

1870.—Sir,—I beg to report, for the information of the Hon. the Minister for Colonial Defence, that I moved out yesterday with a force of about 400 Europeans and Natives, to the position formerly occupied by Te Kooti. Found a number of saddles and bridles hid in potato pits, and discovered a track leading through the bush in a northerly direction. I sent Henare Te Pukuatua with his men to follow this direction outside the bush, and went myself with the Europeans and rest of the Natives by the bush track. Found a small kainga in a clearing with the fires still burning, and just then I heard firing in Henare's direction. When I got to the open I found Henare at a village beyond Kurunui, but the people had run away to the bush. I halted here to rest the men, and sent out scouts. Whilst lying down, a volley was fired at us from the top of a cliff, about 500 yards off, which had been scoured by my people half an hour before. No one was hit, and I sent a force up to dislodge the enemy, but they had evidently only just fired and bolted. Our scouts brought in four men and a woman they found in a village about two miles off. They informed me that Te Kooti, with two hundred men, was in the bush above. I placed a picquet of Natives to watch the place and returned to camp with the Europeans, leaving Kemp and 200 men at Kurunui. I sent out sixty Europeans this morning, and am just starting myself, knowing now that Te Kooti is in the bush here. I have, after consulting with Colonel Moule, dispensed with the services of the Militia, who march back to-day. Their going back to their several posts will, I trust, tend to restore confidence. As soon as Colonel Fraser's force arrives I will send back the Armed Constabulary to their several posts on the Waikato. Lieut.-Colonel Moule leaves to-day, as I think he will be of more use to his own district and to my force by being at Cambridge than here. Major Clare I will keep for the present. Major Drummond Hay is now at this post. I think I will be able to get some valuable information or assistance from him. If I find so, I will put him on pay. The Hon. Donald McLean, had better come here to see the Natives.—THOS. McDONNELL, Lieut.-Colonel, Commanding Field Force.—To St. John Branigan, Esq., Commissioner, Armed Constabulary."

Colonel Moule tells me that Rewiti, the King's secretary, with three of his friends, was at Kurunui village, six miles from Ta Papa, in the ranges towards Rotorua, when our people arrived yesterday morning. Your telegram of this morning was forwarded immediately it was received. Nothing is yet known of the Arawa, supposed to be advancing towards Rotorua from the Tauranga side of the range; but you will observe, by Lieut.-Colonel McDonnell's despatch, that he is operating in the direction in which they may be expected.

The Hon. the Defence Minister.

ST. JOHN BRANIGAN.

No. 184.

Mr. Commissioner BRANIGAN to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

(Telegram.)

Cambridge, 31st January, 1870.

FOLLOWING just received:—"Camp, Tapapa, 31st January, 1870.—Sir,—I have the honor to report, for the information of the Hon. the Defence Minister, that Kemp and Topia, with 300 Wanganuis and forty Arawa under Lieutenant Preece, left Kurunui at daylight yesterday, entering the bush at the place we had been fired at from the previous evening. They struck the enemy's tracks and followed them to the ridge, which was found rifle-pitted, and evidently prepared for a stand, but afterwards abandoned. Following the track for two miles further, they came upon signs of the enemy, and a large encampment, for at least 300 men, which had been occupied by a few men the night before. About a mile and a half further on we found another encampment, and here the tracks branched, one going towards Tauranga, the other striking back in the direction of Tapapa. Thinking the larger portion of the enemy had gone by the latter, the force followed that road to the top of the range, where they could see Tauranga by climbing a tree. Hearing voices, they sent scouts out, who came on a party of four; fired on them, but missed. One of the four, however, ran right in amongst the Wanganuis, and is now a prisoner. His name is Harawira, of the Ngaiterangi. He gave information that Te Kooti and Ngaiterangi were on the track the force had left. Heard voices, and sent out scouts, who came on a party of the enemy; fired on them, killing one man named Winiata, a chief of Kereopa's hapu; got his arms (rifle and revolver). Followed the track for a mile further, but, getting late and having no food, obliged to return. On the way back saw several branch tracks, showing that the enemy were in several bodies. Reached camp at dusk. The men being much fatigued, I have given them this day to rest, and in the meantime have sent a letter to the Ngatiraukawa, at the request of several of the tribe I have in camp, telling them if they come in within twenty-four hours I will do them no harm for having joined Te Kooti. I have hopes this will succeed; if so, and Te Kooti's force once commence to leave him, his days are numbered. He avoids taking up a position, so that I cannot surround him, but I will harass him night and day, and I think he will tire first. I will move into the bush from this post and Kurunui early to-morrow, and we will work towards each other. I cannot send the Waikato Constabulary back for a few days, as I must hold Tapapa and Kurunui; and being so close to the bush, and having stores in each, a good few men must be left at each to guard them. You will see I sent back the Militia before I received your orders, and I will not keep the Constabulary an hour longer than their services can safely be dispensed with. I would beg to bring to the notice of the Hon. Mr. McLean the excellent conduct of Lieutenant Preece, commanding the Arawa Contingent. His zeal and energy on all occasions, and his tact in managing Natives, render him most valuable to me, and