

Major-General CHUTE to Governor Sir GEORGE GREY, K.C.B.

(No. 122-67.)

SIR,—

Head Quarters, Auckland, 4th June, 1867.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 31st ultimo, in reply to mine of the 30th.

General to Gov.,
7 Feb., 1867.

Gov. to General,
19 Feb., 1867.

General to Gov.,
5 March, 1867.

General to Gov.,
1 April, 1867.

Gov. to General,
1 April, 1867.

A reference to the correspondence noted in the margin, which commenced nearly four months ago, will show that I have urgently requested your Excellency to favour me with instructions as to the distribution of the 18th Regiment, with which request your Excellency distinctly refused to comply; and your Excellency, in your letter of the 1st April, in finally refusing to give me instructions, wrote as follows: "under these circumstances I think it better for the public service to decline to take any responsibility whatever regarding the movement of troops in this command."

The instructions received from home, both by your Excellency and myself, stated that the 18th Regiment was not to be located either in distant or isolated posts, or in places where adequate accommodation and other necessities for the maintenance of discipline, &c., were wanting; and in consequence of your Excellency refusing to give me instructions for the distribution of the corps, in which I was most unwilling to interfere, a considerable portion of the regiment has hitherto been under canvas; and they have been in the field or on outpost duty since July, 1863, except for four months, when they were in barracks at Otahuhu.

Your Excellency having, as already stated, refused to favour me with your instructions for so long a time, I considered it my inevitable duty, in pursuance of the orders of Her Majesty's Government, and in consideration of the welfare and health of the troops, to locate them comfortably for the winter, or until I received further orders from home, in the available barrack accommodation; and the distribution I proposed was made with that object (as your Excellency will have inferred from my letter of the 30th May), as well as for the protection of Imperial property more especially in Auckland.

Again, your Excellency having refused to have anything to say to the movement of troops, and not having at the same time communicated to me any opinion of the political difficulties likely to result from any portion of the 18th Regiment being moved from Whanganui, it was impossible for me to anticipate that your Excellency would have any objection to my assuming the responsibility of directing a movement intended for the health and comfort of the men, combined with the protection of Imperial property.

It was also impossible for me to anticipate that your Excellency would expect more serious results to the Colony from the distribution of the corps in barracks than from their entire removal from the country, which your Excellency informs me I am at liberty to carry out; but your Excellency will readily believe that I would scarcely be justified in availing myself of your permission in this respect, in the absence of orders as to the destination of the corps.

With reference to your Excellency's remark, that the public were made aware of the intended distribution of the 18th Regiment before your Excellency, by the advertisement for tenders for the conveyance of detachments from Whanganui, which tenders were to be opened on the 29th ultimo, I have to assure your Excellency that I have nothing whatever to do with the insertion or contents of advertisements, or naming the day on which tenders are opened, these being entirely matters of detail within the province of the Resident Transport Officer, to whom I simply give instructions as to the date on which troops will be available for removal from any particular point.

I now beg further to explain that I had made arrangements for proceeding to Whanganui about the 7th instant to inspect the 18th Regiment, that your Excellency having refused to give me instructions for the distribution of the corps, I had informed the Resident Transport Officer that the detachments specified in my letter of the 30th May would be available for removal at Whanganui about the 8th; and having been compelled for considerations of discipline and the comfort of the troops to assume the responsibility of locating the corps, I still, notwithstanding your Excellency's repeated refusal to have anything to do with the matter, felt it my duty to your Excellency's position to make you acquainted with what I proposed in the event (which I confess I considered a most improbable one) of your Excellency's altering your previous decision, and wishing to order any different distribution.

So far from having any desire to act contrary to your Excellency's wishes in reference to the movements of troops, I am sure your Excellency will on reflection do me the justice to admit that I have exhausted all possible means to secure your Excellency's sanction and consideration in acquitting myself of the responsibility placed on me by Her Majesty's Government.

Had your Excellency wished any other distribution than that I proposed in my letter of 30th May, it was quite within my power, when at Whanganui, to divert any portion of the troops to any other town your Excellency might have desired.

As, however, your Excellency has resumed the responsibility of the movements of Her Majesty's troops by prohibiting the removal of the 18th Regiment from Whanganui, I have given instructions for countermanding the arrangements for carrying out the measures submitted to you in my letter of the 30th ultimo. At the same time it is my duty to inform your Excellency that the Resident Transport Officer reports he cannot at present say what expense this will involve; but whatever it be, I do not feel myself in the remotest degree responsible for it. I now beg to inform your Excellency that on the departure of the Military Train, who are now doing garrison duty in Auckland, and who will probably embark for England about the 20th instant, there will be no troops here for this duty, including the protection of the valuable stores and magazine, &c., &c., and I beg your Excellency to be good enough to allow me to bring up about 150 men of the 18th to Auckland for these duties. In anticipation of your Excellency having no objection to this, I have intimated to the Resident Transport Officer my wish that he should still have transport available for this service, and I earnestly request your Excellency to grant me your permission by to-morrow to carry it out. Should you not be pleased to do so, I shall have no alternative but to employ special constables at a heavy expense.