



TE AWA NUI A RUA

(THE WHANGANUI RIVER).

*Notes on the Scenery, People, and Traditions of the
New Zealand Rhine.*

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PART III.

THE little "Ohura" is ready to cast off from the wharf and fight her way up a low stage river to Pipi-riki, fifty-six miles away. We will step on board and go forth upon the Great Waters of Rua. The lines are cast off, the bells jingle down there in the baby engine room, the "Ohura" swings her nose round to meet the great waters, and glides away from the haunts of man, in the trail of Tuwhare of old.

Albeit for the first few miles the scenery is somewhat pastoral in its aspect, yet no part of the trip is of an uninteresting nature. The fine reaches of the river, bordered on either side by willow trees, almost evergreen in these Southern climes, are picturesque. The grassed meadows are fair to look upon. The ranges that guard the Vale of Rua show marks of the conflict between man and nature.

On the alluvial banks may be seen deposits of pumice, brought down from the region of the great volcanoes of Taupo; the surrounding country is but a thing of to-day in geological time, the primary rocks are conspicuous by their absence.

Traces of many an old time flood are plain to the observant eye. A number of native traditions are extant in regard to great floods of former times, and the disasters consequent thereon, notably one known as Te Wai-o-Takumutia, which occurred many years ago. One Takumutia and his family were carried away in their canoe by it, swept out to sea and drowned.

At Upoko-ngaro the gallant "Ohura" "snubs up" for a few brief minutes, and enables us to observe that quaint little village, which is known also as Kennedy's and Makirikiri. On the heads of the two spurs which rise on either side of the village, are the crumbling earthworks of two old native *pas*. That to the right is Otuhotu, a Maori tomb stands within its walls. The one on the spur to the left is Opiu, a famous old *pa*, of which more anon. These forts were held in the old days of native warfare by the Ngati-Iringarangi sub-tribe, who are descendants of one Iringa-rangi, a famous chieftainess of this place who flourished here some seven generations ago. When she died, it is said that her people cut off her head and concealed it, lest it should fall into the hands of tribal enemies. Such, I am told by her descendants, was the origin of the name Upoko-ngaro (Hidden Head).

Some interesting deposits of moa bones have been discovered near this place, both in the ranges and also in a curious mud spring situated a few miles up the valley. And here it may not be out of place to allow a Maori to relate how the sons of Kahungunu were slain at Opiu.

Friend! Let me tell you of Taikehu and his famous sister Iringa-rangi, who dwelt here at Opiu in times long past away, for from that period to the people of this time there are seven generations of men. But first do you bid the *pakeha* of the big stomach bring to me a glass of beer, which