

SOUTH AUCKLAND

MIRANDA AND ALEXANDRA REDOUBTS

Of all the earthworks thrown up by the combatants of either race during the Waikato War, only two, the redoubts at Miranda (Pukorokoro, so called from the little stream running into the Firth of Thames, the long tidal estuary of which winds through the flats to the north-east of the fort, the Esk, a few miles to the west, and Alexandra, at Tuakau, remain in a state of even tolerable repair. Miranda has only suffered slightly from stock climbing up and down the parapets in a few places; Alexandra has its earthworks almost perfect, and only suffers from the neglect of the board in which it is vested allowing it to become over-grown with noxious weeds.

The first mentioned redoubt was named from the little corvette Miranda, carrying fifteen guns. She sailed down the Firth of Thames carrying a detachment of soldiers who were to construct and garrison the fort. The natives somehow got wind of this project and dug a large number of rifle-pits at the landing place, which was close to where the shell-lime factory stands to-day. Fortunately the intelligence department of the military was also pre-warned, and a detachment of men was landed about three miles to the north to march over-land and take the enemy in the rear. When time had been given for this operation the Miranda's boats, carrying the remainder of the soldiers, pulled towards the land, but at this critical moment the natives, seeing themselves caught between two hostile forces, lost nerve, and, after firing one ineffectual volley at the boats, fled into the swamp, where it would have been useless to attempt to follow them.

With infinite labour a couple of guns were dragged up to the top of the hill and mounted. From the round-shot which is one of the war-relics of the farm on which the redoubt stands these guns were the smooth-bore forty-pounder Armstrongs, then in great use in the navy. Another relic is a trenching tool, mattock at one end and pick at the other. It lay out exposed to the weather and scrub fires for sixty years before it was found, but so excellent is the material that rust has not harmed it, nor has the action of fire injured its temper.

About 350 yards to the south-east of the redoubt rises a knoll about 80 feet higher than the main earthworks, and here a small ditch and bank enclosed what was known as the picket post, whence a good look-out could be obtained over a very large extent of country. Between these two posts, as evidenced by the remains of sod-chimneys, the cooking for the garrison was done. All round the redoubt, about twenty yards from it runs a shallow trench and low bank, evidently intended as a first line