

A number of village settlers are located in various places, and, in spite of the difficulty of ingress and egress, appear to be doing well. Most of them had had a good burn, and an abundant crop of magnificent grass followed. Nor could I avoid comparing the successes here with our Victorian failures at village settlement. In Victoria a clean burn off is difficult, and often the sole result is to sour the land, so that grass does not grow for a year or so. In New Zealand, on the contrary, it is light labour to fell the soft woods; a complete burn is easily accomplished, grass-seed scattered among the logs and other *débris*, and within a month there is grass 6 in. to 8 in. high, green and succulent, upon which the settler's stock thrives, and milk and butter are produced right away.

Beyond the settlements the road passes through a fine forest, containing splendid spars of all the timbers named above, and covering a large area of excellent sawmill material. At some points of this road the snowy summits of Ruapehu can be seen, distant only five or six miles, though, as we were enveloped in clouds of mist, our range of vision was limited to the mud under foot and the dank dark forest on either side.

After some hours of ploughing along through the mud we came out on the open plains of Waimarino, but to my great disappointment the volcanoes were hidden in mist and rain-clouds.

Our course from Raetihi was parallel with the Wanganui, but distant from twelve to fifteen miles from the river. We crossed the plain south-west of Ruapehu about two miles from its southern extremity, and we could see the timber-line stretching for miles in the direction of the river and Taumaranui.

We were now in the heart of the King-country, and crossed the survey-line at a spot where the surveyors were stopped and driven back by the Maoris some five or six years ago, passing an old pa now deserted. Crossing the plains, we passed two inhabited Maori whares, and, striking the timber at a point just opposite that of our entry, once more found ourselves in forest country. The track had just been cut by a Government party under Mr. Field, but had not yet been cleared or formed. To my surprise, I found a great improvement both as to quality and quantity in the timber, very fine totara, tall and of good girth, and splendid white-pine, rimu, and the silver-pine of the West Coast. This last appeared to be fairly plentiful, and is well distributed through the other timbers. I saw fine logs of all the pines mentioned, and the cedar (*kaikawaka*) is the finest I had yet examined.

Some four miles from the plain the country loses its level character, and, as we approach the main streams which, rising about the bases of Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, and Tongariro, flow into the Wanganui or Wangaehu Rivers, the gorges again open up, and the papa reappears.

After leaving the pumice plain, the route lies along the newly-cut 6 ft. track until we reach the turn-off to Taumaranui. Here we note the large size of the totara, and from this point one of the best if not actually the best totara forests in New Zealand, containing many enormous trees, extends. Many of the trees are over-matured, and some undoubtedly hollow. Rimu and white-pine of splendid size and quality, many of them 6 ft. to 8 ft. in diameter, are also found here.

We had expected to find the road party in camp a few miles beyond the turn-off, and to find shelter for the night with them, but darkness set in and found us still plodding on through rain and mud without sign of the camp. Our horses by this time leg-weary, stumbled along the narrow track past the face of the cliffs and precipices till nearly 8 o'clock, when we struck the camp at Kaitiki, and were most hospitably received by the surveyor in charge.

Next morning, returning to Taumaranui, we realised the dangerous feat we had accomplished in the dark the night before. In one place half the road had slipped away, and a second slip from above had deposited a heap of earth and clay on the 3 ft. of track still left, while the creek rushed tumultuously along at the bottom of a steep precipice 400 ft. in depth. Such was the place we had negotiated through blinding rain and the darkness of a winter night, thanks to the sagacity and sure-footedness of Maori pack-horses, for which I shall ever entertain sincere respect.

It had been my intention to examine in detail the totara forest about Taumaranui, but the weather was so bad and our horses so much exhausted that I was obliged, though with great reluctance, to abandon the idea, and returned by the Waimarino Plains to Corlett and Robinson's station, where we proposed to spend the night in order to make Taupo the next day. Leaving Field's track in the plain, we struck northward to Whakapapuiti River. After crossing several streams in flood we reached the open "downs," rolling pumice plains, over which, with some difficulty, as the track-marks (thin wands stuck in the ground) had been knocked down, we made our way till we sighted belts of dense scrub interspersed with rimu, white-pine, and totara, reaching at last the hut of Mr. Thomas Allen, who entertained us hospitably for the night, thus missing the station in the dark.

We found that we were right under the northern end of Tongariro, only about half a mile from the source of the Wanganui, and seven or eight miles from the station we had been making for.

Next morning we left for Lake Taupo, or Tokaanu, crossing the Wanganui where it issues from the sides of the mountains, and passing the bridge and pa where Te Kooti made his last big fight. The sun making his appearance for the first time in four days, I was able to see the dense forests on a range east and south-east of Tongariro, and reached Taupo on Saturday the 19th September.

I visited next day the Village of Waihi and the hot springs, and on Monday travelled by coach to Waiouru, about forty miles, very little timber being visible along this road. About ten miles beyond Waiouru some timber, though poor and thin, was met with, but good forests exist half-way between Waiouru and Ohingaiti.

The forest-lands on the Rangitikei River are good, and extend to the gorges and ravines of the Ruahine Range, a distance of twenty-five miles. The totara is specially good; rimu and white-pine of good quality is also abundant all the way from Ohingaiti to Hunterville.

Striking the railway once more at Mangaonoho I returned thence to Wanganui, and on the 25th September left for Napier, visiting sawmills at Dannevirke (Hawke's Bay Company).