

31st.—I sent on the tired men as soon as it was daylight, and an hour afterwards followed with the rest of the column. About noon we got out of the bush at Te Wanganui. Some seed potatoes were found, several pigs were shot, and we were soon able to make an excellent breakfast. In the afternoon we arrived at Matangarara.

Owing to the nature of the country through which we had to pass, the men got most of their clothes torn off their backs; some also lost the soles off their boots. One man had to march barefooted for two days. I consider the distance from Matangarara to the furthest point we reached to be over thirty miles.

I have learnt since my return, that the part of the country at which we arrived is called Tutaiairi, and that it is about two days' journey from Mangaio, near Pipiriki, on the Wanganui River. The road is called Taukokako, and is the only one known leading in that direction from Taiporohenui.

I have, &c.,

JAMES BOOTH, R.M.

No. 41.

Copy of a Letter from Lieut.-Colonel FRASER to the UNDER SECRETARY, Defence Department.

SIR,—

Fort Galatea, 9th June, 1869.

I have the honor to forward to you a copy of a letter I have addressed to the Honorable Colonel Whitmore, respecting the sad occurrence which has lately taken place.

I have, &c.,

The Under Secretary,
Colonial Defence Office, Wellington.

JAMES FRASER, Lt.-Col.,
Commanding at Galatea.

Enclosure in No. 41.

Copy of a Letter from Lieut.-Colonel FRASER to Colonel WHITMORE.

SIR,

Fort Galatea, 9th June, 1869.

It is my painful duty to call your attention to the annexed statements of Troopers Stephenson and Leary, of the Opotiki Cavalry, relative to the surprise of their party at Opepe on the 7th instant, and the massacre which it is presumed has followed. I have now to detail the steps I have taken in consequence of their report. You will see by their statements that they arrived at this post late yesterday evening. I at once gave orders for a party of troopers (of whom unfortunately there were only four available, but which I increased to eight by mounting three of the Ngatimanawa and one of my own buglers on all the available horses) to proceed in the direction of Opepe, to gain intelligence and to succour any of the fugitives whom they might find.

While awaiting their return this day, I made the following arrangements, viz.:—To withdraw No. 6 Division temporarily (now at the first crossing from Fort Clarke, ninety-eight strong) to hold this post, as there are such large stores of all kinds here, and to proceed myself to-morrow morning on the track Colonel St. John took to Opepe, with as many men as can be spared and some of the Ngatimanawa, to ascertain the fate of those missing: the distance is, I hear, about sixty miles—to take four days' rations, and to march as quickly as I could.

The cavalry sent out having now returned, after proceeding some twenty-five miles without seeing anything, I purpose therefore marching as I had arranged. Brigade-Major Birch accompanies me, and I trust to be able to send you more satisfactory news than it is possible for me to do now.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FRASER, Lt.-Col.,
Commanding at Galatea.

To Colonel Whitmore.

Sub-Enclosure 1 to Enclosure in No. 41.

STATEMENT by Trooper STEPHENSON.

GEORGE STEPHENSON, a trooper in the Opotiki Cavalry, came into camp about 4.30 p.m., on Tuesday, the 8th June, 1869, and stated:—Yesterday morning I, George Leary who has come in with me, Sergeant Dette, McKillop, Lockwood, Sergeant Slattery, T.C., Gill, T.C., Cornet Smith, Lawson, T.C., Ross, O.C., Cook, O.C., and 4 half-castes, Johnson, Potea, Bidwell, and one other, were camped at Opepe. The same morning Colonel St. John, Major Cumming, and an orderly, left with Captain St. George, to go on I think to his place. Captain Moorsom and Mr. Clarke also left—for where I do not know. Between 2 and 3 p.m. it was raining, and we were all lying in the whares; there were two or three armed Maoris came up to the whares; they saluted us as friendly Maoris, said "tenakoe," said they thought we were Hauhaus. One of the men, young Gill, spoke to one of them, who said they were Maoris from the Lake, and not knowing we were Pakehas had come up armed. There were four or five of them close to the whares, and being suspicious I went outside, and seeing some more coming up in skirmishing order, I went to get my arms. One of the Maoris put his gun at full cock in front of my whare door and pointing it at me. I then turned to go into one of the other whares, when he fired at me. I then tried to enter another, and another fired his double-barrelled gun. I then ran for the bush, and saw no more of it. Sergeant Dette was in the bush just before me, and Leary came in at the same time. I heard heavy firing all the time, and I believe all were shot but us three. I could not keep up with Sergeant Dette, who was running fast, and what has become of him I do not know. Leary and I stuck together. We have lost our horses, arms, saddles, &c. The Maoris got round between us and the whares, and fired heavily. There were about 70 or 80 men, as nearly as I can judge, and they were well clothed.