

This siege of Motu-tawa referred to above is not the only one that has occurred: after the defeat of the great Waikato army at Nga-motu (Otaka, near the Sugarloaves) in which, however, the Ati-Awa and allied tribes suffered considerably, these tribes, to square accounts with Waikato and Ngati-Maniapoto, sent a strong *tawa* against the Mokau people, who retired to their island-fortress of Motu-tawa, where they were besieged. Owing to a split in the council of the invaders, the siege was finally abandoned after a good deal of fighting had taken place, in which both sides suffered. This was early in 1832, and shortly after the return of the Ati-Awa forces the bulk of them migrated to Port Nicholson.

The following account of Motu-tawa, by Mr. James Cowan, conveys a good idea of the beauty of the island:

"Motu-tawa covers about two or three acres, and is thickly clothed with beautiful native vegetation. For most of its circumference it is protected by bold banks, which formed part of its defences in the old Maori fighting-days, when the island was a strong *pa* of the Ngati-Maniapoto Tribe. On the northern side its slopes are covered with fine groves of karaka, mangeao, and rewarewa, with ponga tree-ferns. There are high parapets on this side, overgrown with flax, koromiko, &c., and the flat top of the island is thick with old food-pits and remains of whares. On the beach the stumps of the ancient totara palisade-posts are still to be seen. On the side facing Mokau Township, there is a pretty little rock grotto overhung with ferns, sheltering a never-failing spring of fresh water, known to the Maoris as Te Ara-paopao. It was this spring that generations ago enabled the Ngati-Maniapoto people, when besieged there, to hold out for many months against their enemies from Taranaki, when otherwise they would have been forced to surrender through thirst. It was an almost impregnable stronghold in the days of intertribal warfare. At the present time it is regarded as semi-sacred by the Maoris, being a former burial-place of the Natives."

Up the River.

Starting up the river to view the scenery, the first place of interest is Mahoe, on the right bank (from the source), where the Wesleyan missionaries founded a school in which the Maori children were taught to read and write, and to make mats, ropes, baskets, and other useful articles. A cherry-grove now marks the site of the old school.

A little more than three miles from the mouth is the Rangiohua cliff, overlooking the river, at the end of a short ridge. The first *pa* of the district was said to have been erected here by the original occupants of the country as a protection against the invading Maoris from Hawaiki. As so often occurs in the traditions relating to the dim past, the marvellous enters into the account of the manner in which this *tangata-whenua* (or original people) escaped from Rangiohua. Being hard pressed by the more forceful people of Hawaiki, and seeing that the *Pa* Rangiohua was bound to fall in the end, the inhabitants escaped by an underground passage, and came out at a very great distance from their homes—indeed, some say on the east coast. Probably there is some foundation for the story, and the people might well have got away by a passage only known to themselves, and this feat in time has become mixed up with the subsequent wanderings of the defeated people. The promontory on the opposite bank contains some very pretty bush, and as the river winds round it the visitor will get a very good idea of the scenery he may expect during the trip.

The river here winds in the shape of the letter S, and a corresponding promontory on the other bank is immediately met with. Low ridges of hills confine the valley, and from the tops down to the water's edge a thick vegetation terminating in native sedge meets the sight. Five miles up an outcrop of limestone on the left bank is seen, and, though it has not yet been worked to advantage, it will probably be much availed of in the future, when settlement increases in the district.

A little above the limestone-outcrop, on the small plateau at the top of the range overlooking the river, is situated an ancient burial-ground of the Maoris. Reaching the 6-miles distance from the mouth, it will be noticed that the river by this time has considerably narrowed—from a width of over half a mile to about 200 ft. Turning round another small bend, the Moango clearing is seen on the right bank, and, although a distance of only about half a mile by crossing the peninsula here separates the river from its channel further up stream, it takes four miles by water to arrive at the same point. This old clearing, with four miles of water frontage, is said to have been worked for timber during the Maori war, and is now well suited for farming purposes. Coming round the Moango bend, the Tawariki clearing is seen on the further side, and immediately beyond is Greenaway's old sawmill and clearing. Corresponding to the Moango bend is a smaller one named Kapuitaruke, three miles in length. On the left bank, and forming the outer ridge of the semicircle, on the opposite side, is a fine range of hills covered with red-beech, terminating in Puke-whereo ("the red hill"). From the 5th mile up to the Manga-awakino Valley, 17 miles up, runs one continuous belt of native forest, covering the right bank in beautiful vegetation, and forming a magnificent sight to visitors. With the exception of a few possible road-routes to the back country, the whole of this land should be reserved, as it is admirably fitted for scenic reservation, but is not very well adapted for farming or milling purposes. At the 13th mile, on the left bank, is a fine sandstone bluff about 50 ft. high, and on the opposite bank is the site of the old Taurangatoitoti *Pa*, traces of the extensive cultivations which used to surround it being still visible. On the high hills at the back of the sandstone bluff are some old burial-places of the Natives. Fifteen miles up, Rothery's old sawmill is reached, at the mouth of the Totara Stream, the land surrounding it being flat or undulating, and fairly well fitted for settlement; and a mile and a half further on is Kelly's sawmill. Bordering the river at the 17th mile is the Toreia Range, and running past one side of it is the Manga-awakino Valley and the Toreia clearing, in which is placed Dive's new sawmill. The timber up the valley is much superior to that seen on the banks, and, as the country opens out slightly, access to the back land is practicable. Soon after passing the mill the boundary of the Mokau Coal-mines Company's leasehold is reached, and, though some of the land fronting the river is fairly flat, the hills at the back are only suitable for reservation. At the 19th mile some rocks fallen into the