

Having waited the whole day (28th) for Lieut.-Colonel Fraser to come up, I, in the evening, assembled the Natives and told them what was required of them, and suggested that no time should be lost in advancing to co-operate with Lieut.-Colonel McDonnell. I explained to them that they need not be anxious about their settlement, as I was going down the coast to collect a force to watch the cross-roads in the forest near Tauranga.

On the morning of the 29th I left Ohinemutu about 6 o'clock a.m. At 7 o'clock I met a force of the Armed Constabulary with the Ngatipikiao close to Ohinemutu; but Lieut.-Colonel Fraser had not come up, nor did I see anything of him on the road. I, after a long and tedious ride of fifty-two miles, arrived at Tauranga at 7 o'clock p.m. During my absence Major Mair had sent letters down the coast to request the Natives to select 150 of their best men for service, and that they were to hold themselves in readiness for Monday morning.

On the evening of the 30th I left in the "Sturt" for the different settlements along the coast, calling at Whakatane, Opape, Torere, Maraenui, Whitianga, Omaio, and Te Kaha. From Torere, finding the Natives ready, we shipped them at once; and fortunately for us that we did so, for during the afternoon of the 31st it came on to blow fresh, so that by the time we got back to Opape there was such a sea running that it was impossible for a boat to live in it.

At Whakatane, after waiting a few hours, we were able to ship the Ngatipukeko, making up our number to 145 men. We arrived at Tauranga on the morning of the 1st instant.

In the evening of the same day I received a note from Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, to say that at Rotorua the Natives had had a meeting to take into consideration the intelligence received from Patetere, to the effect that a fight had taken place between Te Kooti and our forces, and that he, with his people, was in the forest ranges; and that it was decided that they should advance in two columns, one under Lieutenant Gilbert Mair, to go direct through the forest to Tapapa, and the other to make a flank march towards Tauranga, and intercept Te Kooti in that direction; and that in carrying out this new arrangement he had arrived at Oropi, a Hauhau settlement, a little more than twelve miles from this. The settlement appears to have been abandoned for some days.

In altering the plans, it does not appear to have occurred to the Commanding Officer that the force of 150 men from the coast of the Bay of Plenty was intended to do the very service he was now doing. At the request of Lieut.-Colonel Fraser I sent up 40 more men to strengthen his column, and rations for the European part of his force. They marched to Te Taumata, a distance of about seven miles.

On the 3rd Lieut.-Colonel Fraser's force advanced, but about noon fell into an ambuscade of the enemy and lost three of his men, two Natives and a European, besides two or three wounded. From indications left, and from the particularly orderly way in which the fight was conducted by the enemy, there was little doubt but that they had come in contact with a portion of Te Kooti's forces.

Lieut.-Colonel Fraser sent me another request to have his column re-inforced. I sent him up, on the morning of the 4th, the 150 men from the East Coast. On the same day Lieut.-Colonel Fraser was joined by Major Kepa's and Topia's force of 289 men. They, by their report, set at rest any doubt that may have existed as to the close proximity of Te Kooti's force, as they had followed him through the forest up to that point.

I am not able to explain the delays which took place after the 4th, nor why Te Kooti's trail was not followed up. By the evening of the 6th Lieut.-Colonel Fraser had moved the whole of his force back to Oropi. On the 7th he did not march, on account of the rain.

On the evening of the 7th I received a note from Lieutenant Gilbert Mair, stating that Te Kooti and all his forces had made their appearance at Paparata, a cultivation in rear of Ohinemutu, and had surprised some women who had gone out for potatoes. I immediately sent to Lieut.-Colonel Fraser giving him the information, and suggesting to him to march through the Mangorewha Forest to Rotorua to support Lieutenant Mair. Instead, however, of doing this, you may judge of my surprise to hear, on the morning of the 8th, that the whole force was being marched into Tauranga, with the idea of shipping the men off to Matata, and marching from thence to Kaingaroa. It does not appear to have entered into the calculations of Lieut.-Colonel Fraser how impracticable it was for the "Sturt" to land men on any point along the coast with the heavy sea running, nor how impossible it was to convey over 700 men at one time.

Colonel McDonnell arrived in Te Papa the same evening to glean intelligence, as he had not the least idea of what was going on. At his urgent request I left in the "Sturt" for Auckland.

Just as we had started letters were brought on board announcing that a hard fight had taken place with Te Kooti's forces, in which the enemy had suffered severe loss. Under cover of my letters of 13th instant, I forwarded copy of Lieutenant Gilbert Mair's report.

I cannot close this report without expressing the great obligation under which Captain Montgomerie, of H.M.S. "Blanche," and Captain Palmer, of H.M.S. "Rosario," their officers and men, have placed the inhabitants of Tauranga, for the moral support and lively interest they have taken in this district. Had it not been for the protection so generously accorded, it would have been almost impossible to have restored confidence amongst the European population.

I have, &c.,

HENRY T. CLARKE,
Civil Commissioner.

The Under Secretary, Native Department.