orderlies, with the result that No. 116, Harold Booth, Oamaru (next-of-kin, C. W. Cooke, Agent, Tyne Street, Oamaru), was killed, a ball from the shell passing through his head. I have written the details to his relations. Two horses were also killed.

I have also to report that No. 35, Trooper A. Taylor, has had to be invalided, through chronic rheumatism and physical unfitness for work, and will probably be sent back to New Zealand. Since coming to the front four men have been killed in action (viz., Sergeant Gourlay, Privates Bradford, Connell, and Booth), and six men (Privates Hunt, Young, Hurford, Ryan, Wallace, and Taylor) have been invalided from accident and physical ailments. Details have been furnished you from time to time.

The equipment, clothing, and boots are now in a bad state, but am drawing further supplies from Ordnance Department at Naauwpoort, and hope to be able to keep my men as well clothed as any other of the Cavalry 1st Brigade.

Following so close on my last report, there is no more to write, only again to let you know that all the work done by the Contingent is meeting with great approval, and the General Officer is still perfectly satisfied. I can assure you, each man has an interest, and when on patrol or picket all use their eyes, ears, and intelligence, and, being most steady under fire, can be depended on. It is acknowledged that their outpost work is of the best, and reliance is generally placed on any reports made or brought in by them.

RENSBURG, 6TH FEBRUARY, 1900.

I have the honour to again furnish a short report of the doings of our New Zealand Contingent in South Africa. Since last writing, when I reported the death of Private H. Booth, killed by a shell, no further casualty has occurred, except one horse shot in the head, but since recovered, and two horses wounded on 25th January by shell, and which had to be destroyed.

Both companies are at Slingersfontein, and, with No. 1 Company at Kleinfontein, have been ordered in to form part of a flying column. I am at present at Rensburg, having sent No. 1 by train yesterday to Orange River. No. 2 Company is with me, and have just (9.30 p.m.) completed all transport and settling up for entraining No. 2 Company for the same destination, leaving at 6 a.m., 7th February. This column is being formed of tried men, and it is looked on as an honour to get ordered on to it. No one knows really what or where it has to do or go.

I regret to state that so many men are being invalided. By last post I gave you particulars of Privates Hunt, Young, Hurford, Ryan, R. Wallace, and A. R. Taylor, and since then No. 53 J. Jenks, No. 31 J. Paterson, No. 6 Sergeant Bond, No. 85 T. Gaudin, and No. 103 Sergeant Gwatkins are in hospital. Sergeant Bond, from a kick from horse on shin, has gone bad again, and a slight operation is necessary. A fortnight, or at most a month, will likely put him right. With Sergeant Gwatkins it will take some time to tell what is the matter; the others will in all probability be sent to New Zealand; for the most part their ailment is chronic—I mean they should not have left on an expedition of this sort, but should have told the medical examiners in New Zealand about their past. I will by next mail be able to send you complete medical reports on all these men mentioned in both letters.

The horses are rapidly being reduced. As before reported, your Contingent was put to constant hard and important work immediately after arrival. General French again yesterday, when looking over No. 1 Company horses, told me that we had worked more than our share. I am drawing nine remounts to-morrow, leaving eighteen in horse depot at Naauwpoort. I hope the Second Contingent can spare some horses; they will have a better chance of breaking them in to change of food and climate, there being now plenty of troops in the country. They will not be so urgently required as your No. 1 Contingent, who had at once to take its share to prevent the further advance of the enemy into Cape Colony.

My officers continue in health and work in a hearty manner. Among the non-commissioned officers Sergeants-Major Cardale and Burr are for some time past well up to their duties.

Having written you only last week there is little to report, but from the time we take our place in the flying column we are *en route* to join there should be something to report, and it will be my endeavour to always send you a fair and correct report.

KIMBERLEY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1900.

Since posting my last from Kleinfontein the N.Z.M.R. were ordered to march to Rensburg; thence to entrain to De Aar; and thence by same train to Orange River, which station we reached on the 8th February, detrained, and camped on north side of the river with Kitchener's and Nisbet's Horse and a company of Imperial Mounted Infantry. I was placed in command for outpost purposes. Lieutenants Wall and Pilkington, of the New Zealand Permanent Artillery, joined us at 7.30 p.m. from the Cape. The Cape authorities had no knowledge of what they were sent out for, and considered that they must be intended for the Artillery portion of the 2nd Contingent,

expected to arrive in a fortnight. Having no spare horses or positions for these officers, I issued rail warrants for their return to the Cape, and a letter to the Chief of Staff (Colonel Trotter) at the Cape explaining my action, as we were to march next day. Thus these officers will await the 2nd Contingent, for duty with the guns.

9th February.—Ordered to move out and form part of a large Cavalry and Mounted Infantry column (Mounted Infantry under Colonel H. Hannay) at 8 p.m. All transport reduced one-half, so tents and large portion of valises had to be left at Orange River with a small detail. Bivouacked for few hours before daylight, and at daylight moved on to Rannah, on the border of the Free State.

10th February.—Afternoon, moved out as a detached force with Mounted Infantry, N.S.W. Mounted Rifles, division Rimingtons, and N.Z.M.R., under Lieut.-Colonel De Lisle. Marched till 11 p.m. Bivouacked one hour's march from supposed position occupied by enemy. Object: to keep enemy engaged, to allow a large supply-column of five miles length to pass the other side of hills to the next station.

11th February.—Moving just at daylight. The N.Z.M.R., acting as Cavalry on the exposed flank, searched two farms, reconnoitred the hills, and on arriving at a farm under Boer position were fired at. Then I spread them on a screen reconnaissance, and reported two kopjes occupied, from which we were fired at; only one horse slightly wounded. On Colonel De Lisle receiving the information we were withdrawn, and he attacked about five miles of front with an inadequate force. The N.Z.M.R. were dismounted, and pushed on to occupy the farm and gaps, and act on the left of Mounted Infantry of the right attack. Dismounting my men we pushed on, extended line, occupied farm, formed on left of the Imperial Mounted Infantry, and advanced by rushes. The Mounted Infantry got stopped, and along with them we lay for four hours, with little cover, exposed to fire, and returned same. Orders were sent to retire slowly. This was done, and we then learned that the left attack had been a failure, and the losses were about thirty killed and sixty prisoners taken. We remained till dark, being ordered to form rear-guard on the march to next camp at Ronypan. Before leaving, and as dark was coming on, a movement was noticed among the Boers, who were searching the low ground with ambulances, and about a score of the Bedford Mounted Infantry seemed as if escaping. I strengthened our rear party under Lieutenant Lindsay, and they succeeded, by moving toward the enemy, in bringing away twenty-three men and one captain, the Boers not seeming to care to press after them with our mounted men in sight, as I also brought the rest of the Contingent into view, as if ready to attack. The Bedfords were suffering very much from want of water, and we had to put them on our horses till led horses could be stopped from the main body to mount them, which was two hours afterwards, and pitch dark.

The enemy opened with two guns on the force late in the afternoon, killing several horses and two men. No casualties occurred among the N.Z.M.R., as when retiring under fire the men kept well in hand, and worked back by small parties, as directed. All officers and men except horse-holders were engaged.

12th February.—Reached Ronypan about 2 a.m. Bivouacked at 9 a.m. Left with the now increased column for Ramdain. Our transport again changed and reduced, and much had to be left behind. Long and trying march to Riet River Drift. Bivouacked with 1st Cavalry Brigade.

13th February.—Started 7 a.m. morning afterward with a large convoy and ammunition column for De Keil Drift, on the Modder River. No water all day. Grass fires numerous. Wells and dams dry or destroyed. Arrived at drift 5 p.m. Terrible heat. The troops there were still engaged with the enemy, and the sound of guns—rifles and Maxims—continued till dark. I believe the proper name of this drift is Middle-bosch. Were ordered to form part of Colonel Alderson's Mounted Infantry Brigade, although the commander of 1st Cavalry Brigade asked for our 173 men to be left under his command. Here we learnt we were part of the flying column for relief of Kimberley, about five thousand mounted men—R.H.A., Cavalry, Mounted Infantry, R.E., and telegraph-men.

14th February.—Left at 10 a.m. Three days' forage and rations on man and horse. Please imagine the Christmas-tree appearance and weight our horses carried. Valises, &c., all left here, and we all went on with what we stood up in. A fierce engagement took place as we moved out, the troops remaining at this place engaging the enemy with R.H.A., two lyddites, and infantry and the order for the flying columns was to push through under cover of the force engaged, and go on with the march. Shells hissed and rushed through the air. Rifle-fire and Maxims all round, and our Cavalry charged up the plain, and killed a number of the enemy who attempted to bar the way. Several small kopjes had to be cleared, but by dash, &c., at 12 noon the column was clear, but the little transport allowed had to remain behind. Marched all day under burning sun. No water, and many alarms. From a rising piece of ground, in the distance were seen the housetops of Kimberley, and away on our left another part of our force was seen converging on Kimberley, and about equidistant away. Movement, even with tired men and horses, became more rapid, and the higher parts were soon occupied. While halted (during the occupying of a Boer laager, or post) the retiring Boers opened fire from a small gun on the Mounted Infantry Brigade, of which the N.Z.M.R. was on the right (the exposed) flank. I had ordered open interval in company columns massed. Two shells dropped among the columns, but the angle of descent was so great that they buried themselves in the soft veldt, and exploded without harm. Three more fell further to the left among the Queenslanders and Mounted Infantry. Four guns, R.H.A., opened, and the enemy bolted in hot haste. March was resumed, and the outskirts of Kimberley entered, and we bivouacked at dawn about a mile and a half from town, and Kimberley was relieved (15th instant). The last day's route of the column could easily be followed by the dead horses, kits and rifles on the road. Many horses dropped and died at the dams from exhaustion, heavy burden, and want of water.

16th February.—Leaving bivouac at 9 a.m., the column we formed, with a wide sweeping movement eastward, turned the Boers out of two laagers; and to see them bolt, and our R.H.A. shell and Lancers charge them, was refreshing after the long spell of kopje-work. Queenslanders and New-Zealanders were ordered to take Macfarlane's Station (that is, De Beer's stud farm, about twelve miles north of Kimberley, and in the line of retreat of the Boers), and to hold the same till relieved. This was successfully accomplished on foot with some firing from the Boers, but the R.H.A. kept shell going till we got close. The attack on it was by two flanks and front. This position two companies of Queenslanders and No. 1 N.Z. held till relieved on Monday, the 18th. No. 2 getting engaged further to the left, returned to Kimberley the night of the 16th instant with the rest of Mounted Infantry.

18th February.—Relieved by Mounted Infantry and Queenslanders. No. 1 Company, with whom I remained, as ordered, to be second in command at Macfarlane's, returned to Kimberley and rejoined No. 2. The horses are really done now, our work having been constant ever since arrival, and no exchanges or remounts yet obtainable, although long promised.

20th February.—The fittest horses were ordered to be ready to march from all units, and all the companies, regiments, and battalions had to form composite companies from their units, those with unshod or unfit horses to remain till shod, remounted, or recovered; thus I had to draw from both companies, and was able to send on eighty-four men and horses. The remainder are here, besides other details, such as ten on transport guard, fourteen men and horses at Orange River, the number of sick making up the balance. These are to rejoin here. The Queensland men here were only able to send on the same number as New Zealand, although their Contingent numbers 270, and they have had 160 remounts since arrival in Africa—a fortnight after we did. Our transport has not yet come up, but is expected to-morrow. I remained here with the New Zealand men at Kimberley, because all our stores, camp equipment, shoes, &c., are in different places, and many of the men are sick. Some advance of pay was wanted, and so as to get these matters of administration and reorganization attended to I considered my duty to the Contingent was here, and it has since proved right. We expect to all be together again in about a week or ten days. It may seem strange the splitting of the units, but even the 6th Dragoon Guards, Scots Greys, 12th Lancers, 16th Lancers, Mounted Infantry, and all the mounted forces have had to do the same.

Again the Contingent has done its work well, and all feel very honoured in having been brought so far to share the hardships of the Kimberley relief column.

Horses.—As you can already see, the horses have done wonders, and the officers have paid great attention to them. The majority are run down and want a longer spell than they are likely to get, but to-day the remount officer hopes to give us forty or fifty to replace our weakest.

Men.—Last report gave a list of men no longer fit for service in this war: three more have rheumatism, but will likely be ready to move with us again. Four were left at Orange River; of these I have not yet heard. Of course, these men are not dangerously ill—only unfit to go on.

Three nights ago, when the brigade was camped in low hollow ground beside a dam, one of those tremendous thunderstorms came on, and in a few minutes the place was flooded. In half an hour it was 6 in. to 18 in. deep all over, and for two hours no one could move. Everything was on the ground, and my papers and accounts, &c., are almost ruined. Dark came on, and shifting in the dark is no joke with large bodies. It will put us to great trouble next pay, but I suppose that is part of war; and many others were worse off.

The paper here states that a third New Zealand Contingent has sailed. If I might suggest, horses should be sent instead of men, for the remounting of Contingents already here.

POSITION OF THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED RIFLES ON THE 21ST DAY OF FEBRUARY, 1900.

Headquarters, Kimberley, after Relief March.

Killed in action—

Sergeant Gourley, Troopers Bradford, Connell, Booth 4

Invalided to Cape for New Zealand—

Sergeants Gwatkins and Bond; Troopers Hunt, Hurford, R. Wallace, Jenks, Young, Ryan, C. R. Taylor, Paterson 10

Base, Capetown, storeman—Trooper Coffey 1

Horse hospital—Trooper Ensor 1

Baggage-guard from Middle Bosch (not yet arrived)—

Regimental Sergeant-major Rogers; Sergeant Rockstrow; Corporal McDonald; Troopers McAuley, W. B. Macpherson, Wilson, Hodgen, Hansen, Foster, Dickenson, Joyce, Bartrop, Boucher, Goble, Butler 15

Orange River Hospital—

Farrier-Sergeant Cromie; Troopers Pope, Parkes, Steel 4

Orange River, with horses and part transport—

Quartermaster-Sergeant Berland; Troopers McGabe, Culling, Smith, H. Smith, Palmer, Dick, G. Taylor, Cabot, Aitken, Emerson, Towgood 12

47.

Men at Kimberley Camp.

No. 1 Company—

Sergeant-Major Burr; Sergeants Price and Tuck; Corporal Horne; Troopers Coutts, Enderby, Hogg, Watts, Valentine, Nops, Cameron, McLean, Gorrie, Gallaway, Curtain, Miller, Bachelor, Munro, Jewel, Locket, Mitchell, Wyllie, Mahood, Crawley, Matson, Whyte, Jane, Tetley, Tarrant, Barty, Wiffen, McDonald, Riddel, Edwards, Palmer, Bodle, Brock, Payne, Muir, McCallum, Powell, Smith, Maunder, Hubbard, Gaudin, Dawson, Wooffinden, Walker, Raines; Bugler Brown ... 50

No. 2 Company—

Sergeants Miller, L'Estrange, and Hazlett; Corporals Shephard and Freethe; Troopers Buntin, Heenan, Forsyth, Townsend, Peebles, Ross, Hahu, Newdick, Pawson, Byrne, Strange, Sutherland, Butters, McDonald, O'Shea, Franklyn, Hean, Cook, Saunders, Pepper, Crowe, Arnold, Hamilton, Waldie, Catheral, Glasgow, Hawkins, Crump, and Wilkie; Bugler Fox ... 35

Men who were at Kimberley detached for Duty with the Brigade mounted on the Fit Horses.

No. 1 Company—

Sergeants Harris, Harrowell, Pitt, and Morgan; Corporals Bould and Craig; Troopers Morrison, Hedges, Lewin, Avery, Kells, Cassey, Withers, Wallis, Blair, Cleveley, Newman, Montgomerie, Shaw, Thorpe, W. E. Smith, Bowie, Blenkhorn, Salpin, Manu, Newburn, and Kirkbridge; Bugler Bowie ... 28

No. 2 Company—

Colour-Sergeant Cardale; Sergeants Muir, Grant, and Ellis; Troopers Hastie, Seelye, Burroughs, Cossar, Johnstone, Nairn, McConway, McKegg, Smyth, Wood, Flavel, Wright, Tasker, Symes, Holroyd, Gestro, Morrison, H. Smith, Douglas, Harding, Fraser, J. T. Wilson, Cumings, Renton, Edwards, McPherson, Hasler, Tubman, Fordham, Northe, Prosser, Moore, Black, Fahey, McBeth, Orbell, and Mitchell; Bugler Johnston ... 42

202

Officers at Kimberley.

Major Robin, Captain Davies, Surgeon Burns, Lieutenants Matthews, Johnstone, Hughes, and Lindsay ... 7

Officers with the Brigade.

Captains Madocks and Ward, Lieutenants Bartlett, Chaytor, and Canavan ... 5

214

Sailed from New Zealand, 215. Lieutenant Neave transferred to York Regiment.

KENILWORTH CAMP, KIMBERLEY, 2ND MARCH, 1900.

Referring again to the list of sick, I am afraid most of them will not be fit again this campaign. The list is terrible; but the work of the early part of this war, culminating in the march, has been most severe, and has found out weak men—hot sun, short food, long marches, short sleep, &c. The other units, Imperial and colonial, are just the same, and most of the Imperial, especially the Infantry, have a larger proportion of sick. Do what one can—threaten, warn, and even punish—men will drink all sorts of water, and the water usually in the dams is very bad.

To-day the cast-off horses unfit for further use were to be destroyed to save feed, but I had the good fortune to come across a farmer some way out, and he took the lot (numbers N.Z. 186, 56, 137, 177, 27, 167, 70, 107—eight in all), and gave me £17 10s. for them. The army people five days ago put three hundred in the same condition up for sale, and got about £1 10s. each for them. I will endeavour to thus sell future animals too far gone for work, as it is impossible to place them anywhere for attention; food is so scarce, and the lateness of the rains and the ransacked farms debar any decent prices. Again, the immense number of horses which have been sent to the war, and will not be reshipped, points to geldings being of no value. Mares will perhaps command a better price, but no fancy price will be given. The above horses are all geldings. I have another man coming to make an offer for an unfit mare to-night.

RETURN OF SICK MEN ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL SINCE CONTINGENT ARRIVED, 23RD NOVEMBER, 1899. (Probably most will be invalided to New Zealand.)

No.	Name.	Nature of Illness.
146.	Hunt, H.	Fall on ship.
80.	Young, R.	Fall from horse in action.
143.	Hurford, J.	Heart-disease.
82.	Ryan, J.	Physically unfit; collapse.
19.	Wallace, R.	Hernia (bad).
35.	Taylor, A. R.	Chronic rheumatism, and unfit.
53.	Jenks, J.	Injury, and kidneys bad. (Since dead.)
31.	Paterson, J.	Physically unfit; over age; a wreck. (Since dead.)
6.	Bond, J.	Kick on shin-bone; very bad.
103.	Gwatkins	Pneumonia.
86.	Smith, E. J.	Sunstroke; mentally affected. (Will recover.)
177.	Sutherland	Dysentery and weakness.
64.	Walker, J.	Rheumatism.
112.	Arnold, S.	Typhoid-fever.
18.	Barty, J.	Kidneys (bad case).
65.	Edwards	Fever (supposed typhoid, not developed).
196.	Taylor, J. T.	Dysentery and weakness.
17.	Parkes, W.	Accident, kick; bone injured.
121.	Cabot, J.	Toe to be amputated.

BLOEMFONTEIN, 3RD APRIL, 1900.

Last time I had the honour to post hasty report from detached force, Field-post, Thabanchu, promising more detail on getting at the regimental papers, &c. These details are enclosed herewith, and will show the position and state of the Contingent. I have memoranda on each return, explaining the duties performed since arrival at Bloemfontein to leaving it on the 18th for Thabanchu, and the duties at Thabanchu up to posting last letter to you were reported in same. On the 29th, the telegraph-wire having been cut some days, and no word or orders having been received, and General French having gone back some days before, leaving General Broadwood in command, in addition the forced retirement of three companies of Imperial Mounted Rifles from near Ladybrand before a force of Boers, and constant reports that seven thousand were closing in and upon us, caused General Broadwood to break bivouac and take up a weak defensive position to cover the wagons and convoy retirement to the waterworks on the Modder. These positions were taken up at 11.30 a.m. (30th), and towards nightfall shots were exchanged on the east posts on the nek, six miles out, on the Ladybrand Road, the baggage convoy leaving for west at 2 p.m. The troops held on to the positions till 8 p.m. and the rear-guard till 9 p.m., and all marched all night, crossed the drift on the Modder *en route* for Bloemfontein at 3 a.m. (Saturday, 31st), and bivouacked. Just before 6 a.m., when camp was rousing, the enemy opened on the bivouac and convoy with three guns from hills east of Modder, and rifle-fire commenced across the banks. The shells were well distributed, and all got a fair share, convoy as well. Convoy inspanned, and with two batteries, 10th Hussars, and Life Guards, and Roberts's Horse, squadron each, went on with baggage, the Mounted Infantry Brigade (Colonel Alderson's), comprising 1st and 3rd Mounted Infantry, Roberts's Horse, New-Zealanders, Rimington Guides, being retained to fight a rear-guard action. The convoy getting clear, this force became fiercely engaged with the enemy at close range on the river, Roberts's Horse and New-Zealanders being in reserve. The Boers made a strong attack on the left from the river, and at same time commenced to work round the right, the evident intention being to envelop the small force. A retirement of the Mounted Infantry by successive movement was ordered, each respective dismounted line for fire, to hold on as long as possible. While this was being done a fearful disaster had happened at the head of convoy. Roberts's Horse rode right up and into an ambush, taking with it the head of convoy and guns. A sluit had at this place to be crossed. Whilst this crossing was being effected seven guns were taken, but convoy was stopped and disarmed as they arrived, Roberts's Horse squadron suffering very much. The cavalry had gone out to the flank, and evidently only skirted the ambush. The gunners seem to have done splendidly, and suffered fearfully in defence of their guns. The two that could open fire did so on the Boers taking the convoy. All this happened without the rear-guard covering or troops really knowing what had occurred, we always wondering, during our fight, when the guns would open to help cover us. About this time I was instructed by the staff to send a checking force to the higher ground on our right. A division of New-Zealanders, under Lieutenant Hughes, was accordingly sent; later it was reinforced by another two divisions, under Lieutenants Chaytor and Lindsay, Captain Madocks going up in charge. The strength was 108 New Zealand men, working in one company (four divisions). The remainder, on account of weak horses, &c., and outpost duty, were in camp. These divisions did excellent work, and kept the enemy from being too enterprising in that direction. Shortly after this the original firing-line had retired, followed by the enveloping enemy, and the remaining division of New-Zealanders, under Lieutenant Bartlett, with a squadron of Roberts's Horse, under myself, were left to hold the mouth of the nullahs and sluit running towards the houses and sluit in which the guns and convoy were. Our orders were to hold this place, and cover the saved guns (four) coming out with a few Burmah Mounted Infantry who were with them. The Boers followed these up, as well as following the retiring mounted infantry, and still endeavouring to move round the right flank. Luckily, there was a hollow, which afforded some cover for our horses, and the edge of it for the men. This to be

held till the guns were well up the rise behind us, and long enough to enable stragglers from the gunners, Burmah Mounted Infantry, and convoy to get away. This, I am glad to report, we were able to do. When the above-named parties had got well away, we retired in succession, covered by mounted infantry further up the rise, and so on till the whole brigade were gathered on the side of Bosh Kop, and losses ascertained and a rest obtained. This was 12 a.m., and all had been six hours in action, and all engaged and under fire. All members of the Contingent worked splendidly, and the officers handled them well. (Copy of brigade orders attached.) Many very narrow escapes occurred. Three horses were killed and seven wounded. Several cases of men assisting each other—I mean assisting wounded men—occurred, but being the rule, not an exception, between the forces, and no particular risk was at this stage run, more need not be said.

In the fighting line of the New-Zealanders none were injured; but I regret to have to report that, on account of worn horses, minor sick, and baggage-guard, the men (list attached) on the convoy were taken prisoners. Four escaped to us, and at this date and hour, from reports received, we have every reason to believe that none of the men with convoy were killed or badly wounded, otherwise they would have been found on the field, as it was well searched by the medical forces. It is generally supposed that from two hundred and fifty to three hundred prisoners were marched away, our men among the rest.

I will not try to describe the various scenes, but it was at times rather awful; the galloping of loose horses, and at two separate stages the almost hopeless appearance of getting out in any sort of order, and the amount of rifle-fire, cannon, and the “dub-dub” of one of the Mounted Infantry Maxims, made a scene not easily forgotten. By the time you get this you will doubtless have read more graphic accounts, but I have endeavoured to place only the leading points before you. Captain Ward was present, being one of the staff of Colonel Alderson, and had plenty to do. Colonel Alderson's dispositions certainly prevented the affair from being a complete disaster, as a good six miles had to be retired over; this was intersected with drifts and nullahs. I have made a rough memory sketch to try and make the morning's proceedings clearer.

I must state that all ranks in this engagement lost their valises, and only now possess what they stand up in; but the department are refitting us, and to-morrow we are to get all the necessary refit. Of course, all the others in the brigade—about eight hundred—have also lost everything.

EXTRACT FROM BRIGADE ORDERS by Colonel E. A. H. ALDERSON, Commanding.

Bloemfontein, 3rd March, 1900.

No. 1.—The Brigadier has very great pleasure in publishing the remarks which were made to him by Brigadier-General Broadwood after yesterday's engagement at Samas Post.

General Broadwood said words to the following effect: “Will you please let all under your command know how very much I appreciate the work done by your brigade to-day. It was splendid.”

The Brigadier wishes to congratulate all ranks of the brigade on, and also to thank them for, having gained this very high praise.

SPRINGFIELD, NEAR BLOEMFONTEIN, 9TH APRIL, 1900.

I have the honour to amend my report of a few days ago. These men are from hospitals returned fit, and reported here this morning. I am pleased at this, as we wanted a few more men. Please take them off last list—Farrier Cromie, Private Parkes, Private W. Johnston, Private J. O'Shea, Private A. T. Batchelor, Private T. J. H. Gaudin, Private J. Walker, Private A. Hawkins, Private Arnold, Private H. Forsyth, Private T. Maunder, Private W. Muir, Private R. McDonald, Private J. H. Barty, Private Glasgow, Private Ensor, Private H. Ross, Private M. McCallum, Private P. R. Hubbard, Private J. McCabe, Private C. G. Edwards.

Horses sold in addition to those of report before last: N.Z. No. 52, chestnut gelding (very bad sore back, and poor), £14; N.Z. No. 76, brown gelding (lame, and sore back), £8; N.Z. No. 125, mare (debility), £8; N.Z. No. 42, bay mare (lame front and hind), £10: total, £40.

One remount pony died.

The above horses were pronounced as unlikely to recover in time for service during the campaign, and the Army Veterinary advised getting rid of same. If sent to remount hospital, one man has to remain with every three horses, so it was best for all concerned to sell.

I feel sure, however, Sir, that the men will go on as steadily as ever, but a great number of them are tired of it.

To-day the helmets reached us, and were issued to the men by order. None of the parcels, &c., sent from New Zealand have yet come to hand, and the mails of Second Contingent have come to us; I suppose they have ours.

The Queensland Second Contingent have not one of the horses they brought now fit for service, though they have not been two months in the country. The Third Mounted Infantry, alongside us, have 350 men and horses, and yet can only turn out ninety-three fit. We are 161 here, and turn out 120, so, you see, the horses, although really wanting rest and replacing, have done wonders, and remounts are expected.

The post-orderly waiting, and this is the last chance to catch New Zealand outgoing mail.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,425 copies), £7 1s.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1900.

Price, 6d.]