

DESPATCHES FROM MAJOR FRASER.

No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Major FRASER to the AGENT FOR THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT, Hawke's Bay.
SIR,— Wacangaahika, 21st November, 1865.

I have the honor to report for your information my proceedings from the date of your departure from Napier.

I marched as I had previously determined, and halted at Mr. Goldsmith's for the night, from whence I proceeded early the next morning to attack the rebel pa built near the Bishop of Waiapu's residence. We were not molested on our march by the enemy until near the paddocks belonging to the Bishop, when we were fired on by the enemy, who had been reconnoitering us from their pa; they thus may be said to have fired the first shots of the war. Captain Westrupp and his Rangers soon dislodged the enemy's skirmishers, who fell back upon their pa, around which we then took up our several positions under a heavy fire. Before proceeding further, I must mention that all the houses, barns, and other buildings, except the Bishop's house, had been utterly destroyed by the rebels. The Bishop's house had been thoroughly dismantled, the paper being torn off the walls, glass broken, and all his valuable books torn and strewn about the floors. It was only our sudden arrival that prevented them from burning it,—a most fortunate thing for us, as it is the most favourable position we could have chosen. The firing on both sides continued until evening, when we as far as possible entrenched ourselves, and slept out in the vicinity of the pa. Captain Westrupp and his Rangers took up a position to the left of the pa, looking from the Bishop's house. Lieutenant Wilson and Military Settlers, with the Tuparoas under Te Hotina, were on the opposite flank; the Colonial Defence Force, Hawke's Bay Volunteers, and remainder of the Natives, were posted between the flanks and in front of the pa; a swampy lagoon is in rear of the pa, and is impassable, so none of the force were posted there.

I regret to have to state that owing to the heavy fire from the enemy the following casualties took place:—

Forest Rangers—

Ensign Ross, shot through the head; dangerous, but going on well.

Private Rain, shot through shoulders, severe.

1 Tuparoa Native and 1 Turanga Native killed.

2 Natives (Tuparoa) severely wounded.

From subsequent information I have learnt that five of the enemy were killed; number of wounded not known. Nothing happened further until next day, when an affair occurred, which, had it not been for the courage displayed by the officers and men concerned, must have been attended with very serious consequences. To enable you to understand the whole circumstances of the case, I must inform you, that I have ever since taking the field had to contend with great difficulties on account of the lukewarmness of our Native allies of Turanga, who instead of assisting either by keeping sentry, digging trenches, or taking up positions in conjunction with Europeans when ordered, have been content to remain entirely in the background, and to throw all the work upon the Europeans, Tuparoas, and Henare Potae's men. Accordingly the Tuparoas have been obliged as well as we to do double work; and had the other Natives simply done their duty and obeyed orders, what I am about to relate would most probably never have occurred.

On Saturday Captain Westrupp, with his usual zeal and perseverance, had pushed his position and entrenched himself within about fifty yards of the pa. Orders were therefore sent to Lieutenant Wilson, on the other flank, to select a place for entrenching himself, and to get as close to the pa as possible on his side. I went round to see his position, accompanied by Captain Biggs, and we both considered that he had got an excellent one. A number of the Natives had early in the day been ordered round to support him, as those who had been with him the previous night had left him. These were supposed to have reached him, and had they done so the advantage subsequently gained by him would have been much greater. As it was, however, a large Native reinforcement came up to join the rebels about five p.m. Lieutenant Wilson had not finished entrenching, his men were fatigued, the enemy made a sally from the pa, and he was surrounded on all sides. Under these circumstances, where most hearts would have failed them, British pluck carried the day. Our men, though taken aback, and till fired upon, believing the rebels to be the Queen's Natives coming up to their support, fought bravely. Lieutenant Wilson ordered them to charge: they burst through the enemy, killing eight and wounding thirteen of their number, the loss on our side being as follows:—

Killed—Sergeant Doonan, Privates Borthwick, Martin, Wilkie, and Swords.

Wounded—Lieutenant Wilson, slightly; Private Pierson, severely; Private Sheddon, seriously;

Private Chibbon, seriously; Private Wellfit, slightly; and Private Kennedy, slightly.

One Turanga Native, Andrea Thuruke, was severely wounded. Only three Natives were with Lieutenant Wilson's party at this time.

The operations elsewhere on this day consisted in our keeping up a hot fire on the enemy's pa, and in entrenching ourselves. I am very sorry to state that I have lost the valuable services of Assistant Surgeon Ormond, who was accidentally severely wounded by a shot coming through a window in the Bishop's house. A ball passed through his fingers, which were in his trousers pocket at the