

Bush Reserves on the Main Trunk

By J. L. MOORE

BETWEEN Marton and Taumarunui enough bush reserves are visible from the train to tell the traveller what originally covered this area. These treasured remnants make the journey a succession of delights and surprises.

There are some near Hunterville, and opposite the Kaikarangi Station is a park, mostly of white pine (*kahikatea*). Between the Makohine Viaduct (after Mangaonoho) and Mangaweka the bush and gorges of the Rangitikei River are seen on the right.

From here the railway follows up the valley of the Hautapu River. Taihape has kept a hillside of bush right in the town near the station, and a large domain down by the river. As the train winds and climbs up the valley one sees patches of kowhai and other small trees until, at Mataroa, the splendid Scenic Reserve of 240 acres of *kahikatea*, *matai*, *maire*, *kowhai*, and others comes into full view on the right. As the train nears Ngaurukehu, a signal box and passing-place for trains, the Hautapu becomes more of a mountain stream and on the left is a strip of heavier bush which is also a Scenic Reserve, with *rimu* as well as those just mentioned. This fine piece extends for several miles up to "The Horseshoe" at Turangarere.

From here the line passes through tussock country, and such flowers as *Celmisia*, *Wahlenbergia*, and *Euphrasia* can be distinguished as the train climbs to Waiouru, the highest station on the line (2670 ft.), and affording the first full view of Ruapehu.

At Tangiwai, the next station, State Forest plantations begin and continue till Karioi. Then we come to native bush again, now with much beech, but often with the larger trees taken out. There is a reserve before Rangataua, and at Ohakune a hillside of heavy mixed bush near the station, but the finest sight of all is the Scenic Reserve on the left between Ohakune and Horopito. After crossing the long curved Hapuawhenua viaduct, from which there is a

fine view down a bush gully, there is a short tunnel and then, for the bush-lover, the most exciting two or three miles on the whole Main Trunk. As the train slowly climbs up the incline the *rata* and *rimu* giants are looked at from ever-increasing heights. At first you are level with the boles of the trees, then you see them half-way up, and at last you look out at their tops and at vistas down gullies of real "old man" trees, some of the *rata* still strangling the trees they will eventually kill, and you see glimpses of the blue flat-topped Otiranui hill beyond.

The train now turns abruptly away from this climax, crosses the other curved viaduct, the Taonui, and continues to Horopito. Between here and Erua there are State Forestry Reserves, and I was assured at Ohakune that the present policy was to keep them intact. In this area, just past Pokaka, is the great Makatote viaduct, with first a breath-taking view down the gorge to Mt. Egmont, which I once saw by moonlight from the night express, and then a glimpse to the right up to Ruapehu.

At Erua the railway touches the boundary of the Tongariro National Park bush on the slopes of the smaller mountain Hauhungatahi, and just before National Park station sub-alpine-looking bush appears on the left with a few *kaikawaka* (cedar) distinguishable, a foretaste of the groves of them near the spiral, like branched candlesticks with little umbrellas of foliage on their upturned branches. This bush is partly Scenic and partly State Forest Reserve.

Near Raurimu, Oio, Owango, and Kakahi there are Scenic and State Forest Reserves and then, on the right, views of the bush-clad banks of the Upper Wanganui, and a small reserve, also on the right, known as the Manunui Domain, just before crossing the river into Taumarunui.

Any traveller wishing to see these reserves is recommended to take a daylight train.

"Besides Divine guidance which is the eternal fountain of the light of the spirit of man, love of the beautiful in nature as in the things of the mind, still remains one of the principal sources of civilising influences as well as of hope for a happier and nobler humanity".—Dr. Naji Al Asil, Director-General of Antiquities, Iraq, in *Illustrated London News*.