

Enclosure in No. 25.

Major-General CHUTE to Governor Sir GEORGE GREY, K.C.B.

SIR,—

Head Quarters, Camp Putahi, 8th January, 1866.

I have the honor to report for your Excellency's information that on the 30th ultimo, the date on which the Colonial Troops your Excellency had acquainted me would be placed at my disposal, were ready, I left Wanganui with a small field force, and encamped at Alexander's farm.

On the 31st the force marched to Weraroa, where we were detained for two days waiting for the Native Contingent, who, on the 1st January, were employed in capturing horses the property of rebels, thirty-two of which they secured; and on the 2nd, in preparing some particular food they declared to be absolutely necessary for the march.

On the 3rd instant, the field force, total strength as per margin,* moved across the Waitotara. I directed the Native Contingent to cross at Perikama, beneath and on the right flank of the post at Weraroa, and with the remainder of the force I made a diversion through the Waitotara Block, crossing by the ford near the mouth of the river. The Contingent having rejoined me on the main inland track, we marched towards Moturou, and encamped about a mile and a half from that village, situated at the edge of a dense forest, within which and about two miles from Moturou was the strongly fortified and formidable position of Okutuku, which I was informed was considered impregnable by the rebels, and there it was stated they had collected in considerable numbers. During the afternoon of the 3rd instant, the Native Contingent, under Major McDonnell, proceeded to reconnoitre this position, and taking the rebels by surprise entered it without opposition: a few shots only were fired at them by the enemy's scouts. Having set fire to the whares outside the pa, the Contingent returned to camp.

On the following morning having reason to believe that the enemy in considerable force had re-occupied the position they had apparently evacuated the evening before, I marched with the force to attack the Okotuku Pa. The line of march for the last two miles was through dense forest, and the track itself obstructed throughout by ravines, rocks, and supplejack, rendering the advance most difficult, especially for the skirmishers whom I had thrown out from the Native troops as I entered the forest. At a small clearing overhanging a deep ravine, just before commencing the steepest part of the ascent, the skirmishers were fired upon by the enemy. I pushed on as rapidly as the excessive badness of the ground would admit of, and soon gained the plateau. This is a narrow tongue of land of about twenty acres, the greater part being under cultivation. As the troops crowned it they were exposed to a very heavy fire from the pa, distant about 350 yards. I immediately extended the Forest Rangers on my extreme left, the 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment in the centre. The Native troops were on either flank and in reserve. I directed all to keep as much as possible under cover of the many fallen trees about us. Advancing in this manner for a short distance, the fire became still more severe and two men were wounded. I ordered the party to advance, and endeavour to occupy the pa, when the 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment, led by Captain Vivian, in the most gallant manner charged the stockading, succeed in entering the pa and in driving the enemy down the almost sharpened sides and rear of this defence, formidable by nature, but rendered doubly so by native skill. In this affair I regret to say that Lieut. Keogh and four men of the 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment were wounded. The bodies of six Natives killed were found; it is supposed their loss in killed and wounded amounted to twenty, but owing to the density of the bush into which they retreated it was not possible to ascertain their real loss.

When the pa was captured a portion of the Native Contingent entered the bush, and endeavoured to pursue the retreating enemy. They succeeded in taking the rebel chief and killing one man.

The most formidable part of the defence consisted of a palisade several feet high, and fully three feet thick, made by piling logs of hard wood horizontally between two rows of thick upright stakes, extending a distance of about eighty yards from one sharpened gully to another. So precipitous were the sides and rear, and so dense the forest beneath them, that it was impossible to approach them and cut off the retreat of the enemy. The whole clearing, of which this pa formed the stronghold, was surrounded by bush, and is situated on one of the high points of the range of mountains running nearly in a north-westerly direction from Weraroa. It would be difficult to exaggerate the obstacles opposed to the advance of the troops to such a position, or the spirited manner in which they were overcome by all concerned.

The defences of the pa, whares, &c., having been burnt and completely destroyed, the troops returned to camp.

I am much indebted to Major McDonnell and the Native Contingent for their services on this occasion. Dr Featherston, Superintendent of this Province, who accompanies the Field Force, was present at the assault on Okotuku, and I have every reason to be obliged to him for his assistance on all matters connected with the Natives.

Previous to my departure from Weraroa, I sent to the Officers commanding at Patea, Manawapou, and Waingongoro, informing them that it was my intention to proceed northward by the inland track, pointing out the probability of the rebels retreating in that direction, and instructing them to patrol the country in the vicinity of the bush near their posts, with the view of intercepting and cutting them off.

* Royal Artillery—officer, 1; sergeants, 2; rank and file, 30. Under command of Lieutenant Carre.
 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment—officers, 8; sergeants, 11; drummers, 4; rank and file, 250. Under command of Lieut.-Colonel Trevor.
 Forest Rangers—officers, 2; sergeants, 3; rank and file, 41. Under command of Major Von Tempsky.
 Native Contingent (including Natives)—officers, 12; sergeants, 8; rank and file, 96. Kupapas, or Volunteer Natives—rank and file, 150. Under the command of Major McDonnell.
 Total—officers, 23; sergeants, 24; drummers, 4; rank and file, 567.
 † 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment—officers, 3; sergeants, 4; drummer, 1; rank and file, 100.
 Forest Rangers—officers, 2; rank and file, 33.
 Native Contingent—officers, 3; rank and file, 200.
 Total—officers, 8; sergeants, 4; drummer, 1; rank and file, 333.