

The journey up Hauhungatahi occupies about an hour and a half, and the return about an hour. The bush dies away at the top of the steep face, and from thence a long easy sloping spur covered with tussock and patches of mountain scrub leads to the top. Special notice must be taken going up as to where the track leaves the bush, as several climbers have had some difficulty in picking up the spot on the return journey. Between Hauhungatahi and Ruapehu there is a very low saddle, with several long clearings streaked with patches of scrub leading up to the spurs on Ruapehu. There is a thick patch of scrubby bush running round the steep eastern face of Hauhungatahi, and then a large stretch of open tussock country with numerous small pools about 2 ft. to 3 ft. in depth scattered about. From these pools a long avenue of tussock-covered country, almost level, surmounted on either side by long patches of bush, leads towards Ruapehu. Just where the bush on the left runs out there is a clear stream of water, and it was here that a party camped a short time back and made the ascent of Paretaitonga Peak, accomplishing the journey in four hours. A very easy spur, clear of scrub except for a small patch of stunted bush about 40 chains above the camp, runs up from this stream.

Within easy reach of this base, about two or three miles to the southward, there are two magnificent waterfalls on the Makatote Stream, about 10 chains apart, which are well worth a visit. The columnar structure of the cliffs over which the upper one falls is very interesting, and there are numerous specimens of the large yellow buttercup growing just where the spray from the falls reaches them.

The open country in the saddle, intersected with beautiful streams of water and dotted with patches of bush, makes a charming camping-spot. The only drawback at present is that, owing to the large stretch of bush to the north and south, the only available route is over Hauhungatahi, which is a pretty hard climb with tent, rugs, and other equipments.

The Roads Department has started to complete road connection from Waimarino to Tokaanu, which is formed from the latter end and about three-fourths of the distance. The road leaves the main road a short distance below the turn-off to the Waimarino Railway-station, and runs towards Moturoa, an old Native village, and from there will continue on in a north-easterly direction till it reaches the other formation. If a horse-track were cut in from near Moturoa through the bush up the Mangahuia Stream, it would have an easy grade all the way, and avoid the big climb over Hauhungatahi. The road from Waimarino to Tokaanu, when formed, besides being one of the prettiest drives in the North Island, will open up hundreds of beautiful camping-spots.

The scenery on the Waimarino Plains is superb. The three mountains are visible from almost any part, and the sunset effects on a winter's evening is a sight worth coming a very long way to see. The tussock plains are intersected everywhere with greenish-tinted mountain-torrents tumbling down from Ruapehu in a series of cascades and waterfalls. Large and small patches of bush are scattered about everywhere, giving a most picturesque effect to the landscape. It is possible to ride for miles on the old Native tracks, though the different fords should be well known, as almost all the small creeks are boggy. This side of the mountains is becoming better known now that the railway is completed, and the beautiful scenery will be an incentive to tourists and others to explore the wonders of the region from the Waimarino Plains.

A splendid camping-spot for ascending Ngauruhoe is to be found in a clump of bush to the north of Pukeonaki Hill, as on the west one of the ancient lava-flows has provided a prominent ridge of rocks which gives a good foothold. Ruapehu can be ascended almost anywhere, as the spurs all rise in steady slopes, there being no difficult rock-climbing on any of them. Parties have ascended *via* the Mangaturuturu Stream, which rises in a large glacier on the west, and several excursions have been made up the Makotuku Stream, but these have been more in the nature of exploring parties, and not much has been heard of them.

At present the accommodation around the mountains is very meagre, most of the climbers preferring to pitch camp and bring their supplies and rugs. A few mountain huts, with caretakers, run on the same lines as the Egmont huts, would do a good deal to popularise excursions, and, once known, the park would be visited every year by hundreds of tourists from all parts of the world.

APPENDIX V.

ERUPTION OF NGAURUHOE, 11TH MARCH, 1909, AS SEEN FROM THE WAIMARINO PLAIN.

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[By T. A. JOHNSTON, Assistant Surveyor.]

No written description of the recent eruption and remarkable phenomena could do justice to such a weird and impressive scene. About 5 p.m. on Monday evening attention was suddenly arrested by a sound like thunder in the direction of Ngauruhoe. The noise soon developed into a series of eight sharp explosions like detonators, and a rumbling roar like a train rushing over a viaduct. All the mountains were, however, enshrouded in smoke; but above this suddenly rose a cloud of steam and volcanic dust, rolling and tossing as if eager to get away from the inferno. Caught at last by the rays of the setting sun, it shone with a lurid glare, while the booming of explosions alternated with the muffled rumblings. For twenty minutes, as the dense cloud rolled and mounted upwards, there was a continuous roar, and visions of descending ashes and stones were easily conjured up. At 5.30 p.m., however, the initial explosion seemed to have spent itself, and the imprisoned titanic forces to have found a vent. As the evening closed in, the mountains,