

connection with it, and in justice to the minister I shall read it so that he may say whether it is correct or not. It is a report from South Africa in connection with those soldiers that went on the 'Pomeranian,' and was written on March 22nd, 1900.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Who wrote the report?

Mr. INGRAM. I do not know whether the report is true or false, but it is supposed to be signed by L. W. Herchmer, Lieut.-colonel.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Lieut.-Colonel Herchmer?

Mr. INGRAM. It is supposed to be signed by him. This is what he says:

I must, however, report that it is fortunate that there is no fighting, as our rifles are improperly sighted. I suspected this on board ship, as we had to fire almost off the target with Morris tubes. I got an armourer at Cape Town to inspect, and he reported that our back sights did not belong to the rifles and that at 800 yards they shot eight feet to the right. I reported this officially to the officer commanding the battalion and we had to march without new sights. To-day I am in receipt of a letter informing me that new sights are being furnished; but when we shall get them, or, on receipt, find an armourer to alter them, I cannot say.

I presume that this report has been sent to the department here, that is if it is a correct report. If that is the case, and if these rifles shoot eight feet to the right of the mark, the armourers could not have done their duty in inspecting them. It is a very important statement and should not go abroad uncontradicted if it is incorrect, as it would do a great injustice to the department that furnished these rifles.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Had the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ingram) taken the precaution to notify me that he was going to read this statement, I would have been ready to answer him. It is the first time I ever heard of it, however, and, of course, I cannot give a complete answer at the moment. But I would say that the rifles were purchased, I think, in 1895, under the late administration, and were inspected by the war office inspector. I believe they were properly inspected, and that they are just what they ought to be. I am not advised of any rifles in store here of the character mentioned in the report read by the hon. gentleman. No complaint of that kind has ever been made. But now that the hon. gentleman has mentioned the matter, I will make inquiry, and when an opportunity arises, I will give my hon. friend and the House an answer. It is, as he says, of course, a very important matter. It is rather singular, however, that this should be the only occasion when a complaint of this kind has ever been made. I cannot possibly understand it. The difficulty about the sights of the rifles might possibly have resulted from the sights being interchanged among rifles, but that is hardly

likely. Colonel Otter and the different commanders have made elaborate reports as to what took place in South Africa, but, so far as I know there has been no mention of this matter.

Mr. INGRAM. I would have been glad to consult the hon. minister, but this report came into my hands only a short time ago. There is another point. As I understand it, this government supplied the horses with the forage, etc., while in transport to South Africa. I do not know whether this government or the home government is responsible for supplying the forage in South Africa. But if the horses are treated as this report states, it is high time there should be a reform, not only in the treatment of the men but in the treatment of the horses as well. In his statement, which is evidently furnished by Lieut.-Colonel Herchmer, this is what is stated with regard to horses at Cape Town:

The forage was insufficient, particularly for horses just off ship and we had great difficulty in feeding our horses; they did not gain at Cape Town.

Other extracts from this report are as follows:

During the three days en route, the horses got oats and water, but no hay.

We make from 10 to 18 miles per day, according to water which is very scarce, the whole country being at this season of the year a sandy waste without a blade of grass, relieved here and there with a few small bushes which the native animals consume. The country is entirely destitute of trees, except a few willows, &c., near the dams and wells. All along this march our horses were under-fed.

The forage for the horses being again very short indeed, it appears impossible to get them filled up on the government rations; if this could be done for several days running and the horses could get into condition, they would do, but under the present conditions, I have little hope of their doing much hard work.

We had to leave 23 horses here, some with sore backs caused by poverty and lame, and about eight too poor to face the difficulties ahead. It is hardly likely these horses will ever be in fit condition again, as they do not get sufficient forage to build them up.

If the Imperial authorities are responsible for insufficient forage for the horses in South Africa, particularly on landing, it is high time that something should be done. The English authorities have recognized that the Canadian method of fighting the Boers—that is as mounted rifles—is the most successful method. And the success of that class of troops must depend entirely upon the good condition of the horses they ride. If it is true that forage was short even at the port of landing, it is nothing less than a disgrace to those who are responsible for it. I can understand that, at times, forage would be insufficient at a distance from a base of supplies, but not at the very port of landing. I do not say that this report is true, but if it is true it must have caused

Mr. INGRAM.