

On the 7th we followed the bed of the Whakatane, which we struck here; and I regret to say that, at the foot of a steep hill called Hukanui, an ambuscade fired upon the scouts, depriving the country of a cool and gallant officer, in the person of Lieutenant White, who was shot dead. His scouts very gallantly got his body out of the stream under fire. The hill was defended by the Hauhaus from the top, and from another which flanked it. However, I managed to turn the position which was evacuated. To effect this I ordered Sub-Inspector Gundry with No. 8, and Major Mair with his Natives, to force a track through the fern; but it was with the greatest difficulty that Major Mair and myself managed to push on the Natives. After letting the men have dinner on the top of the hill, I moved on for about three miles, when I came in sight of Whenuanui's pa, Tahora. I halted on a ferny ridge about 600 yards from it, an open plain being between the enemy and myself. Perceiving that an advance along this must entail heavy loss, I sent Lieut.-Colonel Fraser with No. 1, and Major Mair with Natives, to my left, to make their way through a bush, and seize a cleared plateau commanding the pa; at the same time I directed Sub-Inspector McDonnell with No. 2, and Sub-Inspector Gundry with No. 8, to work round through scrub to the right, so as to reach the edge of the bush lining the clearing round the pa. The first movement was decisive. As soon as the enemy saw Colonel Fraser's men surmount the ascent, and bound along the plateau, he made a precipitate retreat, and at sundown I had the whole force in the pa. On the 8th my march was later than usual, as I distributed the bacon and ammunition I had, cleaned arms, and destroyed the palisading. At about 11 a.m. I came in sight of Pata Hoata, Peiroa's pa. Seeing a hill commanding it on the further side, I endeavoured to work round to it through the bush by my left. Lieut.-Colonel Fraser however found that he would have to fight his way through this, it being held by the enemy who thus flanked me. In consequence of this I ordered him to send No. 4, and part of No. 1, under Sub-Inspector Travers into this bush, and went round to the other flank. Here, with No. 8, and a sub-division of No. 2, I managed to get within ten yards of the pa, and here I determined to establish a sap. However, before the tools could be got, the enemy guessed my intent and bolted. Sub-Inspector McDonnell went in pursuit, but ineffectually. I deeply regret that, in holding the bush, Sub-Inspector Travers received a mortal wound, the man who inflicted it falling dead himself almost at the same time. I established myself in the pa, sent out pickets and a foraging party, and awaited your arrival.

I must beg to pay a hearty tribute to the endurance and gallantry of the European force under my command, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, all obeyed orders implicitly, and worked together with a zeal and willingness I have rarely witnessed. I beg to bring to your favourable notice the whole of the centre column, for it is impossible for me to particularize. Sub-Inspector Scannell acted as adjutant of the column, and rendered me every assistance. The officers, non-commissioned officers and men of No. 1 right sub-division, No. 2, and No. 8, skirmished most pluckily up close to the pa, led by Lieut.-Colonel Fraser and their officers, and the small detachment of No. 4 stuck manfully to poor Sub-Inspector Travers. At the same time I must report to you that the conduct of the Native allies was far from satisfactory; Major Mair had to work hard to induce them to do anything. They refused to join the advance, and it was with the greatest difficulty they could be induced either to carry pikaus or face any fire. From this censure I must except Tiwai Pehana, of the Whakatoeas, who has done his best to help Major Mair to get men, and by his example done all he could to make them useful. Had it not been for Major Mair's exertions, I doubt if I could have got the Native force on at all. I enclose a return of casualties, which I deeply regret is so heavy.

I have, &c.,

To the Hon. Colonel Whitmore,
Commanding Colonial Forces.

J. H. H. ST. JOHN, Lieut.-Colonel,
Commanding Centre Column, Field Force.

P.S.—I forgot to mention the number of the Native loss; I put it down at—

At Omaru Teani	6 men; another was reported.
At Tahora	1 „
At Pata Hoata	2 „
Total	9 men.

Besides these I presume others were wounded, and got away somehow or another.

J. H. H. ST. JOHN, Lieut.-Colonel.