

No. 24.

COPY OF A DESPATCH FROM GOVERNOR GORE BROWNE, C.B., TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE.

New Plymouth, New Zealand,
31st March, 1860.

No. 28.

MY LORD DUKE,—

Having arranged that the Steamer from Nelson should call at this Port on her way to Australia, I am enabled to forward a report of later date, than that sent by the ordinary Mail.

On the 24th March I received information that an advanced party of the Taranaki Tribe (with whom we have no sort of difference) were about to build a Pah four miles from the Town in a very formidable position. It was reported that they were determined to destroy the Europeans root and branch, and considered themselves able to do so.

The Garrison of the Town being exceedingly weak, I communicated with Colonel Gold who was then at the Waitara in an entrenched Camp with 400 men. Colonel Gold received my letter at a little after 4 p.m., and with great promptitude marched at once with half his Force into the Town, which he reached at half-past 10 p.m.

As soon as I heard of his approach I prepared guides and information to enable him, should he think proper, to make a sudden attack upon this party, which had only reached their present ground at noon on the same day.

Colonel Gold assented, and a party went out for that purpose but failed in attaining their object, the Natives having retired into the Bush.

On 26th March a report reached me that the Taranaki and Ngatiruanui tribes were coming up with all their force to attack the town, stating that they had no intention of joining W. King, who has declared he will not make war on unarmed people—but that they should act for themselves.

Your Grace will observe that these tribes come from the South of New Plymouth, and that we have had no difference or disagreement with them. W. King, on the other hand, lives on the North, so that the Town is between the two hostile forces.

On the 27th March, three Settlers and two boys, who had gone into the country to look after cattle, were savagely murdered, and on the morning of the 28th these tribes came close to our Stockade on the Omata, (4 miles South of the Town) danced the War Dance, and fired some shots at it. They were reported to have taken up a strong position between the Block-house and the Town; they had also built two Paha, one of which was close above the Block-house occupied by the Settlers, who were uneasy at their situation. Colonel Gold therefore organized a Force for the purpose of relieving the Block-house and bringing in a Settler's family who had unwisely remained in the country. At two o'clock this Force left the Town by two roads: the Volunteers took the road by the sea, and were attacked by the Natives almost immediately. A reinforcement of Sailors was sent out, and a heavy fire kept up whilst daylight lasted. Just before dark Captain Cracroft captured the Maori Pah with his Sailors most gallantly, after which the Force returned to Town. Colonel Gold will give details and full particulars of what took place, but my object is to keep Your Grace acquainted with events as they have occurred, and to draw your attention to the fact that five unoffending people—two of them boys—have been barbarously murdered, and we have been attacked by tribes who have nothing whatever to do with the disagreement between W. King and the Government. From this it is evident that other combinations may be made against us, and that a trial of strength between the two Races will take place unless I am able to prevent the junction of the powerful tribes living on the Waikato and their allies, with those now in arms against us. This, however, I hope to be able to do.

On the 28th, the Natives, though occupying a very difficult country, did not confine themselves to the dense bush, and their numbers were estimated at 460, while ours reached 330 to 350 men. The fight, however, was well maintained, and their loss is known to have been very considerable. In the course of the next day, they retired to their Paha. These Paha being on the sea shore, 25 miles South of the Town, I requested Captain Cracroft to batter them from the "Niger," which he did with good effect on 30th March.

The foregoing details will satisfy Your Grace that the Maoris are more formidable than most other savage races with which we have yet been engaged, and I beg to submit to you that three strong Regiments, bringing into the field at least 3000 rank and file, should be sent to the Colony with the least possible delay. One Regiment should be divided between Auckland and Wellington, and the remaining two should be ordered direct to New Plymouth. If the Waikato tribes and their allies unite against us, this Force, together with what we now have, will not be at all more than sufficient; but if I am fortunate enough to prevent such a collision—as I trust I may be—the 65th Regiment, which has long since exceeded the usual time of service in the Colonies, might be withdrawn, and any reinforcements received from Australia sent back to those Colonies. The remaining 3000 men will be required for a considerable time to ensure peace and prevent the destruction of life and property elsewhere which has commenced in this Province.

Finally, I have to inform Your Grace that the Provincial Authorities are making arrangements to send away as many women and children as possible to Nelson, as they look forward to protracted troubles. I have obtained from Nelson a small Steamer able to enter the Waitara river and keep up a communication with the Detachment stationed there, which is no longer possible by land. The Garrison being now quite strong enough to protect the Town, my presence here is no longer necessary, and I propose to return to Auckland, where I can more easily communicate with the Waikato

MILITARY.