

Despatch No 162 of the 20th Decr

1854

Camp Ballaarat

4th December 1854

Sir,

I have not felt it incumbent on me to report to you every day, as the despatches of the Resident Commissioner will have made His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor acquainted with the events that have occurred since the date of my last letter; nor do I consider it necessary to enter into the details of the engagement which took place yesterday morning, which are fully given in Captain Thomas' report to the Major General, a copy of which you will no doubt have received.

Gross misrepresentations however having been made with regard to this affair in some of the public papers, I think it proper to state that I am able positively to affirm from my own personal knowledge, that the insurgents fired upon us from their entrenchments, without warning or challenge, before a single shot was fired either by the troops or the police.

For several days previously this gold field had been in a state of open and undisguised rebellion.

The insurgents were constantly parading in large bodies under arms, and carrying on a systematic search for arms, horses, saddles, provisions &c., which they took away without payment, giving, in some instances receipts in the name of the "Commander in Chief of the Diggers under Arms ". All work was at an end, the rebel leaders having given notice to the miners that anyone working without special permission from them, would be shot.

Since their camp was stormed the aspect of affairs has completely changed. Shortly after the engagement I rode up (accompanied by Mr. Commissioner Amos) to the scene of action, to ascertain whether there were any unclaimed dead or wounded. I found there a crowd of several hundred persons, apparently unarmed, from some of whom I learned that there were about half a dozen dead and three wounded insurgents still lying on the ground. I promised to send up medical assistance, and to have the dead removed and buried, at which they appeared to be gratified.

On my return to the Camp this was done, and the dead were buried at the cemetery. Two soldiers who were killed were also buried there. A large number of persons assembled to witness the funerals, some of whom volunteered to assist in filling the soldiers' graves.

A feeling of relief appeared to pervade the whole population at finding themselves suddenly released from the reign of terror which had been established by the insurgents. Both troops and police have behaved remarkably well throughout the whole of these disturbances.

Although quiet and order have been to a great degree restored (the miners having mostly resumed work, and many licenses having been issued today) the vigilance of the garrison has not been relaxed, nor would it be safe to do so until the arrival of reinforcements shall have rendered an attack on the Camp utterly and clearly hopeless.

In order that the authority of the Government may be completely and permanently re-established, it will be necessary most vigorously to follow up the blow that has been struck, by thoroughly rooting out and dispersing the remnant of the rebels party. The force that will be at the disposal of the Major General will, I have no doubt, be amply sufficient for this purpose. On this subject I quite

concur in the views expressed by the Resident Commissioner (of this day), the contents of which he has been kind enough to communicate to me.

I have &c. (Signed) C. Pasley