

APPENDIX IV.

MOUNT EGMONT: ANNUAL REPORT OF NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

In submitting my report this year, I am placed somewhat at a disadvantage, inasmuch as the fine weather prevailing enables the various houses to be kept open for the reception of the public much later than usual, and consequently the data supplied is not as full and concise as I would wish.

The year, on the whole, has been a very busy one, and improvements and additions to roads, tracks, and houses have been expedited to such an extent that next season promises to open under much more favourable conditions, so far as facilities for travel and rest are concerned, than any of its predecessors.

THE NORTH EGMONT HOUSE.

This house has had its busiest season this summer. The number of visitors to the end of April who signed the Board's visiting-book total 1,116. In reviewing the season just closed, it is gratifying to note the large increase in the number of visitors from other parts of New Zealand who have made the trip, not only single individuals but also fairly large parties. The University Summer School students, forty-seven in number, visited the house in January, and, although the weather at the particular time of their advent was not altogether favourable, the majority climbed to 6,000 ft.

All who have stayed at the different houses expressly as health resorts, have spoken in high terms of the bracing climate, and as a result of their trip have returned to work invigorated in mind and body.

Last winter the experiment of keeping the house open was given a trial. The majority of people have been under the impression that to live there during the winter would be an impossibility owing to the extreme cold. This is far from being the case. Cold it is certainly, but a strengthening and appetising cold which makes one feel that a dinner after an ice-climb is something to look forward to and appreciate. There are some glorious days, too, when the mountain looks at its best with a mantle of snow right down from the summit, a warm genial sun and not a cloud to be seen; whilst a view of the snow-clad mass in winter on a moonlight night is one of the most magnificent sights conceivable, and one not soon forgotten. The first winter ascent was made by Mr. Mannering (manager of the Union Bank, New Plymouth) and party in July last, the time taken to get to the summit and back being ten hours. The climb, however, at this time of the year is not child's play, and good alpenstocks, ropes, and stout hearts are indispensable; the wind on some of the slopes is very bitter and fierce.

Any intending visitors could get a statement of charges and all particulars as to how to reach the mountain from Mr. W. J. Shaw, New Plymouth, the local agent of Cook's Tourist Company, and the caretaker, Mr. Duncan, will look well to the creature comforts. Mr. Duncan, I might here mention, is an enthusiastic meteorologist, and has informed me that could he be supplied with the instruments, especially solar and terrestrial radiation glasses, it would give him great pleasure to record and forward to the Meteorological Department a statement of readings.

Whilst touching on the North House, I might here mention that many influential men of northern Taranaki have considered that the accommodation is inadequate, and that an up-to-date hostelry should be erected. Strong representations were made to the Board on this matter, but the question of parting with any portion of a national reserve for this purpose is one requiring careful consideration, and the Board did not see its way to grant all the concessions asked for, consequently the matter has fallen through for the present.

THE WEST (RAHOTU) HOUSE.

As previously pointed out, this house is at present out of the direct line of tourist traffic so far as Rahunu as a tourist headquarters is concerned, but it is certainly worth including in the itinerary of travel, as a few days' tour down this coast, with its Native and other associations—including Parihaka, one of the most picturesque and well-conducted Native villages in New Zealand—is something worthy of the tourist's attention. But to return to the Rahunu House, the track thereto is easy of access, the house well furnished with mattresses and pillows. A fair supply of cooking-utensils and a good paddock for one's horse, enable the visitor to undertake a trip with but very little inconvenience; in fact, last season a semi-invalid lady of sixty walked from the radius-line to the house and back again without any serious amount of exertion or inconvenience.

The number of visitors does not show an increase on last year's total, about a hundred undertaking the trip, but the very best time of the year was practically lost owing to heavy bush-fires in the vicinity and the consequent obscuring of the atmosphere, precluding any good views being taken.

Any inquiries can be made from Mr. Kitchingman, of Rahunu, who would be pleased to give to the intending visitor all necessary information.

THE SOUTH HOUSE (DAWSON'S FALLS).

This very popular resort has again beaten its previous record to the end of April, 1,236 persons having visited the house. In fact, so far as the whole mountain is concerned, everything points to the fact that urgent measures will soon have to be taken to provide larger houses in order to cope with the traffic. Mount Egmout as an asset to the colony is a most valuable one, and is yearly becoming more appreciated.

Mr. Wilkie, of Kaponga, will supply any information to the intending visitor.

THE EAST HOUSE.

This house, which enjoys the distinction of being built at a greater altitude than any of the others, is the one mainly patronised by those who make Stratford their base. To some the situa-