

It was constructed on a neck of land about 500 yards wide, the slopes of which fell off into a swamp on either side. On the highest point of this neck they had constructed an oblong redoubt, well palisaded and surrounded by a post and rail fence—a formidable obstacle to an assaulting column, and difficult to destroy with artillery. The intervals between the side faces of the redoubt and the swamps were defended by an entrenched line of rifle-pits.

I encamped the 68th Regiment and Major Ryan's detachment about 1200 yards from the enemy's position on the 27th, and on that and the following day the guns and mortars intended to breach the position were brought up to the camp, which was joined by a large force of seamen and marines, landed at my request from the ships of the squadron by Commodore Sir Wm. Wiseman. The composition and strength of the force assembled in front of the enemy's position on the evening of the 28th are shown in the margin.*

Having received information that, by moving along the beach of one of the branches of Tauranga harbour at low water, it was possible for a body of troops to pass outside the swamp on the enemy's right, and gain the rear of his position, I ordered Colonel Greer to make the attempt with the 68th Regiment, after dark on the evening of the 28th, and in order to divert the attention of the enemy from that side, I ordered a feigned attack to be made in his front.

Colonel Greer's movement succeeded perfectly, and on the morning of the 29th he had taken up a position in the rear of the enemy, which cut off his supply of water, and made his retreat in daylight impossible, but was necessarily too extended to prevent his escape by night.

I enclose Colonel Greer's report of his proceedings.

During the same night the guns and mortars were placed in position, and opened fire soon after daybreak on the morning of the 29th. I gave directions that their fire should be directed principally against the left angle of the centre work, which, from the nature of the ground, I considered the most favorable part to attack.

Their practice was excellent, particularly that of the howitzers, and reflects great credit on the officers in command of batteries.

About 12 o'clock, the swamp on the enemy's left having been reported by Captain Greaves, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General, practicable for the passage of a gun, a six-pounder Armstrong gun was taken across to the high ground on the opposite side, from which its fire completely enfiladed the left of the enemy's position, which he was thus compelled to abandon. The fire of the guns, howitzers, and mortars was continued with short intermissions until 4 p.m., when a large portion of the fence and palisading having been destroyed, and a practicable breach made in the parapet, I ordered the assault.

150 seamen and marines, under Commander Hay, of H.M.S. "Harrier," and an equal number of the 43rd Regiment, under Lieut.-Colonel Booth, formed the assaulting column.

Major Ryan's detachment was extended as close to the work as possible, to keep down the fire from the rifle-pits, with orders to follow the assaulting column into the work.

The remainder of the seamen and marines and of the 43rd Regiment, amounting together to 300 men, followed as a reserve.

The assaulting column, protected by the nature of the ground, gained the breach with little loss, and effected an entrance into the main body of the work, when a fierce conflict ensued, in which the natives fought with the greatest desperation. Lieut.-Colonel Booth and Commander Hay, who led into the work, fell mortally wounded. Captain Hamilton was shot dead on the top of the parapet while in the act of encouraging his men to advance, and in a few minutes almost every officer of the column was either killed or wounded. Up to this moment the men, so nobly led by their officers, fought gallantly, and appeared to have carried the position, when they suddenly gave way, and fell back from the work to the nearest cover.

This repulse I am at loss to explain otherwise than by attributing it to the confusion created among the men by the intricate nature of the interior defences, and the sudden fall of so many of their officers.

On my arrival at the spot I considered it inadvisable to renew the assault, and directed a line of entrenchment to be thrown up within one hundred yards of the work, so as to be able to maintain our advanced position, intending to resume operations the following morning.

The natives, availing themselves of the extreme darkness of the night, abandoned the work, leaving some of their killed and wounded behind.

On taking possession of the work in the morning, Lieut.-Colonel Booth and some men were found still living, and, to the credit of the natives, had not been maltreated; nor had any of the bodies of the killed been mutilated. I enclose a list of our casualties.

I deeply deplore the loss of the many brave and valuable officers who fell in the noble discharge of their duty on this occasion.

The 43rd Regiment and the service have sustained a serious loss in the death of Lieut.-Colonel Booth, which took place on the night after the attack. I have already mentioned the brilliant example shown by this officer in the assault; and when I met him on the following morning, as he was being carried out of the work, his first words were an expression of regret that he had found it impossible to carry out my orders.

* General Staff—4 field officers, 1 subaltern.

Medical Staff—2 field officers, 1 subaltern.

Naval Brigade—4 field officers, 6 captains, 7 subalterns, 36 sergeants, 5 drummers, 371 rank and file.

Royal Artillery—1 field officer, 1 captain, 3 subalterns, 1 staff, 1 sergeant, 43 rank and file.

Royal Engineers—2 rank and file.

Moveable Column—1 field officer, 2 captains, 3 subalterns, 1 staff, 6 sergeants, 4 drummers, 164 rank and file.

43rd Regiment—1 field officer, 5 captains, 5 subalterns, 3 staff, 17 sergeants, 12 drummers, 250 rank and file.

68th Regiment—3 field officers, 6 captains, 15 subalterns, 3 staff, 34 sergeants, 21 drummers, 650 rank and file.

Total—16 field officers, 20 captains, 35 subalterns, 8 staff, 94 sergeants, 42 drummers, 1480 rank and file.

Detail of Artillery employed—1 110-pounder Armstrong, 2 40-pounder Armstrongs, 2 6-pounder Armstrongs, 2 24-pounder howitzers, 2 8-inch mortars, 6 cohorn mortars.