

At length the mist happily lifted, and Major Kemp, whom I sent round to the right, reported the enemy's camp close by. I ordered a general advance, and Major Kemp followed by the whole of his men, from our right flank rushed into that side, while No. 1 descended directly on the front, and the Arawas, with No. 2, against whom the resistance was the most protracted, at length drove the enemy past his position, and entered from the left.

Major Kemp, allowing his men little time to plunder the camp, pushed on with his own men, the Guides, and No. 8, driving the enemy before him.

After about an hour, I had the satisfaction of hearing Lieut.-Colonel St. John's men open on some of the fugitives, and shortly afterwards I collected the force and bivouacked. At about noon Major Kemp returned with the party which had pressed farthest in pursuit, bringing with him two women prisoners, and having overtaken and killed several wounded fugitives, though the bush was so thick and country so precipitous that he had been unable to overtake the main body. He had prevented them from crossing at the main ford, but the tribe of Ngatiruanui are celebrated as the best bushmen, except perhaps Ngatiporou and Uriwera, in the Island, and are on their own land, so that Kemp's Natives and the Arawas, only some of whom have a general knowledge of the country, could not overtake men flying for their lives with such advantages in favour of their escape.

The behaviour of our men has been excellent, both Natives and Europeans striving to do their best, and showing the greatest desire and impatience to close with the enemy, who on the other hand, finding for how short a time he could prevent being grappled with by our troops, fled precipitately directly the partial lifting of the fog enabled our men to see where to charge him. The cheers which rang through the forest when his camp was taken will prove, I confidently venture to predict, the knell of Titokowaru's influence on this coast. He has escaped with comparatively light loss, though he has left seven or eight dead on the ground at no very great distance; but he has lost all his camp, bell-tents, baggage, many arms, saddles, tools of every description, and even a very great many commonly used pipes, so great was the panic which must have taken him. A great quantity of food, fresh meat and potted meat, fruit, potatoes, clothes, blankets, almost everything down to Tomahawks and Maori spears, fell into the hands of our men. I learn from the prisoners that Titokowaru was himself present and narrowly escaped, having had to swim the river; that his force consisted of 400 "guns," and was therefore fully equal to my own in point of number; that they only heard of my approach from the sentry, and that great dissensions prevail in the camp since Titokowaru's failure to carry out his promises and retreat from Tauranga Ika. Mr. Booth has obtained a great deal of political information of value, which may, however, be thus summarized:—The rebels clearly have not been in communication with the Government Natives, as they were ignorant of many things of interest to them. They have suffered considerable desertions, to the extent of about 200 men.

I have recrossed the Patea and have encamped at Kakaramaea. The Natives are out to-day searching the bush on the north bank of the river beyond Otoia, and I shall judge from Major Kemp's report what course to pursue.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the behaviour of all ranks was so good that I am unable as yet to select for especial praise or decoration any individual of the force, but I must acknowledge my obligation to Lieut.-Colonel Lyon, who loyally supported me, and by his personal influence with the men prevented that disbanding of divisions which in the bush is so often the consequence of the eagerness of the men to join those who happen to be first engaged. I must also thank the chief, Major Kemp, for his great assistance to me and loyal co-operation, no less than the example he set his men; and Captain Gundry, commanding No. 8, Arawa Division, who led his men into the bush in a manner which was most creditable, and I regret to add has lost his brother, who has since died of wounds received while fighting gallantly at his side.

I wish also to thank the officers of my staff, Captain Birch Brigade-Major, and Sub-Inspector Swindley, commanding the Guides and acting as Aid-de-camp; Messrs. Booth, R.M., who kindly accompanied me; and Preece, my interpreter.

I must not fail to thank Assistant-Surgeon Walker, the only medical officer available, and who was with my column. The attention of this gentleman to the wounded, and the intrepid manner in which he has on so many occasions exposed himself in most dangerous positions to the enemy's fire in dressing the wounded have often before, as on this occasion, when not in my power to thank him specially attracted my admiration.

Amongst the plunder obtained at this engagement, some trophies have been recovered from the enemy. Among these was the saddle he took from the shepherd during the late attack on the escort when his horse was shot, and the revolver taken from Hori who was killed at the Karaka flats, together with several other revolvers and pistols known to have been taken from us in former engagements.

I believe this action will prove to have left little else but pursuit in small parties to be done on this coast in order to stamp out the embers of the rebellion, and it is therefore with deep regret that I learned on the field, by the arrival of your despatch, that the chief Ropata and his hapu, who were actually on their voyage in the "St. Kilda" to join me, had been induced by representations made to them at Napier to decline to leave the East Coast. At this stage of this campaign, with the enemy dispersed and flying for his life, it is impossible to exaggerate the value of the assistance so intelligent a chief as Ropata could have afforded, at the head of the bravest hapu of the best bush tribe in New Zealand. If, owing to our great difficulties in carrying out rapid pursuits in the deep jungle, Titokowaru escapes for some time the punishment his atrocities deserve, not only is it possible that he may hereafter again give trouble, but he will certainly be more difficult to reach or punish in the fastnesses to which he will make for shelter. If the Ngatiporou are unavailable, and hounds to carry the trail considered to be improper agents for that purpose, I would suggest that some Australian blacks should be engaged to supply what only very great practice can give to Europeans, and what I have not got in this force—the faculty for tracking fugitives in the bush.

I enclose the Casualty Roll, which I regret has been severe.

The Hon. Colonel Haultain.

I have, &c.,

G. S. WHITMORE, Colonel.