

attacked at this inclement season of the year, when such an operation must be extremely harrassing to the troops employed in it.

The settlement of Wanganui is in no real danger from the Wereroa Pa, although as long as it is occupied by the Natives a somewhat larger force will be requisite to ensure the protection of the settlement than if the position were in our hands.

In regard to your Excellency's proposal to collect with as little delay as possible a sufficient force to take the Wereroa Pa, I must inform your Excellency that I consider it impossible to take that position by any formal operation in such a manner as your Excellency wishes, viz., so as to secure a marked and decided success, inflicting a large loss on the enemy, and sustaining but a trifling loss ourselves. I believe that in any formal attack on this position, (which it must be remembered cannot be surrounded, and from which the Natives can effect their escape at any moment,) our loss would most probably be heavier, much heavier perhaps, than that of the enemy; and that, under such circumstances, the mere possession of the place would not be followed by the important advantages which it is your Excellency's desire to attain.

On the contrary, it is possible that its capture, with a loss on our side exceeding that of the enemy, might have an injurious moral effect on the Natives, and instead of hastening their submission, encourage them in postponing it.

It is indeed a matter of surprise to me that any one with a knowledge of the country between Wanganui and Taranaki can entertain a hope of striking a decisive blow there. The nature of the country forbids the idea, and if Her Majesty's troops are to be detained in the Colony until one is struck, I confess I see no prospect of their leaving New Zealand.

As we have now entered on the rainy season, I am not prepared to concur in your Excellency's opinion that the siege of the Wereroa Pa would at such a time be of necessity a short operation; and with reference to your Excellency's remark that an overwhelming force could be collected for reducing the pa, because I propose the immediate withdrawal of two regiments, and as you state shortly of an additional force of three other regiments, I must remind your Excellency that I have expressed no opinion as to the time at which any reduction beyond the proposed one of two regiments can take place,—the consideration of any further reduction, I informed your Excellency, I postponed, until I was made aware what steps the Colonial Government were taking to provide for the defence of the Colony.

Experience has shown me that it is not generally desirable to attack such positions as the Wereroa Pa in a formal manner by a large force openly assembled for the purpose. The Natives, glad of the opportunity of fighting us with all the advantages as to position on their side, assemble from all parts of the country, and having defended their position to the last moment, effect an escape into dense forest, where it is impossible to follow them. An immediate formal attack, therefore, on the Wereroa Pa, at a time the most unfavourable in point of weather, and when the Natives are in all likelihood best prepared, is, in my opinion, unadvisable.

I have, however, to inform your Excellency that before I received your letter of the 19th instant, I had sent Brigadier-General Waddy instructions to form a post near Nukumarū, to strengthen the frontier of the settlement of Wanganui.

The establishment of this post will also be useful in the event of a formal attack on the pa being undertaken by your Excellency's desire.

I have further given Brigadier-General Waddy permission to surprise or make a sudden attack on the place if he considers that the information he may receive as to the number of Natives in it justifies him in so doing. It is not impossible that the close proximity of this post to the pa may of itself cause the abandonment of the position or its surrender by the Natives.

Looking however to the nature of the recent instructions received by me from the Secretary of State for War, and to the terms of Mr. Cardwell's last despatch which your Excellency received by the last mail, and a copy of which was forwarded to me, I see no ground in your Excellency's letter of the 19th instant to induce me to alter my opinion, stated in my letter of the 12th instant, as to the extent of the reduction that should at once take place.

After that reduction, I still propose to wait to see what steps the Colonial Government are taking to dispense with a further number of Her Majesty's troops.

In naming the places from which the troops might be withdrawn, I could have no intention of violating the terms of your Excellency's commission, or of assuming the command of the Colony. It was impossible I submit, in proposing any reduction, not to take into consideration the places from which the Imperial troops could best be withdrawn; and it did appear to me that some of the posts in the Wanganui and Taranaki Districts were those which, in the absence of Colonial forces to relieve the regular troops, it was most desirable to abandon.

It will however, be for your Excellency of course to decide whether troops can be better spared from other places, and it will also be for your Excellency to intimate to me your wishes as to the distribution of the force remaining in the country.

I do not anticipate any of the serious results foreboded by your Excellency as likely to follow the withdrawal of two regiments, any more than I should look for the submission of the Natives and the pacification of the country, as likely to result from their detention for an attack on the Wereroa Pa.

My conviction is, that except there exist other grounds than those mentioned in your letter of the 19th instant for detaining the whole of the troops in the Colony, the withdrawal of one regiment, and of another directly after it, can be effected with safety and without endangering the results which it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government, as I understand it, to secure. This is my opinion, but I think it right at the same time to add, that if as Governor of the Colony, you are satisfied that the withdrawal of any part of Her Majesty's troops until the capture of the Wereroa Pa has been effected, will entail the serious consequences which you have stated, it will be my duty to obey any instructions you may give me to detain them, and to comply with and carry out to the best of my ability any directions which, after this expression of my opinion regarding the expediency of attacking the pa, you may think fit to give me for undertaking the siege of that position or any other military operation which your Excellency may consider necessary for the defence of the Colony.