

THREE WEEKS' CARAVANING IN OTAGO.

(By P.M.)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 201.)

THE site where we camped that night lacked nothing in picturesqueness. We were on the edge of a deep ravine, out of which tall birches shot up their heads, the lake peeping through the lofty branches here and there at us. Our bed of cut ferns was very comfortable, but again we found our blankets not sufficient to keep out the cold.

Steadily jogging along, we reached Mount Crichton Station next morning, and according to promise called again. We followed the British instinct within us and gave three good cheers for the station and its people after finally saying 'good-bye.' Walking slowly, for the sun was shining brilliantly, we reached Bob's Cove at tea-time, when a wood-cutter boiled our billy and sold us a pot of jam.

Poor Cook! The sandflies assailed him as more valuable than any other of us and paid him considerable attention. His hands were so swollen that the knuckles had disappeared entirely. The flies were unusually numerous here, and the afflicted one bolted his food and then bolted himself. Reaching our friend's (the miner's) place, we stayed in his hut all night once again, and as he very kindly insisted on lending us blankets, and we lifted the iron sheets, our night's rest was much more pleasant than before.

Cook's ill luck still pursued him. He was fondly carrying in his pocket several stones which he had taken from the bottom of creeks, and which he assured us con-

tained specks of real gold. 'It's gowld right enough,' said the miner, 'but it's the kind yees call newchums gowld, and ain't worth nothing.'

By noon next day we were back into Queenstown, somewhat travel-stained after our walking tour, but feeling that our labour had been amply rewarded. We were now in possession of two horses, and the question was how to make use of both.

'We'll have to drive tandem, boys,' said Driver. 'It will look a bit odd, but that's nothing.'

After some inquiry at the livery stables and saddler's we succeeded in hiring collar, traces, etc. The collar was too large and the traces too short, but we banded the former with cloth, and a blacksmith lengthened the traces by attaching short chains to them, and he also screwed hooks to the ends of the shafts. A clothes' line was purchased for reins, and our turnout was in good going order, as the auctioneers say. The rest of the afternoon we spent in idly strolling about, walking through the park by the lakeside, and lying under the shady trees. Oh, what a glorious sunshine, and how pure and exhilarating the atmosphere! Over us seemed to come a feeling of contentment, and a forgetfulness of the troubles and worries that beset this mortal life. 'I say,' said the Amateur as he lay on his back and looked up into the cloudless sky, 'I should like to live here always, wouldn't you?' And a murmur of assent went round.

In the evening we harnessed up and drove through the Shotover Gorge, passed Arthur's Point, so-called because one Arthur obtained here in an afternoon several pounds' weight of gold with only his knife and pannikin. That night and for part of next morning we travelled through

the fertile little district of Malagana, and then we came to Arrowtown. Like other places in Otago, it has had its day. Few persons passing through this quiet and sleepy little place would imagine it was once the scene of all the various excitements and tumults that are attendant on the congregating of thousands of men together, eager in the quest for gold. From the bed of the river at the foot of the slope on which the town is situated almost incredible quantities of gold have been got. Before the great rush set in one party—Fox's—got 40lbs weight in two weeks; McGregor's actually obtained 82lbs in about the same space of time, and another party of only three members took out 110lbs in four and a-half weeks. Not far from Arrow the road takes over the Crown range to Lake Wanaka, but we had to forego through lack of time our intention of visiting this beautiful lake, and so rejoined the road we had originally come by, so as to return to Clyde, thence we would strike north and travel to Dunedin by a fresh route. Merrily we spun along, the pots and pans in the van tinkling and jangling an accompaniment to the driver's gee-up.

For the second time we camped in the Kawarau Gorge. The only suitable place we could find on which to pitch the tent was a flat producing an abundant crop of Scotch thistles, which we had to scrape away with the tomahawk before we could set up our canvas house. As the evening shades descended, the loneliness and wildness of our surroundings made an awesome impression upon us. The rocks we were amidst assumed fantastic shapes and forms, and the gray precipitous hills looking down upon us became undistinguishable black masses, save for their jagged tops that stood clearly out against the starlit sky. Naught broke the silence save the steady munching of our horses as they partook of their allowance of corn, and the sullen roar of the river dashing along its narrow and rocky channel. To dispel the oppressive feeling that was fast seizing us Cook was besought to bring us his violin and play his liveliest tunes.

'There's nothing for breakfast,' said Cook when we got up. 'All the bread's eaten' and I can't find any cake.' And such a lugubrious countenance he had as he imparted this doleful information. But hidden away amongst some miscellaneous luggage we discovered a vagrant plum duck, and our breakfast was substantial, if not orthodox.

It was midday before we left. We spent a lot of time loitering about, but when we did set about matters and Driver had gone to his horses, Cook to his particular duty, and myself and Amateur to take down the tent, very little time sufficed to see us on the road and ready to start. At Cromwell we separated, I on one of the bicycles striking off to visit friends at Lowburn, the others continuing down the Dunstan Valley, where they spent the major portion of the afternoon shooting. At night we rejoined again at the Clyde and camped on the property of 'Dave,' whose acquaintance we had made on our upward journey. He promised to take us goat hunting on the morrow, and Cook and Driver were greatly elated at the prospect, and in their sleep shot innumerable billies, which they could not find next morning. Minus coats and hats, and in many respects resembling Italian banditti, we clambered up Cairn Muir next morning. From the top there was a splendid view of the plain below encircled with mountains and divided in twain by the Molyneux rushing along in its eager race to the sea. Here and there patches of water gleamed like silver, and homesteads surrounded invariably by green poplars dotted the plain. The two Nimrods of our party satisfied their ambition and knocked over one animal apiece. The rest of us did not persevere, for the sun was hot, and the air dry, and it was much more comfortable perching on a rock and basking in the sunshine than scrambling as they did for miles over rocky hills.

Leaving Clyde next day, we travelled north towards Naseby. The roads immediately improved, and were almost without exception in splendid order right to our journey's end. Old Sol soon persuaded us to doff first our coats, then our waistcoats. Cook and I cycled along, now leaving the van away in the rear, occasionally loitering behind it. Driver looked enviously awhile, and then signified his wish to exchange his seat in the trap for that of one of the machines. But we were somewhat reluctant to allow him to leave his post, as when Amateur, who acted as his understudy, took the reins, the horses acquired a zig zag gait, and only flicked their tails when he threatened unutterable things. However, we allowed him to gratify his desire, and immediately he bolted his machine down a steep hill and endeavoured to break his neck. Was ever there such base ingratitude? Along undulating and bare country, save for the eternal tussocks and mata-gouri scrub we drove, and then came to Ophir. I think everyone who travels in New Zealand must feel the absence of that romance and historical incident that is attached to almost every town, hamlet, or district in the Old Country. Here we have no old castles with their



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