

But as the lake is very subject to squalls, which quickly knock up a sea dangerous to canoes, the Natives are very cautious about crossing. In a S. Easter they all say that a canoe cannot cross. The Whakatane men say that if they want to visit Waikare-moana, they generally wait till a party comes thence, and return with them! The lake population is very small (Native estimate 80 men); their natural outlet for trade is down the valley of the Wairoa to Hawke's Bay. The Natives report a dreadful winter climate, and so much snow and ice that the lake people send away their horses down the Wairoa valley to winter.

To return to the Whakatane. The canoe navigation from Ruatoki downwards is reckoned fair. It involves, however, a good deal of poling; and good paddling navigation can only exist for a very few miles up from the mouth of the river at Whakatane.

There would be no difficulty and small expense in making a practicable dray-track from Whakatane up to Ruatoki, or even up to Tunanui. But, above that point, the great height, steepness, and jumbled-up character of the hills, and the continuous forest, would make it very difficult to get even a good bridle-track. The Maoris do drag horses along the present track, but it is impossible to ride; indeed, the tract is villainously bad, even for the North Island of New Zealand—even in the estimation of the Maoris themselves, who often amused themselves with giving animated descriptions of its badness. They have a local proverb, "Ruatahuna piki-piki maunga," signifying, "Ruatahuna, for ever climbing mountains," as we might say. The traveller does, indeed, encounter every variety of badness, as he toils over these tremendous hills; where a net work of slippery roots seldom allows his feet fairly to touch ground, and where from time to time he must provokingly check his ascent to cross yawning gully. Often with back bent low, he must thread the dirty overgrown bed of a steep little water course; or, still with back bent, sidle along the muddy slope of a steep hill, through a little tunnel in the koromiko copse; or, straightening his back with a sigh of relief as he emerges on the open shingle-bed, find that he has to ford and ford again and again the cold rapid stream, slipping and splashing over weed-covered stones. The indolent endurance of such atrocious tracks by the Natives of the district is a continual source of astonishment to the traveller, especially as they own a good many horses now, and many of the most annoying and dangerous places might be made good by a few hours' work with axe or tomahawk or spade, as the case may be.

3rd. The coast country from Ohiwa to Te Kaha.

The traveller sees comparatively little of this country, the track lying along the beach or within half a mile of it. At Opotiki, a fine alluvial flat spreads out for four or five miles in breadth and depth, between the sea and high, steep, wooded hills. Most of this is cultivated by the Natives; and, as I am informed, exhausted by constant cropping. Seven to eight miles beyond Opotiki, the sands end and the country changes considerably in character; that is, the high wooded hills either come down to the sea, or leave but a narrow belt of terrace intervening between their steep sides and the low sea cliffs. There is, indeed, a greater breadth of level land at Te Kaha, where a broad low point runs out nearly two miles into the sea. These terraces, generally of light dry soil, are for the most part under cultivation. Fine maize and kumara are grown, but the wheat has much degenerated from over-cropping. Potatoes are very little grown along the coast. The Maoris use light American ploughs, with one horse (jibbers very common), both for scratching the soil a couple of inches deep to put in the crop, and also for ploughing up the kumara when ripe. A woman may often be seen ploughing and a man driving; and, perhaps in the next cultivation, a party squatting down, scratching up the kumara with a stick and their hands, in the old fashion. A good deal of taro is also grown along the coast; and, both here and in the Werawera country, every kainga has its little crop of tobacco, and "torori" (native grown and half-dried tobacco) has almost entirely superseded foreign tobacco, and nearly put a stop to that eternal begging for tobacco which used to annoy the traveller ten or twelve years ago; however, begging for matches has taken its place.

The country in the interior appears to be a mass of wooded hills and mountains, and I did not hear of any kaingas or cultivations in the interior.

From Whakatane to Te Kaha, the present track varies very much in character. From Whakatane to Opape, about eight miles East of Opotiki, it lies chiefly along hard sands; the interruptions being three miles of hill at Whakatane, ascent from Whakatane very steep. The entrance to Ohiwa a very long swim, practicable only at or near slack water in nearly calm weather; and the turn into Opotiki involving three deep fords or swimming places, according to the state of the tide. There is often a great delay in getting a canoe at Opotiki, and still more at Ohiwa, and the Natives are very disobliging and extortionate.

From Opape to Te Kaha the track becomes exceedingly bad; it passes either over heavy beach, or large shingle, with now and then a respite of cultivated terrace; or else over steep hills through bush where it is extremely dangerous, and all but impassable to horses, not from the natural features of the hills but from the ruinous state of the track. When nearly level it is worn into a line of small mud pits by the constant footfalls of horses, each stepping in the tracks of the one before him; when hilly, the chaotic ruin of the track surpasses anything I have ever seen even in New Zealand. Across the two first hills after leaving the Opotiki sands, the track is now worn into a deep narrow zigzag clay trench, whose bottom is a series of irregular steps from two to three feet deep, and the top of the step a mud hole one or two feet deep: large roots project into and cross this trench in the most embarrassing manner; supplejacks lie about in profusion or dangle in front of the horses' eyes; and accustomed as our Maori nags are to every sort of bad travelling they shewed the greatest fear of this horrible track, and we had great trouble to force them to it. The only formidable natural obstacle to a fair bridle track is the Motu, a broad shingle bed river issuing from the wooded mountains, a couple of miles west of Whitianga. When low it is not a difficult