

will make my operations more difficult. Still, with my present and expected force, I do not see anything likely to be apprehended, except the enemy escape, that would delay me much here, or otherwise be unfavourable; and we run an equal chance of taking his stronghold, and defeating him with great loss, without very much sacrifice of life. The success or failure of the expedition will turn upon the practicability of investing him, and of this, not knowing the ground, I can form no positive opinion. Nevertheless, I am anxious to try, and at least confident that in doing so I do not risk any serious reverse. Of course I mean when the Ngatiporou, or even a part of them, join me. Before that, it is at a least a matter of doubt whether my force can keep up its communications and invest the place.

The officers and men are behaving very well; but I am disappointed in Mr. Gascoigne's scouts, who are never to be found, and are by no means enterprising.

To-morrow morning Major Fraser will reconnoitre to my right flank towards Waikohu, a stream running into the Waipao some little way above Waerengahika, and descending the hills by a valley to the left front, looking with one's back to the sea.

The Hon. Colonel Haultain.

I have, &c.,

G. S. WHITMORE, Colonel.

No. 12.

Copy of a Letter from Colonel WHITMORE to the Hon. Colonel HAULTAIN.

SIR,—

Head-Quarters, Ngatapa, 30th December, 1863.

In continuation of previous despatches, I have the honor to inform you that having satisfied myself by reconnoitring expeditions on both flanks that the enemy was not attempting any movement in force on either flank, I moved forward on the 24th instant from Fort Fraser at Patutahi, and pressed on my material and stores from that post and Fort St. John as far as I had been able to make wheel traffic good, to my front,—a distance of perhaps eight miles. Here my advanced parties captured two of the enemy's spies—one an old man—whose insolent bearing so provoked the Arawa that they shot them. What little the elder one (whom I had hoped to save) said was to the effect that Te Kooti was in my front a few miles with his men, having received large reinforcements from the Uriweras. He said "Go back, go back, the land is full of Hauhaus: did you not see the 'star'?" I have since had reason to believe that all he said was untrue. However, I built a small redoubt to protect a tent of stores, with a garrison of a dozen men, and on Christmas Day moved on, making the road good for pack-transport, and took post beyond the high range which terminates the valley.

Here again I erected a small defensible post which I christened Fort Roberts, and collected all the burdens I could in two trips get from the pack-animals. From the highest ranges I could obtain no signs of the enemy, but I found the trail of his scouts leading away from me. I this day learned the arrival of the Ngatiporou.

On the 26th I marched, leaving the detachment previously sent on by the Ngatiporou to guard my artillery and stores, and to await the arrival of the rest of their tribe under Ropata. I reached this evening the late camp of the Ngatikahungunu, and slept. The enemy's position was now in full view, but he made no movement to oppose my march. Nevertheless I took precautions to prevent his surprising me on the march or laying ambuscades, in which the young Arawa Division proved extremely valuable.

On the 27th, having drawn the rations brought up by the pack-horses the preceding night, I pushed forward to within a mile of Ngatapa, and occupied the ridge opposite the enemy's fortifications. Here I bivouacked and strengthened my position, sending back parties to improve the track, which was trying to the pack-animals. I now learned that the Ngatiporou were marching, but delayed by the illness of their fighting chief Ropata. Although the difficulty of supply was increased by every day's delay, and my arrangements did not contemplate any very protracted operations, I placed myself in the hands of the Hon. Mr. Richmond, who had kindly consented to remain to assist me, and trusting to him the real difficulty of the campaign, I resolved to await the Ngatiporou, and to make a simultaneous movement when I marched to cut off the enemy's retreat at the same time as I closed him in in front.

The position of Ngatapa is by a great deal the most difficult and strongest I have ever seen in this country; and of those in my camp, none, European or Native, has ever met with a stronger. Rising abruptly out of a confused and "tormented" mass of forest-clad hills, a single cone-shaped mountain rises, conspicuous from its height and isolation. It is covered with bush, which has been to some extent cut down and burned. The apex of the hill, which is perhaps 2,000 feet high, is girt by a triple line of fortification, and of these the two inner ones rise to a height of 12 feet. Rifle-pits guard the front and the water, which is distant some few chains; and a scarped ridge, said to be impracticable for the descent of the garrison, terminates two, if not all three, of the parapets. These latter are built as we build fortifications, with fern and sticks. I learn that behind the ridge the apex is descended by a ladder to a second knoll on which the kainga of the women stands, and by this alone, I am informed, can the garrison escape to the rear. My plan has therefore been to send a strong party to the rear to intercept escape, while with the bulk of the force I approach the main body of the place by flying sap where necessary, or even by single sap, so as to render all attempt to burst out impossible. I have brought up the cohorts, with the view of employing vertical fire, which, I believe, has never yet been used in Maori warfare, and with which they are probably unacquainted. I now pressed forward small reconnoitring parties; but to all appearance the enemy's garrison consists of only 150 men, who are all employed in adding to the defences.

The 28th passed without any tidings from the rear, the pack-horses bringing up a report that the Ngatiporou would not march. I assembled the senior officers, and having ascertained their views decided that as the supply was difficult and expensive, and as we could not abandon the enterprise because we could no longer calculate on a complete success, we should send to the rear to ascertain for certain whether the Ngatiporou were coming, and if they were not, to attack the place in front only. The natural consequence of doing so would be at best but an imperfect success; but the spirits of the