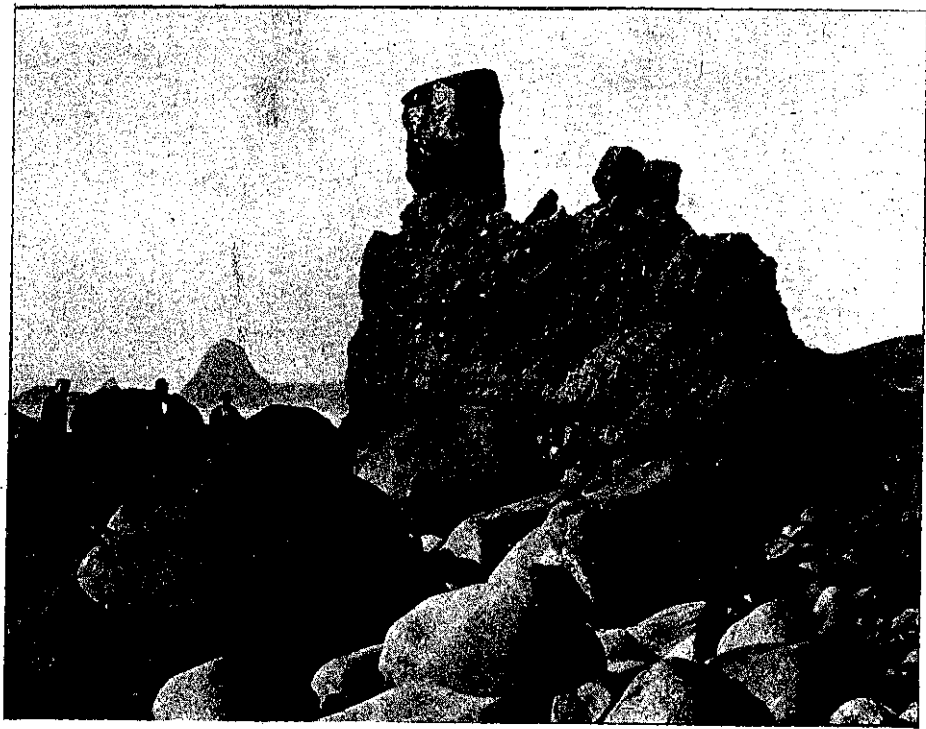


situation became grave indeed. A messenger was sent at great risk to represent things to the Colonel, and to tell him the ammunition was also running short, but Murray replied: "The volunteers have got themselves into this mess, let them get out of it as they best can. *My* orders are to return to New Plymouth at nightfall." Nothing could move his determination, and he marched away, leaving the volunteers to their fate. The "Hero of Waireka" he was afterwards called in derision. His officers were furious

people were hot within them at that time, and there were indeed few, if any, who would hear or say a word in his favour.

The gallant little band was now in a desperate plight, hemmed in as they were on all sides by a fierce and brave foe. They had taken their stand round a farmhouse at this time, and had made entrenchments of firewood, sheaves of oats, etc. So they faced the foe, and fought on expecting death. But all at once the smoke grew thinner, the rattle of musketry ceased, and silence



ROCKS AT OMATA, BEHIND WHICH MAORIS FIRED.

—indeed, more than one of them became conveniently deaf, and *failed to hear* the recall, and did not leave the battle-field. It is but fair to say the Colonel believed himself bound and fettered by red tape, and compelled to act as he did. He had been many years a soldier, yet Waireka was his first battle. His promotion had been consequently slow, and even now he was only a Brevet-Colonel. It is easier to judge after all these years, but the hearts of the

reigned as the shades of night closed round them. Was it some trick on the part of the dark-skinned foe, some plot to take them unawares? they wondered, but nothing stirred. After the young crescent moon had set, the little band crept out, pausing often to listen, but hearing nothing save the beat of the surf on the beach, or the cry of some wheeling seagull. They called in a small detachment of men stationed on the beach, and slowly and noiselessly began their