

On the north for about two miles it is all Crown land, of which it is proposed to reserve about 3,000 acres, together with a small portion of Native land on the opposite side of the line. A large portion of the land in the vicinity of Ohakune, and between Mangachuehu and Mangawhero Streams, has been disposed of by the Crown for settlement some years since, and is in part utilised by settlers. But although a good proportion of the original bush remains, too great a sum would be payable by way of compensation were it repurchased from its present owners (see photo.).

There are several Crown sections still undisposed of near the Rangataua Station, but it is very questionable whether it would be judicious to reserve them and thwart settlement of suitable country. Native blocks comprise a good deal of the country between the settlement and Ruapehu, and no doubt could be easily acquired if thought desirable, as the land is not very suitable for cultivation—in fact much of it is quite unsuitable.

The settlement at Ohakune is on much better land, and its prospects are good.

From Ohakune to Mangawhero Stream most of the land adjacent to the road is disposed of and partly cleared, but between the latter and Raetihi it is covered with valuable timber of rimu, kahikatea, matai, and other varieties. It is, however, Native land, which if thought desirable might not be found difficult to secure.

220 acres, including two small lakes, two miles from Ohakune, have already been reserved for scenic and recreation purposes.

RAETIHI TO RAURIMU. (PLANS NOS. 4 AND 5.)

The main road from the township at Raetihi to the railway-station at Horopito, up the Makotuku Valley, where it again meets the railway-line, runs chiefly through land that has been more or less cleared for settlement, and is now occupied by scattered homesteads. The railway-line between the Mangawhero Stream and Horopito Township runs through several miles of Native land; the remainder of the distance is Crown lands, a portion of which as well as some of the Native land it is proposed to reserve.

At Horopito (ninety-one miles from Marton) the land is still under bush, several hundred acres of which will later on become available for settlement (see photo.).

For a distance of about four miles north of Horopito Crown lands extend on either side, which it is proposed to reserve, and on the east the large Urewera Block of over 12,000 acres continues up to the slopes of Ruapehu. All this land is under forest, and is in parts swampy.

Crossing the Mangaturuturu Stream, the waters of which are of sulphurous nature, a vast expanse of Crown lands extends between the line and the mountains for about ten miles. Except for a gap here and there, they are all forest-clad, and as the soil is not over well adapted for agriculture or pastoral purposes the land would form an admirable addition to the present Tongariro National Park. On the west the Crown lands have been subdivided for settlement, but with a few exceptions are unoccupied, and, together with the unsurveyed Crown lands at the back, form another magnificent stretch of forest country, in which are predominant numbers of the New Zealand cedar (*kahikawaka*), which grow very freely for about a mile and a half on either side of the road, but further to the westward comes the rimu, matai, kahikatea, and occasional totaras and ratas. Here again it is proposed to make a considerable reservation for scenic purposes.

Beyond the Mangaturuturu Stream the railway-line and main road cross the Manganui-a-te-ao Stream, a very fine wooded gorge, over which a viaduct is about to be constructed 110 ft. in height and about 266 ft. in length. Undoubtedly an effort should be made to preserve the scenery in its present condition, as the sight is most impressive as viewed from the edge of the terrace above.

About a mile further north is the famous Makatote Gorge, and in a more marked degree than previously may be seen New Zealand forest scenery in perfection (see photo.). The Makatote Stream winds its way at the bottom of a deep precipitous ravine covered with dense vegetation and forest. Both east and west the gorge extends for over a mile in a comparatively straight line, and the beauty of the bush so displayed must be seen to be realised and fully appreciated. The huge steel viaduct now in course of construction is the largest in the colony, being 260 ft. in height and nearly 900 ft. in length, and when it has spanned the aerial gap travellers on the North Island Main Trunk Railway will be afforded an unparalleled opportunity of seeing what is undoubtedly the most striking and majestic view on the route. A strip of land along the gorge has already been reserved, and it is imperative that the whole of the land on either side of the stream, as far as it can be seen from the viaduct, should also be preserved in its present state, which is now recommended.

About two miles from the viaduct the line emerges from the bush and enters the historic Waimarino Plains. These undulating, grassy slopes, covering an area of about eight miles in length and from one to four in width, form a remarkable feature in the midst of the vast forests surrounding them (see photo.). The line skirts the edge of the forest on the east side for some three or four miles, and then crossing the plains, runs close to and parallel with the western forest line until it once again enters it. This large expanse of open land, covered with native grass and tussock, was the scene of many a raid in old times by the Waikato Maoris on their way to invade Taranaki, and the remains of the earthworks of the old Waimarino Pa, two miles beyond Erua Station (99 miles), on the edge of the bush, still remain to attest former occupation by the Natives. While crossing the plains, above the bushy slopes surrounding them, the craters of Tongariro, the ever-active volcano of Ngauruhoe, and the colossal mountain of Ruapehu, distant some ten to twelve miles, are constantly in view (see photo.).

In close proximity to the Waimarino Pa are some small but fine patches of native bush well worthy of preservation, and all the land between the line and the Ruapehu Mountains is very suitable for an extension of the National Park, as a dense forest spreads over the slopes to near Hauhangatahi (4,983 ft. in height)—a volcanic cone now extinct.

The Waimarino Railway-station, 104 miles from Marton, is situated a mile south of the northern end of the plains, and here the last glimpses are seen of the mountains and the southern Waimarino Forest.