

DESPATCHES

FROM

MAJOR FRASER, COMMANDING FORCES AT TURANGANUI.

(Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 20th July, 1866.)

That there be laid upon the Table of this House—“A copy of a Despatch from Major Fraser, Commanding Forces at Turanganui, dated 21st November, 1865; as well as any other Despatches written by the same Officer in the months of November and December, 1865.”

(Mr. George Graham.)

WELLINGTON.

—
1866.

DESPATCHES FROM MAJOR FRASER.

No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Major FRASER to the AGENT FOR THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT, Hawke's Bay.
SIR,— Wacangaahika, 21st November, 1865.

I have the honor to report for your information my proceedings from the date of your departure from Napier.

I marched as I had previously determined, and halted at Mr. Goldsmith's for the night, from whence I proceeded early the next morning to attack the rebel pa built near the Bishop of Waiapu's residence. We were not molested on our march by the enemy until near the paddocks belonging to the Bishop, when we were fired on by the enemy, who had been reconnoitering us from their pa; they thus may be said to have fired the first shots of the war. Captain Westrupp and his Rangers soon dislodged the enemy's skirmishers, who fell back upon their pa, around which we then took up our several positions under a heavy fire. Before proceeding further, I must mention that all the houses, barns, and other buildings, except the Bishop's house, had been utterly destroyed by the rebels. The Bishop's house had been thoroughly dismantled, the paper being torn off the walls, glass broken, and all his valuable books torn and strewn about the floors. It was only our sudden arrival that prevented them from burning it,—a most fortunate thing for us, as it is the most favourable position we could have chosen. The firing on both sides continued until evening, when we as far as possible entrenched ourselves, and slept out in the vicinity of the pa. Captain Westrupp and his Rangers took up a position to the left of the pa, looking from the Bishop's house. Lieutenant Wilson and Military Settlers, with the Tuparoas under Te Hotina, were on the opposite flank; the Colonial Defence Force, Hawke's Bay Volunteers, and remainder of the Natives, were posted between the flanks and in front of the pa; a swampy lagoon is in rear of the pa, and is impassable, so none of the force were posted there.

I regret to have to state that owing to the heavy fire from the enemy the following casualties took place:—

Forest Rangers—

Ensign Ross, shot through the head; dangerous, but going on well.

Private Rain, shot through shoulders, severe.

1 Tuparoa Native and 1 Turanga Native killed.

2 Natives (Tuparoa) severely wounded.

From subsequent information I have learnt that five of the enemy were killed; number of wounded not known. Nothing happened further until next day, when an affair occurred, which, had it not been for the courage displayed by the officers and men concerned, must have been attended with very serious consequences. To enable you to understand the whole circumstances of the case, I must inform you, that I have ever since taking the field had to contend with great difficulties on account of the lukewarmness of our Native allies of Turanga, who instead of assisting either by keeping sentry, digging trenches, or taking up positions in conjunction with Europeans when ordered, have been content to remain entirely in the background, and to throw all the work upon the Europeans, Tuparoas, and Henare Potae's men. Accordingly the Tuparoas have been obliged as well as we to do double work; and had the other Natives simply done their duty and obeyed orders, what I am about to relate would most probably never have occurred.

On Saturday Captain Westrupp, with his usual zeal and perseverance, had pushed his position and entrenched himself within about fifty yards of the pa. Orders were therefore sent to Lieutenant Wilson, on the other flank, to select a place for entrenching himself, and to get as close to the pa as possible on his side. I went round to see his position, accompanied by Captain Biggs, and we both considered that he had got an excellent one. A number of the Natives had early in the day been ordered round to support him, as those who had been with him the previous night had left him. These were supposed to have reached him, and had they done so the advantage subsequently gained by him would have been much greater. As it was, however, a large Native reinforcement came up to join the rebels about five p.m. Lieutenant Wilson had not finished entrenching, his men were fatigued, the enemy made a sally from the pa, and he was surrounded on all sides. Under these circumstances, where most hearts would have failed them, British pluck carried the day. Our men, though taken aback, and, till fired upon, believing the rebels to be the Queen's Natives coming up to their support, fought bravely. Lieutenant Wilson ordered them to charge: they burst through the enemy, killing eight and wounding thirteen of their number, the loss on our side being as follows:—

Killed—Sergeant Doonan, Privates Borthwick, Martin, Wilkie, and Swords.

Wounded—Lieutenant Wilson, slightly; Private Pierson, severely; Private Sheddon, seriously; Private Chibbon, seriously; Private Wellfit, slightly; and Private Kennedy, slightly.

One Turanga Native, Andrea Thuruke, was severely wounded. Only three Natives were with Lieutenant Wilson's party at this time.

The operations elsewhere on this day consisted in our keeping up a hot fire on the enemy's pa, and in entrenching ourselves. I am very sorry to state that I have lost the valuable services of Assistant Surgeon Ormond, who was accidentally severely wounded by a shot coming through a window in the Bishop's house. A ball passed through his fingers, which were in his trousers pocket at the

time, entered the left thigh and passed through the right, the injury to the right thigh being very slight. I am able to report most favourably of his condition; no alarm need be felt by his friends. Next day (Sunday) we were attacked about eight a.m. in the most deceitful manner, by about 200 of the enemy, who advanced armed, in three bodies, close to our main position, under a flag of truce, their intention being to take us off our guard, and then fire at us. We however, providentially, did not pay any attention to their flag, as no flag of truce should be respected carried by such a large body of armed men, and I ordered them to be fired on before they could come up with us. This was the signal for them to begin, and we had a fair hand-to-hand fight, with about equal numbers, in an open place, and without the aid of trenches, in which the enemy were totally defeated, with a loss of thirty-four killed, and at least that number wounded, their men falling in all directions as they attempted to regain their pa, from which, I may add, a hot fire was kept up during the engagement. Our loss consisted of Trooper Hirtzel of C.D.F. being slightly wounded in the leg.

I trust your Honor will pardon any hurriedness visible in this Despatch, as it is being written under great difficulties and during an incessant fire. Before closing this, as the aspect of affairs remains unchanged, the Hau Haus being too dispirited to attack us, and their pa being too strong to be taken without a little time, I beg to call your Honor's attention to three points which I feel it my duty to write about:—

1. Nearly all the breech-loading ammunition is unfit for use, and if some really good be not sent at once, I shall have about eighty men without ammunition.

2. The attitude of the Native allies is of such a nature as to make me quite agree with your Honor that it would be impolitic to give them any more arms at present, and that their general laziness, both in action and in camp work, renders it necessary for me to be reinforced by at least 100 Europeans as soon as possible. I trust your Honor will be good enough to do so.

3. Hand grenades and rockets are much required, and would be of invaluable service against this pa.

It is my pleasing duty to inform your Honor that nothing can be better than the health and spirit of all Europeans under my command. All look forward to an early reduction of the pa, and all are eager for the attack. I cannot conclude, however, without mentioning how much credit is due to Lieutenant Wilson and Ensign Richardson for the manner in which, with only about thirty men, they so gallantly defeated and forced their way through four times their number. The only regret I have is, that the bodies of our unfortunate comrades had to be left on the field, although strenuous efforts were made by Captain La Serre and Lieutenant St. George, with a mixed force of Volunteers, to recover them, which the near approach of night alone prevented their doing.

Captain La Serre's party brought in one wounded man, Private Swords, who died the same night.

I wish particularly to bring under your Honor's notice, that Lieutenant St. George was the first to volunteer to go to Lieutenant Wilson's assistance. To all the officers my best thanks are due, for the support they have given me since active operations commenced. It has been hard work for both officers and men, as we have been obliged to keep awake all night, and the enemy have taken good care that we should not sleep much in the daytime.

Since writing the above, I have heard that the defeat of the rebels on Sunday has had the effect of making the Hau Haus of the pa Rarerera consent to an unconditional surrender, and I am about to take steps concerning it. I have made just now a prisoner of a Native called Koti, on suspicion of being a spy.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FRASER,

Brevet-Major Commanding Forces at Turanganui.

His Honor Donald McLean,
Agent General Government, Napier.

No. 2.

Copy of a Letter from the UNDER-SECRETARY, Colonial Defence Office, to Major FRASER.

(No. 778.)

Colonial Defence Office,

SIR,—

Wellington, 2nd December, 1865.

With reference to that passage in your Despatch of the 21st November, in which you state—“Next day (Sunday) we were attacked about 8 a.m. in the most deceitful manner by about 200 of the enemy, who advanced armed, in three bodies, close to our main position under a flag of truce, their intention being to take us off our guard and then fire on us. We, however, providentially, did not pay any attention to their flag, as no flag of truce should be respected carried by such a large body of armed men, and I ordered them to be fired on before they could come up with us. This was the signal for them to begin, and we had a fair hand-to-hand fight with about equal numbers, in an open place, and without the aid of trenches, in which the enemy were totally defeated, with a loss of thirty-four killed and at least that number wounded, their men falling in all directions as they attempted to regain their pa, from which, I may add, a hot fire was kept up during the engagement. Our loss consisted of Trooper Hirtzell being slightly wounded in the leg:” I am directed by the Honorable Colonel Russell, acting for the Defence Minister, to request that you will furnish the Government with the means of affording every explanation which may be asked for upon the several circumstances therein stated, and that you will be good enough to call for and forward to this office, a separate statement from each officer present in the field on that occasion of all the incidents detailed in the passage alluded to which fell under his own immediate observation.

I have, &c.,

Major Fraser, Commanding Colonial Forces,
Waiapu.

J. HOLT, Capt.,
Under Secretary.

No. 3.

Copy of a Letter from Major FRASER to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Colonial Defence Office.
(No. 12.)

SIR,—

Napier, 15th December, 1865.

With reference to the subject adverted to in your letter to me, No. 778-2, of the 2nd instant, I have the honor to state that on my return to the Wairoa, which will probably be to-morrow, I will obtain and forward to the Government the separate statements of each officer present on the occasion referred to, and will also forward at the same time such explanations as will put the Government in a position to answer any questions which way be asked them.

Under Secretary, Colonial Defence Office,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FRASER, Brevet-Major.

No. 4.

Copy of a Letter from Major FRASER to the UNDER SECRETARY, Colonial Defence Office.
(No. 8.)

SIR,—

Camp Te Tawa, Upper Wairoa,
30th January, 1866.

I have the honor to enclose, for the information of the Government, letters from the officers whose names appear in the margin* relative to the attack on Sunday morning, the 20th November last, by the Hau Hau at Waerengaahika, Poverty Bay.

I have also the honor to state, for the information of the Government, what came under my own notice on the occasion.

It will doubtless be remembered by the Government that on the preceding day, Saturday, Lieut. Wilson's position had been charged and taken by the enemy, on which occasion Lieutenant Wilson was misled in some measure by the enemy wearing the same badges as the friendly Natives, viz:—some white calico or linen round the left arm; when, therefore, on Sunday morning, after having passed an anxious night in our trenches, we saw three large bodies advancing against our positions, with, seemingly, a white flag carried among them, the men at once thought that the rebels were intending a second charge. I, however, gave an order not to fire, as I wished to be more sure of what they proposed doing. When they got close to us I saw their flag had a red cross on it in one of its corners, and I immediately ordered the men to fire, the results being as I stated in my Despatch.

I regret that in writing my report, which I was obliged to do hurriedly and under great difficulties, I did not allude more fully to this affair, as I am certain, had I done so, none of the absurd reports concerning it would have ever been allowed to appear in the newspapers.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FRASER, Brevet-Major,
Commanding Colonial Forces, Upper Wairoa.

The Under Secretary, Colonial Defence Office.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

Copy of a Letter from Captain BIGGS, H.B.V., to Major FRASER.

SIR,—

Napier, 15th December, 1865.

I have the honor to forward you for the information of the Hon. the Minister of Defence my opinion respecting the flag of truce at the Waerengaahika.

Even supposing it to have been a flag of truce (which it was not,) after the treachery the Hau Hau had been guilty of the day preceding, in wearing our badges, I consider that, accompanied as it was by such a large number of armed men, you would have been very much to blame had you allowed the fanatics to come any nearer our position without firing upon them.

The only reason why any of us were warranted in supposing that it was a flag of truce is, that a similar flag was hoisted at Hungamagatoroa when the Hau Hau surrendered at that place and some of the Hau Hau from Hungamagatoroa were known to be amongst the fanatics at Poverty Bay.

From subsequent information, as you are aware, it was never intended to be looked upon as a flag of truce.

Brevet-Major Fraser,
Commanding Colonial Forces, Tauranga and Waiapu.

I have, &c.,

REGINALD NEWTON BIGGS,
Captain H.B.V.

Enclosure 2 in No. 4.

Copy of a Letter from Lieutenant St. GEORGE to Major FRASER.

SIR,—

Camp Te Tawa, Upper Wairoa, 20th January, 1866.

In answer to your request that I should write a statement of what I saw at Waerengaahika on Sunday morning, the 19th November, 1865, I have the honor to inform you, for the information of the Government, that I was in the trenches on the morning in question. About 10 a.m. I saw some 200 Hau Haus advancing from the pa on to our lines; they were in three companies, one of which I noticed had a flag of truce, and at first thought it was a white one. We were ordered not to fire. When the enemy got a little closer I saw that the flag had a red cross in the corner. The order then came to fire, which we did. This fire was returned, and the Hau Haus charged our lines.

I have, &c.,

Brevet-Major Fraser,
Commanding Colonial Forces, Wairoa.

J. C. St. GEORGE,
Lieutenant Colonial Defence Force.

* Captain Biggs, H.B.V.; Lieutenant St. George, C.D.F.; Ensign Richardson, K.M.; Ensign Tuke, H.B.V.

DESPATCHES FROM MAJOR FRASER.

Enclosure 3 in No. 4.

Copy of a Letter from Ensign RICHARDSON to Major FRASER.

SIR,—

Camp Te Tawa, Upper Wairoa, 24th January, 1866.

In reply to your request for a statement of the incidents that took place at Waerengaahika on Sunday morning, the 20th November, 1865.

I have the honor to state for the information of the Government that I was on duty in the trenches on that occasion, and that I saw the Natives advancing from their pa towards our lines in three columns, one of which (the nearest to our left flank) had a flag flying in front.

From their number and plan of advancing I concluded at once that an attack upon our position was intended. Orders were given not to fire. When the enemy was within a range of fifty or sixty yards a red cross was seen in the corner of the flag, and orders were immediately given "to open fire," which was done. The enemy promptly responded, and a general action ensued.

I have, &c.,

WM. A. RICHARDSON,

Major Fraser, Officer Commanding E.C.E.F.

Ensign No. 1 Company E.C.E.F.

Enclosure 4 in No. 4.

Copy of a Letter from Ensign TUKE to Major FRASER.

SIR,—

Camp, Te Tawa, 24th January, 1866.

In compliance with your request that I should inform you of what came under my personal notice at Waerengaahika on the morning of the 19th November, I have the honor to state that at about 10 a.m. on that day my attention was directed to three large armed parties of the enemy advancing from their pa towards our lines, under, apparently, at that distance, a flag of truce. Orders were given by the Major Commanding not to fire. On their nearer approach, however, it was at once perceived that it was no flag of truce, but a Hau Hau fighting flag, having a red cross in the corner. Orders were then given to open fire on them, to which they immediately replied, broke into open order, and charged our lines.

I have, &c.,

ARTHUR TUKE,

Major Fraser, Commanding E.C.E.F.,
Te Tawa, Wairoa.

Ensign H.B.V.

No. 5.

Copy of a Letter from Major FRASER to the UNDER SECRETARY, Colonial Defence Office.

In haste.

Maru-Marū, Te Wairoa,

(No. 1.-W.F.)

27th December, 1865.

SIR,—

I have the honor to report for the information of the Minister for Colonial Defence, that, in accordance with instructions received from His Honor Mr. McLean, I commenced active operations at the Wairoa as soon as possible after my return thither from Napier.

Having organized an expedition, consisting of Captain Hussey's Company and part of my own, and part of the chiefs Kopu, Ihaka, Whaanga, and Karauria's tribes, I started from Te Wairoa on Saturday, the 23rd instant, and marched about nine miles, camping for that night about two miles above the junction of the Wairoa and Waiāu Rivers, and about four miles from the enemy's first position.

I remained at this place until Monday morning, when, after Divine Service, we made an early start and proceeded towards the enemy's pa, which on arriving at we found deserted. This pa had evidently been originally an old fighting pa, and the Hau Haus had intended making it a strong position, as they had palisades ready for the purpose of strengthening it. Nothing but our quick advance saved our having some trouble, both there and along our whole line of march, there being many places suitable for ambushes and the ground being such that every step might have been contested.

I will now explain the different positions of the enemy, so that the Government may thoroughly understand what I am about to relate. This pa that I have mentioned was on the right bank of the Wairoa, on the left bank of which, directly opposite, was a kainga, in which were several whares, a flagstaff, &c.; near it were large cultivations. The enemy had deserted this kainga and had separated in two different directions; some had gone to another kainga, about a mile and a half off, situated on a creek which runs into the Wairoa and called Maruhakeke; the remainder had taken to the hills, where, subsequently, we discovered that they had a large unfinished pa. The chiefs and I held a consultation on our arrival as to what was best to be done. We could see the Hau Hau flag flying in the pa on the creek, and we determined to send a flag of truce to them in order to give them an opportunity of surrendering unconditionally before blood was shed. They treated our message with contempt, and I accordingly hoisted the Union Jack, opened fire and marched in the direction of the kainga Mahuhakeke, with all the Europeans and about 150 Natives. Captain Hussey was in command of the advanced guard; he pushed on with a few men too hurriedly—the main body could not keep up with him. The consequence was that the approach to the kainga being very sudden, and it being occupied by a large number of rebels, this gallant officer was shot, and died in a few minutes, while bravely leading the few men with him up to the position. About three minutes afterwards the majority of the men had got to the ground. I had been on the spot myself before Captain Hussey was killed, and was then engaged in rallying those who had been with him. As soon as I saw enough men available I ordered Captain Biggs and Lieutenant Bear to take possession of a small garden in rear of the kainga, and outflank the enemy. This was done most effectually. The men charged the kainga led on my side by Lieutenant St. George, who was first in the kainga, and drove the enemy pellmell before them. Captain Biggs, with his usual skill, saw that they could be followed up from where he was stationed, and did so with some Europeans and some

Natives. The enemy fled in all directions, were followed for a mile and a half up the creek, and across into the bush and scrub, losing altogether, in the attack on the kainga and in the pursuit, about ten of their number, nine of whom have been buried by the friendly Natives, and I have no doubt that I am considerably underrating their loss. The casualties on our side were as follows:—

Europeans.

Captain Hussey: gunshot wound through spine, entering right side. Killed.
 No. 195. Corporal Hawes, T.M.S.: gunshot wound in left arm. Serious; doing well.
 No. 639. Private Hollingsworth, T.M.S.: gunshot wound in left arm and back. Serious; doing well.

Natives.

Tipene, of Kopu's party: gunshot wound through head. Killed.

While we were engaged as described above, the chief Kopu and the greater part of his men were watching the enemy's other position, in order that we should not be cut off. As soon as this chief saw the enemy driven out of their kainga, his men being fresher than ours, he determined to chase them as far as he could. He did so in the most able manner, driving them before him into the hills, and returned at nightfall, having killed three of their number in addition to those enumerated before, and having only one man slightly wounded.

The next day, at two o'clock in the morning, Captain Biggs, Cornet Pearce, and Ensign Richardson, with fifty men, composed nearly all of my own Company, who volunteered for the service, started with Kopu and Ihaka, Waanga's people, to surprise the enemy if possible, and drive them out of any position they might have taken up. Captain Biggs returned to Camp about 9 a.m., and reported his having discovered a large unfinished pa from which the enemy had fled. He had not, therefore, seen anything of the enemy, but was able to give me information of the direction they had taken. Kopu remained with his men in order to scout. Kopu returned in the evening, having found and being engaged with the enemy a great part of the day in what may be described as a bush fight. Two of his men were wounded, one I fear, by name Rana, will not live. Kopu reports the enemy to be now occupying a strong position on a spur among the hills. They have sent their women and children to Waikaremo, which is about three days journey from where I now am. The fugitives from Turanga under Anaru Matate have taken refuge with the enemy here. I estimate the number of the enemy at about 400; and, considering the small force at my disposal, having only 100 available Europeans for the field, together with about 150 trustworthy Natives, I am now sending Captain Biggs overland to Napier, to obtain His Honor Mr. McLean's consent for him to proceed at once to Tuparoa, in order to obtain the services—which I know will be gladly given—of those brave Chiefs Te Hotine and Ropatu, with their men. I also purpose removing by the same opportunity from Turanga-nui 20 men from my own Company and the Hawke's Bay Volunteers. This will be an addition to the force here of about 200 Natives, who have fought with me before and whom I know and can trust thoroughly, and of 50 Europeans.

In concluding this Despatch I beg to bring under the notice of the Government the general gallantry displayed by both officers and men in the pursuit of an enemy over a strange country—one which even the friendly Natives knew nothing about. I must particularise the names of Captain Biggs, Lieutenant St. George, and a gentleman volunteer who has accompanied the expedition with Ihaka Waanga's Natives, a Mr. Towgood, of Hawke's Bay, as having been, by their skill and courage, of the greatest possible assistance to me, and I trust the Government will remember their services.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FRASER, Brevet-Major,
 Commanding Local Forces,

Turanganui and Te Wairoa, Province of Auckland.

The Under Secretary for Colonial Defence, Wellington.

