

The enemy being quiet and not having fired a shot since 11 o'clock the previous night, the Major General determined to assault, and having had a howitzer moved to the front and a strong force of skirmishers consisting partly of Natives, after a shell and a charge of canister was thrown into the small breach, the assaulting party moved forward and entered the Pah which was found to be vacated and which was destroyed.

As the second Pah Puketakariki was somewhat less than 300 yards from Orongomahungai, and not a shot was fired from it during the advance upon the latter—the presumption was, that it also was evacuated, as however the enemy might have been there in force, keeping quiet in hope of luring on the Troops, it was considered prudent to bring two howitzers well to the front, and after three rounds fired from each, the last being canister, the Troops entered the Pah and destroyed it.

The latter Pah was of a construction similar to others which have been previously destroyed,—it was nearly square, surrounded with two rows of palisades, the outer row being covered with bundles of green flax, and having the usual rifle pits communicating under ground with each other.

Orongomahungai was different; it was situated on the summit of the precipitous bank of the river Kahihi, which here makes a sharp turn, and the outer line of the Pah was traced across a sort of peninsula formed by the bank, the rear of the Pah being the bank, and consisted of the ordinary two rows of palisades covered with bundles of green flax—then the rifle pits well traversed, backed immediately by the high earthen bank of a Pah so old that trees were growing on the summit thereof.

The accompanying sketch of the ground with the positions of the Pahs and lines of trenches is not as perfect as I could have wished, and I had not sufficient time allowed me after the capture of the Pahs and previous to the march of the Force on its return to New Plymouth to make a sufficient survey.

Looking to the small effect of the projectiles on the stockade, I am confirmed in the conclusion at which I had previously arrived, that a practicable breach cannot be formed by Artillery—nevertheless its use is essential for searching the rifle pits, and in cases similar to the Pah of Orongomahungai when there is a high bank within a stockade immediately at the back of the rifle pits, shells lodging in the bank and exploding would have the effect of mines and render the pits untenable; the defenders would be buried in the *debris*.

It will be observed on looking at the position of the Pahs with reference to the river, and the bush on the left, and the existence of the rifle pits on the further side of the bush from Puketakariki as shewn at A and B on the plan, and the difficult country intersected by deep swampy gullies to the rear of those pits that it would have been impracticable to have surrounded both Pahs at once with a view to enclose and capture the enemy. It is also clear that it would have been an immense risk to have surrounded "Puketakariki" thrusting a force between the two Pahs with the rifle pits at C, immediately in rear of the investing body, and as regards Orongomahungai, the precipitous bank, and the difficult character of the river, the former inaccessible, and the latter impassable to a European, though traversed by Natives, rendered an investment of it impossible. The defenders occupied and held for the time this strong position, but eventually left it, hopeless of a successful defence, or of causing much loss to the assailants, who adopted a mode of attack to which they were unaccustomed.

Similar strong positions which cannot be enclosed, and from which there are means of escape inaccessible to Troops, may possibly be held for a limited time, and be evacuated before matters come to an extremity, but Pahs in open country will be invariably left on the approach of a hostile force.

I believe that the attack thus made on this position will have a wholesome effect.

From the careful preparations made, it was evident that a determined resistance was contemplated, and yet the Natives were driven out in little more than twelve hours, and they will doubtless perceive that positions, however strong, are not proof against a systematized attack.

Capture of the Pah may be in all cases calculated upon confidently, with little loss, but capture of the defenders, with the experience already gained, will never be effected.

I would beg to bring to your especial notice the Officers of the Royal Engineers who served under me.

To Captain Pasley, who was unfortunately seriously wounded on the 11th, every credit is due for the care and energy with which he carried out his instructions, and assisted me with his valuable advice; and to Captain Mould also, who, although subsequently for night duty, when he pushed forward the sap through difficult and encumbered ground, nevertheless took an active part in the day duty before and after Captain Pasley was wounded, praise must be awarded.

I cannot omit noticing a worthy, able and zealous Non-Commissioned Officer in the person of Sergeant Howatt, of the Royal Engineers, who on the march was constantly in advance with a detachment of the corps actively engaged in smoothing difficulties on the road in the way of the transport, and on the first day of the attack he volunteered his services, though not for duty during the day, and gave valuable and energetic assistance in the breach until most severely wounded. His conduct deserves the highest praise. I must be permitted to mention, and to request the favorable notice of the Major-General Commanding, to the Field Officers in the trenches, who were to a certain degree under my orders—Lieutenant-Colonel Sillery, D.Q.M.G., and Major Hutchins, 12th Regiment, who took a most active and untiring part in the operations, both in respect of judiciously posting the guards of the trenches, and urging on the working parties.

T. R. MOULD, Colonel,
Commanding Royal Engineers.

To the Deputy Adjutant-General,
&c., &c., &c.