

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND CONTINGENTS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

(LETTER FROM MAJOR-GENERAL HUTTON IN REFERENCE TO THE).

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

Major-General HUTTON to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

DEAR MR. SEDDON,—

Camel Drift Bivouac, near Pretoria, 9th June, 1900.

It will, I am sure, be a great satisfaction to you to hear some short account of your fine troops, which I have the privilege to include in the brigade under my command.

There are three distinct contingents which now comprise the First Battalion of New Zealand Mounted Rifles—viz., that under Major Robin and that under Major Davies; Major Robin, being the senior officer, commands the battalion, with Major Craddock as his second in command.

In every engagement in which they have taken part, upon every occasion when hard work or peculiarly dangerous service has fallen to their lot, they have always acquitted themselves well. Since leaving Bloemfontein on the 1st May we have been continually marching, and engaging the enemy. The day's work has been always long, followed often by cold nights on outpost duty or guard, the exposures constant, and the amount of our rations precarious. All have been taken in good part, and I always feel confident of the result when the New-Zealanders are detailed or selected for anything especially difficult. Among an especially fine lot of fighting-men such as are to be found in this brigade from all parts of the Empire, none have a higher reputation for steadiness under fire, or for that dash and gallantry when the moment arrives, which are so peculiarly the attributes of British troops of the highest type.

New Zealand is especially fortunate in the officers selected for, and serving with, the Mounted Rifles. There are several, whom I do not wish invidiously to name, who would take a very high place among the best of the mounted infantry officers, who, as you are aware, are the picked officers of the army.

An excellent feeling exists, I am glad to say, between all the various representative battalions from the different colonies; and I feel certain that the co-operation together in this campaign of the representatives from Canada, from the six colonies of Australia, and from New Zealand will contribute more than anything else to weld the whole military elements of the Empire into such a powerful national defence force as will, some day, astonish the Queen's enemies.

The campaign is drifting to a close, and, if Providence so wills it, the final stage of the campaign since the 1st of May will be proved to be one of the most interesting pages of our military history.

If the casualties have been few, the reason may be ascribed to the admirable strategy of Lord Roberts, and to the able leading of General French, under whose supreme command the brigade has acted since the 10th May, rather than to the enemy being reluctant and unwilling to meet us in the field on equal terms.

The campaign has taught all of us many lessons, and among others the lesson that all Her Majesty's Forces, wherever they exist, must have one individual system of training and organization, and of equipment.

It has been clearly proved that we do not require conscription to provide the Empire with the finest troops which any occasion could demand; but we do require some system of suitable organization which will enable the Empire as a whole to utilise the material which she possesses in such profusion. It would be folly to suppose that the 200,000 men now in South Africa have the organization, the training, or the equipment which would fit them to compete successfully with the armies of Europe.

Will you allow me, in conclusion, to again convey my congratulations to the New Zealand Government and yourself upon being so well, and in such a distinguished manner, represented by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles now serving under my command.

Believe me, &c.,

EDWD. H. HUTTON,

Major-General Commanding 1st Mounted Rifle Brigade.

The Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon, Premier, New Zealand.

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