

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL CAMERON, C.B., TO HIS EXCELLENCY SIR GEORGE GREY, K.C.B.

Head Quarter's, Queen's Redoubt,
10th September, 1863.

SIR,—

With feelings of deep concern I have to announce to your Excellency the melancholy death of Mr. Armitage, Resident Magistrate of this district, who, with two other Europeans, was murdered by Natives at Camerontown, on the 7th instant.

I herewith forward a letter I received this morning from Lieutenant Burton, 40th Regiment, commanding at the Bluff stockade, detailing the circumstances of this lamentable occurrence, as they were related to him by two friendly Natives.

Mr. Armitage had for some time past been engaged in the troublesome and hazardous duty of superintending the transport of supplies for the Troops by the Friendly Natives up the Waikato, and since the commencement of hostilities had always acted with me in the most cordial manner for the good of the public service.

The loss of so zealous and useful a public officer is deeply to be regretted.

I have, &c.,

D. A. CAMERON,
Lieutenant-General.

His Excellency Sir George Grey, K.C.B.

Enclosure to No. 21.

LIEUTENANT H. BURTON TO THE DEPUTY QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL.

Bluff Stockade,
September 9th, 1863 (12 p.m.)

SIR,—

I have the honor to report for the information of the Lieutenant-General commanding, that about 10 o'clock this evening ten Natives, of William Te Wheoro's pa, accompanied by four others of Kukutai's tribe, arrived at the Akaramaea pa, overland from Taupari, which latter place they left this morning at daylight. These, you will understand, are the Natives who were of Mr. Armitage's party on Monday last, and who have up to the present time, been missing. I regret to say that they confirm the tidings of Mr. Armitage's death, as also those of the two Europeans, known as Robert and William. The former of these was a blacksmith, who acted as clerk to Mr. Armitage; the latter was a carpenter, engaged in erecting a store at Camerontown.

The circumstances attending their deaths as far as I can elicit from two of the most intelligent of the "Friendly Natives" who witnessed them, are these.

The names of these two Natives I here mention in the margin.

Hawira and Eru.

Mr. Armitage started from the pa adjacent to this post—in a canoe with three natives—accompanied by two or three other canoes full of Te Wheoro's tribe, at about 6 o'clock on Monday morning last. On reaching Tuakau, or thereabouts, there was some delay on the part of these other canoes; so that Mr. Armitage got on ahead of them, and reached Camerontown about half an hour before them, at about half-past 8 o'clock a.m. On arrival, Mr. Armitage got out of his canoe, and went over to a house about two hundred yards from the bank of the river, where were the two Europeans I have before named. When he reached the house, one of the three Natives he left behind in the canoe—"Eru," above mentioned in the margin, went off in the direction of the stockade erected at Camerontown, and occupied by Friendly Natives under their Chief Tokah. He was on his way thither, when the enemy opened fire from the bush on the road from, and near the river. Enclosed is a rough sketch of the ground, drawn out by the Native "Hawira." Where the enemy fired from I have marked X.

Mr. Armitage and the two Europeans, it appears, had returned from the house (marked A), and were on the river bank at this time. The two latter were shot, and fell over the canoe, upsetting it as they fell. Mr. Armitage had got into the canoe, when he was shot, falling into the water through the canoe's overturning. The hostile Natives dragged his body out of the water, took a portion of the clothes from off it, together with his watch and chain and ring. The bodies of the two other men did not rise to the surface of the water, and have not been heard of since.

The Natives who witnessed this then ran into the bush, but came out to meet those Natives who were detained in their canoes, and who had by this time arrived. The enemy having re-taken to the bush, the Friendly Natives fired in the direction they were supposed to have gone; but there does not seem to have been any loss on either side with regard to them. They report that all the stores, consisting of maize, tarpaulings, &c., have been burnt or otherwise destroyed. The number of hostile Maoris they believe to have been about two hundred. I should have mentioned that the enemy returned the fire of the Friendly Natives, who continued to fire till they had exhausted all their ammunition, when they retired upon Taupari, which place they reached at about 8 o'clock the same night. The four Natives who reached Te Wheoro's pa on Monday did not land at Cameron, but higher up, and were not engaged in the affair.

I have, &c.,

H. BURTON,
Lieutenant 40th Regiment,
Commanding Bluff Stockade.

The Deputy Quartermaster-General, Head Quarters.