

From Colonel Mould, Commanding Royal Engineers, New Zealand.

*Royal Engineer Office,
Taranaki, March 30, 1861.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to submit, for the information of the Major-General Commanding, the following Report, accompanied by a sketch, of the Engineer operations carried on for the attack of the pah on Matarikoriko, the entrenched position at and about Huirangi, and the Te Arei Pah.

The Major-General having resolved on the reduction of the pah on the strong and commanding position of Matarikoriko, and to entrench the troops in a suitable position to carry on that as well as other subsequent operations, a redoubt, No. 1, having a perimeter (interior) of 266 yards, and an area of 2,560 square yards, capable of accommodating 450 men, with four guns, was traced out on the morning of the 29th December last, on the site of the old Kairau Pah, about 1,100 yards distant from Matarikoriko, and commenced under cover of a line of skirmishers, and was carried on without molestation for upwards of two hours, with a working party of 100 men, superintended by a detail of Royal Engineers. About 9 A.M. a sharp fire of musketry was opened by the enemy from lines of rifle pits, previously unseen, situated on the left and left front of the redoubt, some only 140 yards distant on the edge of a very steep wooded and swampy gully. Nevertheless the work was continued without interruption, though there was but little intermission in the enemy's fire, good cover was obtained by 6 P.M., and 480 men occupied it during the night. On the 30th December platforms were laid on the left face of the redoubt, and two 8-inch guns mounted to breach the pah, and the parapets were heightened in parts so that the interior of the redoubt might be more thoroughly defiladed. On the 31st December, it having been ascertained that the Matarikoriko Pah had been evacuated by the enemy, it was taken possession of, 100 men, with one 24-pounder howitzer, and a detail of Royal Engineers, encamped inside, and the construction of a stockade to accommodate 60 men, was immediately commenced within the pah, and carried on day by day briskly to completion.

It being known that the enemy had strong entrenched lines at Huirangi, in difficult positions on the edges of gullies, with bush and scrub in their rear, the Major-General approved of a plan to establish redoubts, one in advance of another, and then to form approaches towards the position.

In accordance with this arrangement a redoubt, No. 2, 26 yards square, was established on the 14th January, about 600 yards in front of No. 1, and occupied the same night by 120 men and one 24-pounder howitzer, mounted en barbette.

On the 18th January redoubt No. 3, 30 yards square interiorly, was established about 400 yards in front of No. 2, and occupied that night by 100 men, with one howitzer. The fire from the enemy's position was in the early part of the day very brisk, and at intervals heavy volleys were fired; but the fire was materially kept down by that of the Artillery and skirmishers, so that the casualties were small,—only two in number.

On the 19th January and the two following days additions were made as wings to the redoubt, so as to increase the accommodation and to afford flanking defence, and an 8-inch gun was mounted

in the right wing. The enlarged redoubt had an area of 1,900 square yards, and accommodated about 450 men in tents.

On the 22nd January a double sap, directed towards the centre of the enemy's position, was commenced and carried on, without intermission, day by day, until the 2nd February, when it reached their rifle pits. The daring attack of the enemy on the left wing of No. 3 redoubt, on the morning of the 23rd January, not being connected with the Engineer operations, is only thus alluded to. The sap, except for the first 120 yards, when it was only 12 feet in width, was fifteen feet wide in the clear of the gabions, and was substantially traversed at intervals of from 35 to 40 feet. The whole distance sapped was 768 yards, thus averaging 64 yards a day, and was executed without a single casualty, notwithstanding frequent daily volleys of musketry and dropping fire from various parts of the enemy's position, all concentrated on the head of the sap. During its progress, redoubt, No. 4, 13 yards square interiorly, to hold a guard of 50 men, was established on the 27th January on the right, and on the 29th January redoubt No. 5, 24 yards square, was constructed on the left, about 250 yards from the rifle pits, for a garrison of 100 men. From the date of the formation of this last redoubt, the enemy had not fired upon the working parties, having evacuated their whole line, which was about 1500 yards in length from extreme right to left, and had retired down the gullies into the bush, and broken country in their rear. Thus the first objective point aimed at by the Major-General was satisfactorily attained.

Redoubt No. 6, was commenced on the line of the enemy's position, near the centre thereof, on the 2nd February, completed on the 3rd, and occupied the same date, with 450 men, with two 24-pounder howitzers, and an 8-inch gun was mounted on the 4th February, in the right half bastion of the redoubt. There being a bush, with dense undergrowth close to the left front of the redoubt, which might give cover to the enemy to advance, and attempt a surprise, it was resolved to destroy it, and working parties were employed in cutting it down on the 3rd February, and several following days.

From No. 6 Redoubt, the strong position of Puke-rangiora, situated upon the brink of a steep cliff, about 300 feet high, falling to the Waitara River, backed by a thick bush and occupied in part by Te Arei Pah, was observed through an avenue in the bush, and presumed to be at a distance of about 2,000 yards. After a careful reconnaissance, the Major-General determined to attack it in a mode similar to that proposed for the reduction of the Matarikoriko Pah, and carried out in the capture of the Huirangi position; accordingly on the 10th February, a force moved by two roads towards the position, and when within 550 yards of Te Arei, the enemy opened a well sustained fire from the pah, and from unseen lines of rifle pits of considerable extent, right and left and in advance thereof. A Redoubt, No. 7, having a perimeter of 240 yards, and an area of 1,650 superficial yards, was immediately traced out, carried on under a very heavy fire to completion, and occupied that night by 400 men.

As the enemy's position commanded the redoubt, the 11th February was occupied in raising portions of the parapets, and surmounting them with gabions, with sand-bag loop-holes at intervals between, and the redoubt was enlarged