

The remaining portion of this part of the pa was entirely commanded by a point of land which jutted out from the left bank of the Waitotara river, lower down the stream than the pa.

The front of the pa, which ran across from left bank to left bank of the two streams, stood at the head of a gentle slope which fell gradually away from the pa for a distance of more than a thousand yards, when the ground began gradually again to rise gently.

This face of the pa was very strongly fortified. It was evidently anticipated that the attack would be made here, and the pa was constructed on the principle of a desperate defence on this side by a garrison perfectly protected by palisaded rifle pits, and of a speedy and secure escape from the rear of the pa. It was probably not apprehended that any force would attempt to advance through the valleys of either of the streams along which the pa was built, as these were completely commanded by the high banks along which the faces of the pa ran, whilst the dropping fire which would have been poured from above would soon have almost annihilated any body of men that had tried to force their way along those valleys.

The road from the pa to the interior of the country led across the Koie stream, and up the Karaka range on the other side of that stream, through the forest and potatoe and kumara fields, from which the supplies for the garrison of the fortress were drawn, and was the line along which any reinforcement coming to the pa must advance. On the Karaka ridge the Natives had constructed a small redoubt to cover their retreat, but their rear was left quite open to favor their retreat and the ingress of supplies and reinforcements.

All this was fully explained to me on the ground, from whence, as it was peculiarly favorable for a reconnaissance, much of what was explained could be pointed out and seen, by natives who knew the country well, and especially by Hori Kerei, my native orderly, to whose father the Karaka range had belonged, and who had been brought up there as a boy.

It was evident that the constructors of the Weraroa Pa had never contemplated that a force would pass through several miles of a dense forest and a most difficult country, to occupy the heights of the Karaka in their rear, and that if a force once got to the Karaka, that the precipitous banks and cliffs which favored the escape of the Natives from a force in front, would render it almost impossible for them to escape down such places and across such open valleys by daylight, as they would be exposed to a heavy fire during their whole descent, from a force lying hid on the other side of the valleys, and by night ambushes being laid in the valleys, they would probably be captured or destroyed if they then attempted to escape.

I determined therefore to occupy these heights by surprise, by a force if possible strong enough to repel any sortie from the pa (which would be threatened by us in front), and also strong enough to repulse or capture any reinforcements that might be coming up. I determined also immediately more troops came up, to occupy the point over the Waitotara river on our left, which commanded the other face of the pa.

The defenders of the place would then have been completely shut in, and being continually harrassed by a fire from rifles in their rear and on their left flank, and from guns and mortars in their front, whilst we had taken possession of and used their supplies, must have yielded.

At two o'clock on the morning of Thursday the 20th, having decided on this plan of attack, I sent for Mr. Parris, the Interpreter, and explained it to him, and desired him to wake up the Native chiefs and the officers of the Native Contingent, and explain it to them, that they might arrange amongst themselves in detail the parts they were respectively to take in it, and to inform them that I expected Lieut.-Colonel Trevor, commanding the 14th Regiment, on the ground early the next morning, with a detachment of 100 men of the 14th, and shortly afterwards a detachment of 100 men of the 18th Regiment, and that, when these men arrived, the whole of Her Majesty's Colonial and Native force, with the exception of a few friendly Natives, would, in pursuance of this plan, march to occupy the Karaka heights.

Mr. Parris, to whose indefatigable exertions I have been more indebted during the last few days than I can well say, explained to the Natives the proposed plan of operations, and soon after daylight came to tell me that they unanimously agreed in its soundness, had arranged for the execution of its details amongst themselves, and were quite delighted at the prospect.

I next saw Captain McDonell, commanding the Native Contingent, on the subject, and sent for Major Von Tempsky, who commanded the Forest Rangers, and would have commanded the force which was to march to the Karaka heights to explain his duties in the affair to him. Unfortunately this valuable officer had in the night been seized with a violent attack of illness, and sent to say he could not move from his bed. This was a great disappointment, but I sent for Major Rookes, who was in command of the militia forces of the district, and directed him to give the necessary orders for the occupation of the Karaka heights by the forces I have mentioned.

Major Rookes under the difficulty which had arisen from Major Von Tempsky's illness, which left no officer of rank to command the force proceeding to the Karaka heights, most greatly to his credit, himself undertook this command. The force was ordered to march at half-past twelve, by which hour I calculated that 200 men of the regular troops would be on the ground.

Just as this force was about to start, Pehimana, the head chief of the pa, who had come over to us, stated that there were 600 men in the pa. This was an evident exaggeration, but it proved a source of great embarrassment and anxiety throughout the operations, on account of the small force before the fortress.

Lieut.-Colonel Trevor, with 100 men of the 14th, arrived very early on the Thursday morning, and immediately pitched his tents opposite the left of the pa, distant about 1300 yards from it, and between the camps of the Natives and of the Forest Rangers.

At about 10 a.m. Captain Noblett, of the 18th, with 100 men of that regiment, arrived on the ground, having come up from Waitotara much more rapidly than I thought practicable, and under Lieut.-Col. Trevor's orders pitched his tents on the left rear of those of the 14th.

At half-past 12, Her Majesty's Colonial and Native Forces under Major Rookes' command, paraded near the Native Camp, out of sight of the pa, and moved off for the Karaka heights, by a road which was not exposed to view from the pa. Throughout the whole day it rained very heavily, a circumstance which greatly increased the chance of our force seizing the Karaka heights by surprise, although it much inconvenienced the men.