

COPY OF LETTER FROM LIEUT.-COLONEL M^CDONNELL.

(No. 66-1.)

SIR,—

Patea, 12th September, 1867.

With reference to your letter, No. and date as per margin, and a private conversation I had with the Hon. the Minister for Colonial Defence, I have the honor to inform you that after due consideration I deemed it much more desirable to march the relief to Warea, and much less expensive to Government than to send them by the steamer "Waipara," which was already under charter. Accordingly, as soon as I returned from Wellington, I sent for Wharemasingi and told him I intended to go overland to Warea, and take some men with me, and that I would go through in the daylight, and had no intentions of attacking, unless opposed on the road; he strongly advised me not to go from Opunake to Warea by day, as I would be fired at; but I told him that the road could not be allowed to be closed any longer for Europeans by day, and I would go through by day. I accordingly took with me the force as per margin;* leaving Captain Newland in command, with orders to call out the Local Militia for duty, if he considered it necessary. My reasons for making the force so strong were, that I heard that Ahitane intended to follow the party, which he thought would be only twenty-five men, and attack them; and I also considered it would have a good effect on the Warea Natives, and show that though the Imperial Troops had left we still had forces, and could go where we wished.

On my arrival at Waihi I asked for volunteers from the Native Contingent, when the numbers as per margin came forward and offered to accompany me without pay, and I gladly accepted their services.

No. 561-2.
Aug. 24, 1867.

Capt. Kepa, Lieut.
Wirihana, Ens.
Poma, 1 Sergt.,
and 14 rank and
file.

I marched from Waihi to Kawia, on Thursday, the 5th instant, and sent on from there a Native to Honi Pihama, telling him I was coming next day, and to get some food ready for my men. The messenger found the whole of Ahitane's tribe at Oeo, with Honi, and when told that I was coming with a lot of men they were greatly alarmed; however, Honi Pihama assured them that I would not come at night, and that even if I did I would not molest them. They left Oeo at daylight, and Captain Cumming met them about seven miles from Opunake, he states there were upwards of fifty armed with double-barrelled guns, a few with rifles and revolvers; they were civil and shook hands; one man only was rather abusive, but he was quieted by the others.

I marched from Kawia to Opunake on Friday, the 6th instant, and occupied the redoubt. On Saturday I started for Warea early, with Mr. Booth, Captain Cumming, the mounted men, and a few of the Native Contingent, who had horses, leaving Captain Page to bring on the men. I saw William King, at Umerou, he also advised me not to go on, but to wait till dark, but I assured him that the road would not be allowed to be closed any longer; that the Pakeha and the Maori must use the road when they liked, either by night or day, and if it was objected to by the Warea Natives in all probability I would pay them a midnight visit when they did not expect it. About three miles after we had left Umerou (William King's place), I found a sort of flax-gate put up across the path, with a letter written on flax, the real reading of which was, "If you go through the land do not molest us." I arrived all right at Warea, without being interfered with, but by the tracks, it could be seen we were watched all the way. I learnt afterwards, from my scouts, that I had not left Opunake two hours when Ahitane's tribe marched in, and are gone to see the Warea Natives, and to attend a meeting which takes place there on the 15th instant.

After making all arrangements for the men at Warea I went on to New Plymouth, with Mr. Booth and Captain Cumming, where we arrived at about eight p.m., and saw Lieutenant-Colonel Lepper, and made all provision for a supply of rations, &c., for the force. On Sunday, the 8th instant, I had an interview with His Honor the Superintendent, who expressed himself much pleased with the steps I had taken, and I explained to him what is my firm opinion, that the danger of travelling by day along the Coast has been considerably magnified by the Natives for selfish purposes: hitherto no one could go through at night without a guide, the average charge for whom was thirty shillings, this, with profits on grog sold by William King, at Umaroa, made it quite a harvest for them to have Europeans travelling by night through their district.

I left New Plymouth on Monday morning, and marched from Warea with the remainder of the men, on Tuesday, leaving Ensign Von Rotter with twenty-five rank and file (the party of Colonel Lepper's men having been sent to New Plymouth). Mr. Von Rotter is a most energetic officer, and I have no doubt will give satisfaction to Lieutenant-Colonel Lepper and the Government.

The march back was without any incident worth reporting, but I may state that I assured the Natives all along the Coast that the Government would not allow the road to be closed for Europeans by day or by night, and I am of opinion the expedition has had a very beneficial effect. The expense to Government will be very trifling. I used the spare horses as pack-horses, but had to hire one extra at Waihi at five shillings per day, this for seven days, and some extra rum issued to the men, will be the principal expense of the expedition.

* DISTRIBUTION.—From Patea, Field-officer, 1; Captain, 1; Subaltern, 1; Staff, 1; Sergeant, 1; Rank and File, 19. From Mokoia, Captain, 1; Sergeants, 2; Rank and File, 13. From Turu Turu Mokoi, Rank and File, 11. From Waihi, Subaltern, 1; Rank and File, 19. Total—Field-officer, 1; Captains, 2; Subalterns, 2; Staff, 1; Sergeants, 3; Rank and File, 62. Remarks.—Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel McDonnell; Assistant-Surgeon, Luther; Ensign, Von Rotter. Captain, Cumming. Met at Oeo, Captain Page and Ensign Hirtzell.