

THE SEVENTH CONTINGENT.

Four Gisborne members of the famous Seventh Contingent arrived by the s.s. Omapere this morning, namely, Farriers Breingan (Patutahi), and J. R. Parker (Gisborne), and Troopers Teesdale and Taylor. The returned contingenters were met at the wharf by Lieut. Lewis and Sergt. Wakelin (of the Gisborne Rifles) and given a hearty welcome home. The novelty of welcoming back our soldier lads has perhaps worn off by now, but it is as well not to forget that the Seventh Contingent is New Zealand's last contribution to the British army in South Africa which has taken part in the war. Not only is the Seventh the last to take an active share in the struggle, but it is generally admitted that they are the most renowned of all New Zealand's contin-

Special interest attaches therefore to the home-coming of the quartette of Gisborne members of the doughty Seventh, whose gallant stand at Bothasberg have given them the premier place among the roll of colonial contingents. In order to get an account of the Bothasberg engagement fuller than the meagre description cabled, a representative of the HERALD interviewed the returning troopers on the subject.

Trooper Teesdale in reply to questions said that the New Zealanders on the night of the engagement were included in Colonel Garratt's column, which included 500 of the Seventh Contingent, 200 of the Queensland Imperial Bushmen, and about 300 of the Munster Fusiliers, the latter being infantry. On either side were other British columns operating in the drive. The full brunt of the attack fell on the left wing of the New Zealanders, which was composed of the Canterbury, Otago, and supplementary companies. The Gisborne boys were attached to the right wing, and had a good opportunity of witnessing the fight. Adjutant Clark placed the right wing and Lieutenant (Adjutant) D. Hickey the left wing. It was dull and dark that night in February when the Boers made their great dash at the British lines driving before them their infuriated cattle. They drove the cattle on to the right wing for a start, but diverged on to the left which they struck at with all their force in the wild endeavor to find an opening. Manie Botha was in command, and it was estimated from the captures made after the conflict that the cattle numbered 28,000. Rain had been falling shortly before the attack, and everything was suitable for the midnight dash. The men on the right wing heard the cattle bellowing about two hours before the blow

was struck but they were not sure at what point the attack was to be made. Colonel Garratt was in charge of the mounted men, with Colonel Porter directing the New Zealanders. The attack commenced at 10.30 p.m., the left wing of the New Zealanders being brought into action at midnight. This part of the Contingent were stationed in a gully at the time, extending up to the side of a kopje, and practically in front of the remainder of the column. The cattle were not driven right on to the New Zealanders. If this had happened they would inevitably have been overwhelmed, and the Boers have got clean through. The Boers came up under cover of the herd of beasts, leading their horses, barefooted, it was stated afterwards. The first outpost escaped, but the second one was captured. The attack was then developed with fury. The men on the right were only two hundred yards away, but no Boers reached their lines. They were aroused at 10 o'clock by the noise of the cattle, and were kept going until the following night. Nothing could be seen distinctly except the flashing of the rifles as volleys were fired from the trenches. The cattle were being driven by Kaffirs, who were chanting all the time. The Boers were also accompanied by their women, who had charge of the waggons, and who were also singing in their own tongue a song, the burden of which was the prophecy that the British will never cross the Taal." The right wing were busily employed shooting the cattle driven on the line. The anxiety of the men was frightful," said Trooper Teesdale. "We did not know what moment we would be attacked, and the suspense was unbearable. Some of the men went into hospital over the strain. They broke down altogether, and a number of the left wing who were unwounded went into hospital for rest. Out of the 400 New Zealanders who had left Harrismith a short time before, only 200 were fit for duty after the night. I will never forget it. I was in the first fight at such close quarters although we had many brushes previously. Only fourteen Boers were found the next being carried away, according to the custom, as the Boers never leave their dead on the field. Of those well known in Gisborne, Bert Russell, who was killed, had about eighteen wounds. Ted Childs was also wounded. Ted was soon right and out on column. Lieutenant Forsythe was shot in the head. The Boers formed a half-moon after getting through the first outpost. The other Boers were afraid to fire, owing to the likelihood of shooting their own men. If it had not been for the Black Watch

...to one of the other columns, who
d their front, a good many more
would have got through. They
assisted the New Zealanders in
g the rush. That is why so few
got through.

...presented a fearful scene.
...ly little drains, hurried
with earth piled up about 18
shelter, and not afford-
tion, were filled with
d men. Numbers of
lying with the British,
perate the struggle had
ated that the order had
the Boers charged for
enches to fix bayonets,
landers had left them
go much trouble to
t considered that the
ve been much use, as
eager to get through,

...a body. Slaughtered
...re lying in all direc-
dled and bridled.
rifles were found,
the British weapons,
y experienced in get-
About 200 got

...er Teesdale said the
h was one of con-
the Transvaal and
Five days was
e in any town be-
were received, ex-
n they were mo-
nished their term
h-left South Af-
They were enter-
and arrived home

son raid, and I am now on his
staff as staff-sergeant-major of the
Intelligence Department in command
of the heliograph section. The column
only numbers about 3000 men of all
ranks now—expect to get more. The
pater is in command of the New Zea-
landers, and he has the artillery and
pom-pom guns. He was in action the
other day for the third time since we
have been here. He was in the advance
guard of the convoy, and the Boers tried
very hard to prevent the convoy from
advancing, and made a fierce attack from
the front, and not long after another
troop of Boers attacked the rear, so we
got about four hours of good solid fight-
ing, and the Gisborne boys proved them-
selves the best men of the day. We kill-
ed between 20 and 30 Boers. Two of
our fellows were wounded and one killed.
Five Queenslanders were wounded, and
we buried one; several horses were shot.
Of the Gisborne men, J. Hone Waaka
(Johnny Walker) was recommended for
the Distinguished Service medal for brava-
ry, and Denny, Teesdale and Cato are
all mentioned in despatches, and also
Willy Parker and Carlyle. All of these
of the latest selection were very cool in
action. Not a word out of them. They
simply fire away, and laugh and talk just
as if nothing happened, and told me
afterwards, "What a grand sport fight-
ing is," and I had to admit it was a good
sport, as long as a man didn't happen
to catch a stray pill. Robert and Ray-
mond, my two brothers, came in to get
remounts. They were with General Plum-
mer's column. Their horses were shot
away from under them, and they were
nearly ambushed. They are transferred
to us, and also young Law, of Gisborne,
is coming to us. Tommy Trotter got
fired on the other day by the Queens-
landers, who mistook him for a Boer.
Three or four of the Gisborne fellows have
been picked out as scouts. Sergeant Col-
lett, the man killed, was alongside of me.
He re-engaged from the Fourth Con-
tingent. I forgot to mention young A.
Gannon. He took my place as divisional
sergeant as soon as he was put on the
staff. Very funny—he was out scouting
the other day with a couple of fellows
named Corporals Matthews and Hard-
grave, the latter a Taranaki rep. foot-
baller. As they passed over a spruit, or
hole, in which the Boers were in hiding.
They up like a shot and covered them
with their rifles, and sang out, "Hands
up." Gannon fired a shot, but missed,
and they held up their hands, and
everything was taken from them, four
miles from the camp, and they had to
walk back. The Boers left their money
with them, so it wasn't bad."

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GISBORNE BOYS AT THE FRONT. MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

Staff-Sergeant-Major Tom Porter, writ-
ing to a friend here from Standerton on
June 19th, gives the following interest-
ing particulars of our boys at the front
with the Seventh Contingent:—

"Standerton, Transvaal, June 19th.—
Just a few lines to let you know how the
war is progressing. So far nothing of
any importance has been done by the
Seventh, but the grit is here. There is
only one fault with the men, that is, they
are too eager for the fray, too daring,
in fact, when in action. Of course you
know we are under command of Colonel
Gray, who we nicknamed Fighting
Grey. He was in the '96 Jame-

