

Despatch No.21 Sir George Grey to Edward Cardwell
Government House, Auckland 20 May 1865
British Parliamentary Papers – The Affairs of New Zealand February 1866

Sir, I have the honour to transmit for your information copies of two confidential Reports which have been received from Colonel Warre, C.B., from which you will be glad to see that by two skilful and rapidly executed movements he has occupied two most important positions to the North and South of Taranaki, has placed that Province in a state of security, and has in point of fact, I believe, brought the war in that province to a close.

The post he has occupied to the south of New Plymouth is 50 miles distant from it, nearly half way to Whanganui, and within about 15 miles of the point to which Sir D. Cameron advanced. A remarkable illustration is thus afforded of the correctness of my conclusions as to the sufficiency of the force in the country easily to connect the settlements of Taranaki and Whanganui, as you will find that Colonel Warre states that he was not only able to establish the two important posts I have named, but has also opened his overland communication with them without experiencing any opposition, or any difficulty of any kind.

You will further find that Colonel Warre states in reference to the country to the north of the Waitara, and between that river and the White Cliffs, that the whole number of the rebel Natives in that neighbourhood is very small, whilst to the south of Taranaki at Warea, their main place, he states that the number of rebel Natives cannot exceed 40 or 50 fighting men. I could not, therefore, have asked for reinforcements of several thousand men, in addition to the 10,000 regular troops now in the country, and to the local forces, to encounter such an enemy.

Enclosure No.1

Colonel Warre, New Plymouth, 28 Apr 1865 to Assistant Military Secretary

Sir, No opportunity having sooner enabled me to report for the Lieut.-General's information the fatal result of a rencontre between some rebel Natives and an unarmed party of men, who contrary to all orders, had, as detailed in Major Colvile's letter herewith enclosed, gone some distance below Stony River to hunt cattle and pigs, I avail myself of the present occasion to inform the Lieut.-General that although the body of Private J. Jury, 43d Light Infantry, has not been found, I have every reason to hope that he is not a prisoner in the hands of the rebel Natives; and although at first I anticipated that the rebel Natives had wantonly shot our people to recommence hostilities, I am glad to find by a letter received from Colonel Synge, 43d Light Infantry, commanding the southern outposts, that the Natives living south of Warea repudiate this cruel murder, and have sent word to him under a flag of truce that the Warea Natives deserve punishment, and that they will not assist them in fighting against us.

As signal lights were passed up the coast from Warea to Mohau on the night above-mentioned occurrence, and as on the very same day Mr Parris reported to me that he had received reliable information on Wm. King expected the Ngatimania Poto to come to his assistance, I considered it my duty to take every precaution for the defence of the settlement, and to do all in my power to prevent its again becoming the scene of active hostilities, and at the same time to prevent as far as possible the Europeans and settlers who are now scattered over the whole area of the cultivated district without delaying or impeding their operations, so essential for the speedy occupation of the land. I therefore decided in order to meet the threatened incursion of rebels from the north, to occupy the position near the White Cliffs, Pukearuhe, the position of which, all who know the Native tracks declare, renders it impossible for any body of rebel Natives to enter the province

by the coast line. At the same time I determined to take possession of the Native lands at Warea, with a view to punish the Warea rebels for their cowardly attack on one man.

With a view to enable me to carry out the first-mentioned arrangement, Major Atkinson, Defence Minister, chartered the S. S. 'Phoebe,' which happened to arrive here en route to Manukau, to land troops and stores at Puhiaruhe. The charge of this expedition I entrusted to Lieut.-Colonel Mulock, 70th Regiment, and I await with some anxiety the explanation he had to offer for only partially carrying it into execution, as it appears that owing to stress of weather, only half the troops were landed, not in a very regular manner, and as the landing at New Plymouth on the return of the steamer was not good, he with the troops left on board went on to the Manukau, from whence they have not yet returned. Mr Parris, who accompanied the force, returned with some friendly Natives overland, and reports that the result of this move is already apparent in the surrender of sixteen more of Wm. King's Natives, and that he, Wm. King, has retired to a place called Haupapa, above Kiri Riringa on the Waitara River. A company of military settlers have proceeded to Pukearuhe to relieve the bushrangers by the 'Wonga Wonga' steamer, and I have little doubt when military settlers are placed, as I understand is intended, between the Waitara and the Nunui Rivers, that the whole of the rebel Natives in that neighbourhood, whose numbers are very small, will give in, and the overland communication with Pukearuhe will be secured.

Lieut.-Colonel Synge, 43d Light Infantry, was instructed to occupy the rebel lands at Warea, and to make diligent search for the body of Private Jury, 43d Light Infantry. The state of the weather on the 25th and 26th obliged him to halt at Stony River, where the whole of the men were employed in completing the road recently formed by the military settlers under Lieutenant Ferguson, R.E., which I hope will now last good well through the winter. As the number of rebel natives at Warea cannot exceed 40 or 50 fighting men, I anticipate no opposition to the construction of a military post at that place, and I trust as soon as this is secured that we may be able to drive the rebels out of their villages, and punish them for their repeated acts of violence.

Although I feel that after my Report of the 22nd instant, (No.9,) I may be open to the charge of inconsistency in extending my outposts, having stated that I should reduce them in consequence of an anticipated difficulty in supplying them during the wet season, I trust the circumstances now detailed will exonerate me, and that the Lieut.-General will sanction and approve of my proceedings, which after his letter of the 19th January last, I should only have undertaken without his consent being previously obtained, had I not considered it necessary for the defence of the settlement, and that the delay of communicating with the Lieut.-General's headquarters rendered it necessary for me to take the responsibility on myself. I reported the above-mentioned occurrences and my contemplated arrangement to his Excellency Sir G. Grey by the 'Phoebe' on the 24th instant.

Report by Major F. M. Colvile to the Garrison Adjutant, New Plymouth

Camp, Stony River, 23 Apr 1865

Sir, I have the honour to report for the information of the Colonel Commanding, and in reply to your Letter, No.541, of this day's date, that yesterday one of the bullock drivers reported to me that four bullocks belonging to the Commissariat had strayed during the night across the Stony River. I ordered four of the mounted men to cross the river and bring them back, as I have done on other occasions. I considered four men enough for this duty, the bullock never going far, (they were caught near Koumene's Mill) and as the friendly Natives are constantly passing between Mokotuna and this, had the mounted men confined themselves to my orders the disaster I am about to relate would not have occurred, but unfortunately on arriving at Mokotuna they saw some horses and cows in the distance, and gave chase, and were then joined by one sergeant and five privates

43d Light Infantry without arms, who in direct disobedience to my repeated orders and warnings, had crossed the river by some other ford, with the intention of pig hunting. These men then proceeded in company two or three miles beyond Mokotuna, and whilst engaged in leading away a calf were surprised by a party of nine to twelve mounted Maoris. They all, however, most wonderfully escaped with the exception of Private John Jury, 43d Light Infantry, and Joseph Hawkes of the Mounted Corps; the remainder returned to camp between 5 p.m. and midnight by ones and twos. The men of my regiment were in confinement with a view of being brought to trial.

I determined to start this morning at 9.30 a.m., taking with me 60 rank and file, and a few mounted men to search for the missing men and horses. On arrival at the spot I found the body of Private Hawkes shot in three places, one eye cut out, and body stripped naked, his horse was likewise lying shot close to him. I placed his body in a cart, and have sent it into New Plymouth. I could find no trace of Private Jury, 43d, though I searched the country well in skirmishing order to the distance of a mile round the spot where his horse was lying dead. This man had taken the canteen keeper's horse. The opinion of the Native who accompanied me is that he is taken prisoner. I found the three horses of the three surviving orderlies untouched, with their saddles and bridles on them.

In reply to the questions contained in your letter, I have the honour to state for the information of the Colonel Commanding, that I delayed sending in the report of the disaster until this morning, as I was still in hopes that the two missing men might return in the night, and that it would save the parents of Private Hawkes some suspense. Secondly I only sent four mounted men to bring back the Commissariat cattle, as I considered that number sufficient, to Mokotuna and Raumenes Mill, for as I have previously stated, had they not gone after other horses and cattle, this fatal disaster to one of their number would never occurred. Thirdly, Lieutenant McGuinness of the Mounted Corps requested my permission to cross the Stony River on the 21st instant with a dozen of his men to look for an orderly's horse which had strayed across. I warned him not to go far, and in presence of Lieutenant Talbot, 43d Light Infantry, my acting adjutant, he said he would not go beyond the Mokotuna River. I then allowed Lieutenant Onslow, 43d, to accompany him. He brought back two horses and one foal, of which report has been made. With respect to the step I took to-day in searching for the missing men, I can only say that I did it on my own responsibility, and to the best of my judgment, thinking that even then a man's life might be saved by speedy action. I have, &c., F. M. Colville, Major, 43rd Light Infantry, Commanding Southern Outposts.

Enclosure No.2

Colonel H. S. Warre to the Assistant Military Seceraty
New Plymouth 13 May 1865

Sir, In continuation of my letter of the 27th ult. (No.10) I have the honour to report that I have established military posts at Pukearuhe near the White Cliffs, about 35 miles to the north, and at Opunaki Bay near Te Namu, about 50 miles to the south. My reports to the Deputy-Quartermaster-General will give the details of these expeditions, which with that for the occupation of Warea about 26 miles to the south, conducted by Lieut.-Col. Syngé, 43rd, were carried out simultaneously, on or about the 29th ultimo, and without opposition or difficulty of any kind, beyond the inconvenience caused to a small portion of the force under Lieut.-Col. Mulock, 70th Regiment, who failed from stress of weather, in the first attempt, to land at Pukiaruhe and were carried into Manukau.

Having established my position at Opunaki which I amply supplied by sea, I at once proceeded to open communication by land, aided by the post established at Warea. I accomplished this object without opposition, but owing to the unusual amount of rain which has fallen so early in the season the river became impassable, and I was detained at Opunaki till the 7th instant, when I returned overland to New Plymouth. The state of the rivers and roads has also prevented my carrying out my intention of attacking the rebel Natives who have established themselves about four miles inland near Warea. I regret to state that we have failed to find any traces of Private Jury, 43rd. The friendly Natives state that he was killed, but I fear his body must have been taken away or mutilated by the rebels who attacked his party on the 22d ultimo.

The result of my recent movement has I trust not only secured the peace of the Province, but has, as William, King of Umeroa, naively expressed it, "shut the gate" against the incursions of rebel Natives from the north. The immediate result of the occupation of Pukearuhe was the surrender of 16 of Wm. King's (of Mataitawa) Natives, and of Opunake, that of Wm. King of Umeroa with 20 fighting men, Adam Clarke of Opunaki, with 10 fighting men, besides women and children. I believe also the occupation of Opunaki will not only isolate the Warea rebels, but from the peculiar nature of the country, and the steep scarps of the Waiana river, will cut off the southern Natives who are not likely to remain between the forces now occupying Waingongoro, and Opunaki.

The Natives attach great importance to the occupation of Opunaki Bay, where I found two boats in good preservation, belonging to the S.S. 'Lord Worsley' wrecked three years ago in the adjoining bay, together with large quantities of the debris of the vessel. I enclose translation of a letter I received from Teha the Prophet, whose family fled from Matakaka (his village) on our landing in the bay. Teha, as the Lieut.-General is doubtless aware, is the originator of the Pai Marire or Hau Hau religion, and exercises great influence over the tribes on this coast. Teha's letter is difficult to understand, but Mr Parris, believes he intends to infer that the rebels who are now continuing the strife, are very few in number, "a mere skeleton," seeking their own destruction. Teha evidently considers the rebel cause as hopeless, and requests the removal of the soldiers to save his own property.

I also enclose translation of a letter from Hapurona which was found at Matakaka. Mr Parris tells me that this letter is very characteristic of the "fighting chief of the last war" but the word of Teha is not told. The "basket of Areta," is a figurative expression intending to imply the possession of great knowledge or skill, and by it Hapurona means that although the old chief Nepe and his own son Horopapera (who has been with me throughout the recent operation and has rendered most faithful service) have seceded from the Rebel ranks, their secession is of no consequence so long as he Hapurona remains. "The house of Matapi of our ancestor Rehua," implies that his present habitation is safe, and so well chosen that not even a reptile can enter. As Hapurona describes himself as an

“Owl” he is doubtless alone, and the treasure or knowledge he possesses in the “basket of Areta” must be kept for some future occasion. As Teha has frequently advocated peace, I am inclined to believe that Hapurona would have gone with Nepe and his son “to be men for the Governor” if Teha had so advocated.

The friendly Natives of the Waitara district who joined the expedition to Pukearuhe and returned with Mr Parris overland, will I trust receive some consideration for their services on this, as on many other occasions having been freely rendered. I have, &c. H. S. Warre, Colonel Commanding Troops, Taranaki.

Translation: The Colonel and Mr Parris
Ngatawheta 28 Apr 1865

Friends, salutation to you two. I have heard that you two have arrived at Opunake, and that you wish to see the elders (old men). Let it be enough for you to see them. Don't commence hostilities in that part, but leave it peacefully. Take the soldiers and hostilities on the other side of the Kuroa, that is to say to Warea. Yes, and also bring it on this side south of Waingongoro. You two listen. There are four fighting rooms and four peaceful rooms on the Island. Listen quietly, friends, to these few words. The days of God are good, but the form of man is striving in weakness (as a skeleton). Who shall see that likeness of his? It is for the skeleton to say. The God of thousands. Friends, listen quietly to that word. It is finished. [signed] Na Te Ha Haumene, Na Fito Hauatawa and all the Councils from Ngatawheta to Patea.

Translation: Mowhitu Pa, 22 Mar 1865

Go this my letter to my brother, Tantai Ariki. Friend, salutation to you and the people of Ngatiruanui, Ngarauru, and Waikato, working the work of male children, as saith the proverb of our ancestors. Friend, I am living as an orphan. Our father and our child (Nepe and Horopapera) have gone to be men for the Governor, never mind them. Had also the basket of our ancestors which contains information gone. The basket of Arta. You listen. The Owl is here in the House Matapi of our ancestors Rehua. (An old proverb). Had the word of Teha Houmene which I only heard indirectly, come to me in a substantive form in a letter the word of you two, I should have gone. [signed] General Hapurona.