

PART II.

Three direct lines of communication exist between the Bay of Plenty and Taupo. They are:—

1st.—From Matata *viâ* the posts established by the field force, Arowhata Ho and Opepe to Tapuaeharuru.

2nd.—From Maketu by Kaiteriria, or by the Horohoro.

3rd.—From Tauranga to Puherua by Otane Wainuku, thence by Ohinemutu and the eastern base of the Horohoro, crossing the Waikato at Nihi-o-te-kiore, and reaching Tapuaeharuru through Oruanui.

1st.—The bar of the Awa-o-te-Atua is dangerous; at low water it has not two feet of water, and not more than seven at high. A further obstruction exists some two miles up stream, where vessels drawing over two feet are arrested by a shifting bank of pumice-sand. Once this shoal of only a few hundred yards in length overcome, the Rangitikei becomes a fine stream, with a good body of water as far as Kokohinau. Soon after this kainga, the rapids commence.

All traffic by this line must go by water as far as Kokohinau, as the two roads, or rather bridle-tracks, leading from Matata run through immense swamps. The best of the two has five miles of beach and ten of swamp, with a ford, not always practicable, at the junction of the Orini and Rangitikei. This latter river must also be crossed at Kokohinau.

From this place to the hummocks at the base of Putauaki no difficulty occurs, and beyond these up to Fort Galatea the road is all but made. There are two small streams to be bridged, but the timber for the bridges is ready, and near to its intended position. There are twenty-nine cuttings and sidings on this twenty-five mile piece of road, executed by the Armed Constabulary.

From Fort Galatea to Tapuaeharuru the distance is fifty-two miles, on which little work would be required, as the country is all flat, save at the rise from the Tauaroa to the Kaingaroa Plain. The soil I have already described as a soft rotten pumice, in which wheels sink deep. Traffic would, however, harden it.

I always considered this the worst line which could be adopted, for the following reasons:—

1st.—Its flank is exposed the whole way to the Urewera, who could, coming by Opouriao and Fort Alfred, fire upon boats; or, emerging from the gorges of Horomanga or Tauaroa, cut off travellers, and retreat with impunity into their fastnesses. To watch this road effectually a strong force is absolutely necessary.

2nd.—All along it there is a great dearth of wood and water, the few water-holes being at more than a bullock dray's journey apart. The worst part lies between Fort Galatea and Taupo. I once rode over twenty-five miles in that direction without finding water. At the ford at Arowhata Ho, one of the natural camping-grounds, there is hardly enough tea-tree scrub to boil a billy. Wells cannot be sunk except to great depth, as all moisture percolates through the pumice.

3rd.—There is no feed for cattle or horses along the whole line. Whatever means of transport are used, whether bullocks or horses, their forage must be carried.

4th.—The fact of its having as its only harbour a river which is frequently unapproachable, and of its being a necessity that the first twenty miles of carriage should be by this bad river, is enough to condemn it.

Second Line.

From Maketu to the Tahiki the road has been partly made; it is a good bridle-track, available for bullock drays for twelve miles beyond Maketu. After crossing the Tahiki, the road winds round Rotoiti and Rotorui to Ohinemutu. The track now adopted is by Kaiteriria; but Mr. Heale has informed me of the existence of an almost natural road leading past the Horohoro Mountain by Nihi-o-te-kiore and Oruanui to Tapuaeharuru. This, he tells me, will require hardly any labour, and passes through a country which can produce feed for horses and cattle. The road by Kaiteriria and Orakei Kerako is bad and rugged. After leaving Maketu, from the first creek (the furthest point which waggons can now reach) to the Ngae, a distance of sixteen miles, the road must be made through the bush. The great objection to this line is the want of a harbour at its starting point. The Maketu River has a bad bar, and even the "Sturt" has only once been inside. A swift current and a heavy surf are impediments. The advantage is that it runs the whole way through a friendly country.

Third Line.

This runs past Pye's Pa block-house and by an old Native track, in a direct line to Puhirua on the Rotorua Lake. The two difficulties attendant on its formation are the hostility of the Pirirakaus and the absence of water in the Otane Wainuku bush.

I think that when the Upper Thames is opened, the former consideration will not give much trouble, and the latter can be obviated by sinking wells.

The Pirirakau are a small tribe, living at Meanene, Orope, Akeake, Taumata, and Kaimai, on the edge of the bush.

Although supposed to be hostile they do not seem to have moved since 1867, and they are in the habit of coming into Tauranga as often as the friendly Ngaiterangis. I was speaking, about a month ago, to one of their chiefs, who assured me I need not have the slightest hesitation in visiting their villages. I am of opinion that the only case in which they would take up arms would be in the event of a large body of hostile Natives arriving among them from Patetere; or, as was recently threatened, from Canaan, under the leadership of Hakaraia.

Orope contains the most disaffected, being the residence of a notorious character who murdered a settler in 1866. All their villages come within the confiscated boundary, and their population is so small that they could be easily kept in check by a post, due care being taken to let them know that no aggression was intended.

From the edge of the bush to Puhirua the distance is twenty-two miles, but the track is one rarely used by the Natives on account of the absence of water. This, I have remarked, can be overcome by sinking wells. It is described as rough travelling; but from the character of the country rising from Te Papa—the ravines in it extending in parallel lines along the road and not across it—I do not anticipate many engineering difficulties.