

was getting very short, Captain Canning and myself loading and firing now and then, and I was afraid the enemy might have got round to the crossing of the Waingongoro River before I could reach it. We attained the opening at Ahi-pai-pa just at dusk, and here received a parting volley from the enemy. They followed on yelling, and commenced a war dance in the open ground out of the bush; I caused my men to cheer, and gave them a volley which I think took effect, as their dance ended rather abruptly, and they did not molest us any more. I may state that for some time I had not heard any distant firing, and therefore concluded the remainder of the force had got in advance of me. I pushed on to the river and found a few of the friendly Natives holding the crossing. We got the men and the wounded safely across, and reached camp about 10 p.m. A mixed party of Natives and Europeans, the latter numbering about eighty, had arrived before me, and reported that all the officers were killed or wounded, and left behind, myself included. On rolls being called, I found that Sub-Inspector Roberts, Captain Palmer, Lieutenant Hastings and Ensign Hirtzell, with about eighty men, and four Natives were still absent—I caused three rockets to be fired, and sent a party to the heights above the river and they sounded bugles, but no response was heard. Being satisfied I could do nothing further until daylight, the officers and men, being exhausted, were dismissed. I had arranged to start the Natives to hunt up the missing men in the morning, and just as they were about to start a party was seen approaching the camp which proved to be Sub-Inspector Roberts, Ensign Hirtzell, and sixty-two men with four Natives, who reported Captain Palmer and Lieutenant Hastings as having been killed. I enclose the statement of Sub-Inspector Roberts of what took place from the time he became senior officer of the rear-guard.

It is, I feel, a most difficult task to do justice to the conduct of the brave officers I have had the honor to command on this occasion. I can simply say they did their duty like Englishmen; their gallant conduct under a most galling fire, their inspiring and cheerful demeanour to encourage their men when wearied, exhausted, and almost giving up, saved many lives, and commanded respect and obedience in situations rarely exceeded for difficulty and danger; and I feel confident that if Major Von Tempsky or Captain Buck had lived a few minutes longer I would not have had to regret for ever the loss of so many gallant comrades, whose services at this time the Colony so much requires. The conduct of the men was excellent until they found the enemy was in such force on all sides, when some of them became dispirited; but the noble example of many of their number, with the assistance of the officers and non-commissioned officers, helped to re-instil fresh heart, notwithstanding seven hours, scrambling through dense forest had almost exhausted them before they reached the enemy. Of the conduct of the Kupapas I can speak highly; I never saw them behave better. Kemp, Power, and their small party with us, and the guide, Honi Papara, deserve the special thanks of the Government. The services of Ngatiapa, under Hunia, Hakeke, Pirimona, Peti, Hanila, and others, in assisting Europeans through the bush when cut off from us, I consider deserve to be recognized by the Government. The five men who remained with Sub-Inspector Roberts when they might have left him and party to their own resources are—Hakaru, Tarei, Te Whimini, and Whikita or Pita; the men were so grateful for the conduct of the Kupapas that they subscribed some money and presented it to them. Amongst the non-commissioned officers and men whose conduct deserve especial notice, was Sergeant-Major Scannell (for whom I would be grateful if the Government would do something in the Armed Constabulary); Sergeant Davy, No. 2 Division, A.C., who got up a tree and fired at the enemy; Sergeant Bennett, No. 3 Division, A.C.; Corporal Cahill, No. 3 Division, A.C.; Constables Ready, Kelley, Percy, and Quigley, No. 3 Division, A.C.; Sergeants Anderson and Toovey, No. 5 Division, A.C.; Corporal Boyd, No. 5 Division, A.C.; Sergeant Flear, Wellington Rangers; and Volunteer Sergeants Livingston, Blake, and Pope. And now, in conclusion, I would beg most strongly to represent to the Hon. the Minister for Colonial Defence, the fact that the Natives who accompanied me, and who it is known killed fifteen of the enemy, yet themselves suffered no loss, not even a man wounded. This I trust will prove that to fight Natives successfully in a bush where every tree and track of which is known to them, requires men who have been long and carefully trained to such difficult work. Instead of my men dispersing and taking cover, they could not be prevented from huddling together in small lots, affording a good target to the enemy. My efforts and those of all my officers were in most cases almost without effect in convincing them of the mistake they were making; though willing and anxious to do their duty, their short training had not been sufficient to teach them how.

Mr. Pringle, late of the 18th Royal Irish, accompanied the expedition as a volunteer. On the way back I desired him to take charge of some men, which he did in such an excellent manner that I promised him on the field to recommend him for a commission in the force.

I beg to enclose a list of my casualties which I deeply deplore are very, very heavy, but I am satisfied that that of the enemy is much heavier. The Kupapas killed fifteen, and the known killed by the Europeans was thirteen, making a total of twenty-eight. This does not include the loss they must have suffered when we were fighting our way out.

I have, &c.,

The Under Secretary,
Colonial Defence, Wellington.

T. McDONNELL, Lieut-Colonel,
Commanding Patea Field Force.

P.S.—I omitted to mention that Father Roland again accompanied the force and shared the same dangers. He also assisted to carry the wounded with my party, and his example was a great incentive to my men to persevere. For fear there might be any mistake I regret to have to state that the dead had all to be left behind.

Enclosure 1 in No. 94.

Copy of a Letter from Sub-Inspector ROBERTS to Colonel McDONNELL.

SIR,—

Camp, Waihi, 9th September, 1868.

I have the honor to report for your information that after the retreat commenced I consulted Captain Buck, commanding the Wellington Rifles, who was the senior officer in rear, whether we could take the dead. We concluded it was not possible. Immediately after this Captain Buck was shot, whilst