

The following sets out what has already been accomplished in the direction of preserving the scenery, and the previous recommendations of the late Scenery Preservation Commissioners. It also deals with the general aspect of the country from a scenery standpoint, and what we consider should, if possible, be done to preserve its beauty for the benefit of future generations.

MARTON TO TAIHAPE. (PLAN No. 1.)

Twelve miles from Marton, 32 acres of bush at Silverhope have been acquired and proclaimed a scenic reserve, and the first area of bush beyond it which should be preserved is some 70 acres adjoining the Makohine Viaduct (twenty-five miles distant from Marton), the subject of Recommendation No. 52 by the late Scenery Preservation Commission (see photo.). Of this, about 52 acres have already been gazetted, and the remainder is under negotiation.

Nearing Ohingaiti (26 miles) there is some light bush and scrub adjacent to the line, but hardly worth the expense of acquisition.

In the vicinity of the Township of Mangaweka (31 miles) there are several clumps of bush on the Pauwhakakarua No. 1 Block, a short distance from the railway-line, and on the opposite side of the Rangitikei River, which at this point runs close to the line, there is a fine belt of forest clothing the steep, high banks and adjacent hills. Two portions of this belt, about 102 acres, have already been recommended for reservation by the late Commission (Recommendations Nos. 48 and 50), and are illustrated in photograph.

On the west of Mangaweka, and on Sections 5 and 40F, Block IX, Hautapu Survey District, there is a fine area of forest overlooking the railway. Of this, some 75 acres have been recommended for reservation (Recommendation No. 299), as well as a small clump on the further side of the river (Recommendation No. 49).

Leaving Mangaweka and ascending the incline towards Taihape there is a long strip of bush on the lower (eastern) side of the railway-line between it and the river. Four recommendations of the late Commission (Nos. 47, 193, 275, and 143) deal with the greater part of it, the acquisition of which is very desirable.

Nearing Potaka Township (also known as Utiku), thirty-nine miles from Marton, the forest, which is now on the upper or western side of the line, continues to improve in appearance, and covers a stretch of Native land for about five miles, extending nearly to Taihape. The only part hitherto recommended for reservation in this locality is a small area at Torere Village (Recommendation No. 149), but there is no doubt that the preservation of some of this continuous stretch of forest, which adds so greatly to the picturesqueness of the locality, is very desirable, and an additional reservation in this locality is recommended (photo. attached).

Around Taihape there are also several fine areas of forest well worth preserving. A scenic reserve has been made of a long strip bordering the river, and the other suitable portions are situated upon Sections 51 and 52, Block XIV, Hautapu Survey District, and on the Awarua No. 4A No. 3B Block. The latter area forms part of the belt reaching from Hawaenga Village to Turangarere, and is at present owned by Natives.

TAIHAPE TO WAIOURU. (PLAN No. 2.)

Leaving Taihape the forest for many miles skirts both sides of the line, and as it is hilly country in the vicinity it is seen to great advantage in the wooded gorges and forest-clad knolls and ranges. On the west it is on Native land, and it will doubtless be possible to secure parts; but on the east most of the land for about five miles, having been disposed of under settlement conditions, the indigenous forest thereon will soon be a thing of the past.

Two miles up the line a break appears in the bush, which recedes for about a mile until Paengaroa is reached, where it once more closes on the railway. At this point 490 acres have been reserved for forest and other purposes. Several charming views are to be seen along this portion, and an effort should most certainly be made to preserve the native forest for all time.

Just before Turangarere is reached (sixty-one miles from Marton) some of the best scenery is met with, and the views of the Hautapu River from the train are very fine (see photo.). On the eastern side beyond Turangarere lies the Motukawa Crown forest, which has been withheld from sale for the preservation of timber, &c. There is a pretty waterfall at Turangarere Station (see photo.).

About four miles beyond the Turangarere Native Settlement the open country is reached. On the west the forest gradually recedes to the long range of hills in the Raketapauma, Murimotu, and other Native blocks, distant about four or five miles from the railway. This forest-clad range, extending from a little beyond the Hautapu to the Wangaehu River, is from 2,000 ft. to 3,000 ft. high, and serves as an admirable background to the grassy plains now entered upon.

From Waiouru (69 miles) in the direction of Moawhango a few clumps of trees are visible, but north-easterly towards the desolate Rangipo Plain the view is unrelieved by anything of the kind. However, not far distant in the north-west is Ruapehu, 9,175 ft. in height, in snow-clad grandeur, with its wooded lower slopes stretching far into the plains ahead.

WAIOURU TO RAETIHI. (PLANS Nos. 3 AND 4.)

Continuing the journey through the plains little of interest is seen in the immediate neighbourhood, though the flatness of the country is relieved by the view of forest-clad ranges in the south, distant from four to five miles, and Ruapehu with its lower slopes covered with forest towards the north.

Just beyond the Ninia Railway-station and township site, which is about ten miles from Waiouru and two miles from the Native settlement of Karioi, the solid forest is again met with (see photo.).