

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