

Our Illustrations

THE OTIRA GORGE.

The most frequented route into and out of Westland is via Arthur's Pass. Springfield, 44 miles by train from Christchurch, situated at an elevation of 1252ft. above sea level, is the usual starting place for what is undoubtedly one of the finest coach trips in the colony, along the Christchurch-Hokitika-road, which is kept in splendid order, being one of the few roads maintained at the expense of the colony.

Nine miles from Springfield, on the Hokitika-road, the foot of Porter's Pass is reached, about 2000ft. above sea level. The road ascends to the pass by easy gradients, the top, 3102ft. above sea level, being the highest point touched on the road; from top to bottom being a distance of two miles and a quarter.

A mile and a half further on Lake Lyndon is reached.

Five miles beyond the lake the Castle Hill Rocks are reached. These form fantastic groups of various forms, and fine bold masses of limestone rocks, from which an excellent building-stone is obtained. The limestone caves, a

mile and a half from the Castle Hill Hotel, and less than half a mile from where the main road crosses the Broken River, are of great interest. The whole Cave Stream runs underneath the surface through a limestone cavern for a quarter of a mile, the stream rushing into the cavern over a waterfall about 20ft. in height. For the first few chains it is very difficult to follow, on account of deep pools, but after these are passed the stream can easily be followed through the cavern to its junction with the Broken River, where, at the exit, there is a beautiful natural cavern, through which a very large load of straw might be taken without touching the top or sides. The Castle Hill Hotel, 20 miles from Springfield, and 2371ft. above sea-level, surrounded by ranges and peaks from 6000ft. to 7000ft. high, is an ideal resort for invalids and those desirous of a thorough change.

Seven miles further on Lake Pearson, 1990ft. above sea-level, is reached.

Within a few miles the road passes Lake Grasmere, with easy sloping flats on the southern side, and abrupt precipitous country covered with scrub and patches of lush on the north. The Cass, 33 miles from Springfield, and 2371ft. above sea-level is the junction for the road leading to the country on the north side of the Waimakariri. The cuttings along the Waimakariri are very interesting, the road in places being cut out of the solid rock, and in places built up from the river a considerable height.

The Bealey, 45 miles from Springfield,

situated 2130ft. above sea-level, at the junction of the Bealey and Waimakariri Rivers, is the usual stopping-place for the night, occasionally as many as a hundred visitors having been there at once. Lying at the foot of rugged mountains, covered to a height of over 4000ft. with tawhai, and running back into perpetual snow, the situation of the Bealey Township is a particularly favoured one, the sunsets on the evenings after a nor'-wester being remarkably fine.

From the junction of the Crow River, six miles above the Bealey, the first true glacier is seen, ascending to about 4500 feet above sea-level.

After leaving the Bealey Township the road crosses the Waimakariri, winding up through avenues of tawhai, along the steep banks of the Bealey River.

About eight miles from the Bealey the Devil's Punch-bowl is reached. This is the basin of a magnificent waterfall, broken in the middle, of a total height of over 500ft.

The road from here ascends very rapidly up the slopes of Arthur's Pass, through a dense tawhai forest, until it reaches the summit, 3038ft. above sea-level. Looking to the south, the Godney Glacier is seen arising out of the perpetual snows of Mount Rolleston.

Leaving the Pass, the road runs westward, and is fairly level for a mile along the northern side of the tarn-dotted depression which lies between the moss-grown angular rocks of two ancient lateral moraines. The bottom of this trough is carpeted with a velvety sward, variegated with a sprinkling of

alpine flora and blossoming shrubs. The adjacent sidblings are covered with loose debris, partly overlaid with brooms, veronias, etc., with interspaces of tussock grass. Above all, on either side, stands the bold, rounded slopes of the main divide, ribbed with naked spurs and scarred by numerous couloirs. Looking eastward, the far-reaching vista of the bush-clad faces and rock-crowned heights of the Bealey Gorge may be seen, while outlined in the distance loom up the smooth-flanked mountains of the Waimakariri Valley. Westward, on the right, appear the rocky crests of Hill's Peak, and on the left the snow-floaked summit of Mount Temple, with the miniature Godney Glacier overhanging the rock-strewn slopes of the Upper Otira.

The road now dips sharply into the valley, whence a short smooth stretch, bordered by stunted cedar and the palm-topped rimu, leads to a huge talus of enormous rocks, up and down which it winds to the top of the "Zig-zag," from which a lovely view is obtained. Behind and in front are precipices, fully 2000ft. high, topped by fantastic rocky pinnacles, presenting bold faces of rock, almost destitute of vegetation. Below, on the left, the river surges over obstructing boulders, and falls in picturesque cascades; in front appears the ravine of the Otira Gorge, coated with shaggy, gnarled, storm-twisted forest, and bounded by the snowy crown of Mount Barron. The grade now descends rapidly, snaking through accumulations of rock overgrown with dwarfed rats, and a tangle

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