

Colonel Warre, C.B., commanding at Taranaki, has also been instructed, if possible, to clear his district of rebels, more particularly in the vicinity of his Southern outposts, and to prevent their retreat by Mataitawa, should they take the road at the back of Mount Egmont.

On the 5th January, the Native Contingent desiring rest, the troops were occupied in destroying cultivations.

On the 6th January, the force marched to the Wenuakura River, and encamped on some high land to the southward and front of the rebel stronghold of Putahi. I purposed attacking the pa at once, and had directed two hundred men from the Patea to advance on it at the same time from the side next the river, but the only information I was able to obtain regarding the tracks to it was so meagre that I was obliged to wait until the following day.

On the evening of the 6th, while reconnoitering the position, a small party of the Native Contingent were fired upon by the enemy's scouts, resulting in a skirmish in which we had one man wounded.

Putahi is situated on a clearing about half a mile in diameter on the top of a hill, rising abruptly on all sides from the river plain to the height of about five hundred feet, and covered to the crest with dense bush. The usual approach is from the side on which we are encamped, and was one the rebels evidently anticipated we should attempt, having, as I was informed, erected stockades and other impediments in the bush to assist them in its defence—information which I found to be perfectly correct.

Knowing that by this route the pa could only be taken with a loss of many men, I decided on attacking it in rear, and having succeeded at a late hour on the night of the 6th in obtaining the services of a guide with a tolerable knowledge of the country, I marched at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 7th, with a force,\* crossed a tributary of the Wenuakura by a bridge constructed the evening before, and passing over a plain of about half a mile, ascended a steep spur, which brought us on an isolated plateau, lying to the left front of the pa, about two miles distant from it in a direct line. Descending this, the march may be described as one continued struggle through a dense primeval forest and bush, over ravines and gullies which could in most cases only be ascended and descended by the aid of supplejacks, and then only with great difficulty. The extreme distance to be traversed could not have exceeded four miles, but the obstacles and obstructions opposed to us made it a severe task of four hours.

When we arrived at the clearing, the Native Contingent, who had led through the bush, formed to the left and on the edge of it; the Forest Rangers were opened out in skirmishing order, and lying down to cover the formation of the remainder of the force, who, as they emerged one by one from the bush, were extended with supports; the 2nd Battalion 14th Regiment being in the centre; the 2nd Battalion 18th Regiment on the right, and the 50th on the left; the Native Contingent forming a reserve. The formation occupied more than an hour, under a desultory fire from the pa, from which we were then distant about four hundred yards, and when complete I gave the order to advance. The rebels now opened a heavy fire; but the line did not charge until they were within eighty yards, when, with a cheer and a rush, they carried the position, the rebels retreating to the bush beyond, to which I immediately sent the Native Contingent, who followed them for some little distance. The whole of the troops behaved admirably, and, though working through high fern, conducted the attack as steadily as on an ordinary parade.

The flagstaff, whares, &c., were all pulled down and burnt. The work of destruction being completed, and the formidable pa of Putahi, hitherto considered impregnable, on account of its inaccessibility, being levelled to the ground, I ordered the troops to be marched to camp.

Their loss has probably been very severe, though sixteen bodies only were found in and around the pa.

From information I have received, the garrison appears to have consisted of about two hundred rebels of the worst character.

I enclose a return of our casualties, by which your Excellency will observe we had one man killed and seven wounded. Amongst the latter, I am sorry to say, is Major McDonnell, who, as usual, was most active and zealous, not only in directing the march through the bush, but in pursuing the rebels in retreat.

Where all have behaved so gallantly, it is difficult to select any names for favorable mention; but, of the Colonial Forces, I beg especially to bring to your Excellency's notice Major Von Tempsky, commanding Forest Rangers; Major McDonnell, commanding Native Contingent; as also Ensign McDonnell of the same force.

I had directed Colonel Warre, C.B., to send one hundred men from the Patea to the right bank of the Wenuakura River, and to the right flank of the pa, in order to intercept rebels retreating by the inland route towards Kakaramea. I beg to forward a copy of this Officer's report of the proceedings on the occasion.

I have, &c.,  
T. CHUTE,  
Major-General.

His Excellency Sir G. Grey, K.C.B., &c.

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\* Royal Artillery—officer, 1; sergeants, 2; rank and file, 28; under Lieutenant Carre.  
2nd Battalion 14th Regiment—officers, 6; sergeants, 9; drummers, 3; rank and file, 204; under Lieut.-Colonel Trevor.  
2nd Battalion 18th Regiment—officers, 5; sergeants, 4; drummers, 2; rank and file, 89; under Major Roche.  
50th Regiment—officers, 4; sergeants, 4; drummers, 2; rank and file, 90; under Captain C. Johuson.  
Forest Rangers—officers, 2; sergeants, 2; rank and file, 38; under Major Von Tempsky.  
Native Contingent, &c.—officers (including Natives), 10; rank and file, 200; under Major McDonnell.  
Total—officers, 28; sergeants, 21; drummers, 7; rank and file, 649.