

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND DIAMOND JUBILEE CONTINGENT

(REPORT OF THE VISIT TO ENGLAND OF THE).

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 8th September, 1897.

I have the honour to submit to you, for the information of the Hon. the Minister of Defence, my report in reference to the visit to England of the New Zealand Diamond Jubilee Contingent of Volunteers.

In pursuance of your orders, the Contingent under my command, consisting of four officers and fifty non-commissioned officers and men, left Wellington by the s.s. "Tutanekai" on the night of the 27th April last, arriving at Lyttelton next morning. I immediately proceeded on board the R.M.S. "Ruahine" and inspected the arrangements made for the accommodation of the Contingent. I was informed that neither the members of the Contingent nor their baggage could be shipped on that vessel until the 29th. On that morning I had the baggage removed and shipped by the members of the Contingent, and at about noon the Contingent embarked. The staff, the officers, and men of the Christchurch Volunteer District exhibited great kindness, good-will, and enthusiasm upon the occasion of the departure of the Contingent. They not only most hospitably entertained us on the Wednesday evening at Christchurch, but they turned out in large numbers in uniform at Lyttelton with their band to bid us *bon voyage*, and gave us a splendid send-off.

The Hon. Mr. Carroll, prior to the embarkation of the Contingent, was pleased to address them in an eloquent and spirited speech.

The R.M.S. "Ruahine" did not leave the wharf at Lyttelton until the morning of the 30th April, and at about 10 a.m. on that day left Godley Head upon her voyage to London.

I understood from Major Sir Arthur Douglas at Lyttelton, who was present with Major Madocks at the embarkation of the Contingent, that although the non-commissioned officers and men were travelling third class, yet that arrangements had been made whereby a better dietary scale than third-class passengers usually had was insured for the Contingent, although the New Zealand Shipping Company could not undertake to do all that the Government had otherwise intended and wished in this respect. To my surprise, however, I found, as soon as we got to sea, that the food being supplied to the Contingent was ordinary third-class passenger fare. Upon my complaining to the chief steward, as I immediately did, concerning this, he informed me that his instructions from Mr. Bennett, the company's agent at Christchurch, were that "there was to be no alteration in the third-class fare" of food in respect of the members of the Contingent travelling third class. The number of stewards in attendance at the men's meals were also insufficient, and upon my representing these matters to Captain Bone an additional steward was put on, and certain alterations made in the men's bill of fare, which improved matters; but still the men did not receive what I understood it had been arranged they were to have. The men, however, accepted the situation in a splendid spirit, and there was no grumbling whatever throughout the voyage.

The R.M.S. "Ruahine" had a fine-weather passage to England, and I was enabled to have the Contingent drilled twice daily, with few exceptions, and church parade every Sunday throughout the voyage. Manual, firing, and physical exercises were practised, as well as dismounted mounted infantry drill; the result being that the men were smartened up very considerably. The R.M.S. "Ruahine" went through the Straits of Magellan, called at Punta Arenas, Monte Video, Santa Cruz, Plymouth, and arrived at the Royal Albert Docks, London, on Friday, the 11th June last, at 10 a.m.

The voyage was an exceedingly pleasant one, plenty of amusements and sports being got up on board, in which the members of the Contingent always took part or were present at.

The Contingent were met on arrival at the docks by the Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand, and several of his officials. The Hon. the Premier of New Zealand was then absent from London on an official visit. He sent me a telegram congratulating the Contingent upon their safe arrival. He visited them at Chelsea Barracks next morning, and was pleased to address them.

As soon as the baggage could be landed, which took a considerable time, owing to the large number of other passengers, the Contingent were entrained and taken to Liverpool Street Railway-