

lay between Matata, on the west, and Kohi Point, on the east. An immense swamp extends from the sea-coast to Kokohinau, where is found a small expanse of land, about four miles square, of apparently fertile quality. The base of Putauaki is formed of a series of pumice-sand hummocks, bounding this tract of fern land, and from these upwards barrenness prevails. For twenty-five miles the path leads through these desolate dunes, destitute of timber and vegetation, though intersected by four brawling mountain streams. From these the traveller emerges on the Tauaroa Plain, and a fifteen miles' ride brings him to the Kaingaroa flats. The soil is a soft pumice, clothed with a dwarf kind of toetoe, affording no sustenance to animals. Its roots are so little embedded in the soil that sheep pull it up at every bite, and horses will hardly touch it even when half-starved. From Fort Alfred to Taupo no other vegetation exists, save at rare intervals toetoe bushes on some flat formed by detritus in a bend of the river.

The chain of mountains bounding the Urewera country on the right bank of the Rangiteiki is pierced by two gorges which afford access from this side: one at Horomanga, and the other at Tawaroa; a pathway also exists from Fort Alfred to Opouriao on the Whakatane. This was the trail taken by Te Kooti. The road from Arowhata Ho by Harawiwi passes over the ranges,—of that by Tarawera I have no knowledge.

Once on the Kaingaroa Plains, which lie some 200 feet above the level of Tauaroa, the only water to be found for a long distance is on the Rangiteiki River. Its banks are mostly steep, though of no height, and are occasionally clothed with toetoe and harakeke. At one place, Arowata Tawhitu, the river foams between two rocks so close that the space between them is an easy jump. The Kaingaroa Plains are as sterile as Tauaroa, but exhibit more traces of volcanic action. Wood and water are very scarce, and are rarely found together. At Te Onepu there exists a good-sized pond close by a bush, and at Opepe a small stream trickles out of the rock. Here there is also a limited amount of grass.

The only spot I consider fit for the permanent camp for which I was ordered to reconnoitre was on the eastern side of the Waikato, near Tapuaeharuru, as timber in abundance could be rafted to it from a wood some three miles up on the opposite shore.

Of the country lying between Taupo and the Hot Lakes I know nothing, but Mr. Heale has given me information which will appear in my report on the roads.

#### *Matata and Maketu.*

Between Matata and Maketu, and at the back, lies a large expanse of fern land, mostly taken up for runs.

The mountain country at the back of "Canaan," near Maketu, and southward from Tauranga, is but indifferently supplied with water, and, like the rest of the hill districts, is very broken and difficult. In 1867 Major Mair took a body of Arawas from Maketu to Orope by the mountains, and the party suffered much from thirst. Near Tauranga, however, this want is not so much felt. Several streams run down into the harbour from Otane Wainuku, which forms a watershed; and from the humidity of the bush, and the clayey substratum, I have no doubt wells could be sunk with advantage.

#### *Tauranga.*

During the Tauranga expedition of 1867, several specks of gold were found by washing in the Wairoa, about Kaima, and it is possible that further research will prove that the range running from the Aroha, and dividing the Thames from Tauranga, is auriferous.

A discovery made near Katikati some time ago is likely to influence the fate of Tauranga. Last year, in July, a party of gentlemen walked from Ohinemuri to Tauranga. They were jealously watched all the way, but saw quite enough to satisfy them of the mineral capabilities of the country. On the way to Waihi, four miles from Katikati, they discovered auriferous quartz, and knocked off with a tomahawk a few bits, which have been proved to be impregnated with gold.

#### *Waihi.*

Waihi is only some twenty-five miles from Te Papa by the inland waters; the only difficulty in the navigation being a narrow channel between two spits of land, impassable for boats at low water. Should this place be opened out as a gold field by the Government, Tauranga will be the harbour, and as I hope to be able to prove that the best road from Auckland to Taupo runs at present through Tauranga, I see no reason for doubting that this fine harbour will, in a short time, become the site of a flourishing town. I shall, later, have to speak of the Pirirakaus, the Natives living at the back of Tauranga, who now object to any prospecting on their land; but I am confident that, were Ohinemuri opened, the small section of rebels still holding out in the bush around Te Papa would gladly follow suit with the Thames Natives, and that the settlement of a mining population on the Upper Thames would insure permanent peace in the district of Tauranga.

The desideratum is that the Government should open out this country, and not allow it to fall into the hands of speculators, who would naturally prefer their own interest to the public good.

#### *Recapitulation.*

As a general recapitulation, I may say that, in the Bay of Islands, the valleys near the coast, being of different ages, have arrived at different degrees of maturity: some have passed through the grades from estuaries to mud-flats, then to raupo swamps, and lastly to sound arable land. Some are still undergoing the process of formation; while the Ohiwha and the inland sea of Tauranga remain to show what was formerly the general character. The formed valleys are all fertile.

The mountains which formerly rose out of the bed of the sea form a wild chaos, pierced here and there by deep gorges, the outlets of the waters which once filled the hollows in the interior. As the volcanic region is approached, the soil changes; it no longer bears high fern or bush; a thick deposit of pumice-sand, the result of centuries of eruptions from the craters around, overlies the fertile ground and forbids all hope of cultivation. The open country from Matata to Taupo is worthless.