

range, where we halted, but dare not light a fire, as the smoke could have been seen from any part of the Rangitikei. We eagerly scanned the country for any sign of smoke which might indicate that we were being followed, but saw none. I little thought as we traversed this country that in a few short years the whistle of the iron horse would echo from cliff to cliff, and townships dot the valley below us; but such is already the case.

As we sat over our lunch, Whara drew my attention to the lofty Tongariro range, of which she had known the name of every peak since childhood. Boldly outlined against the azure sky stood the giant Hauhungatahi which rises abruptly from the Waimarino Plains, the not yet extinct Ruapehu, and the ever active Ngauruhoe and Te Mare.

"You must know, E Eke," said my companion, "that Ngauruhoe was one of our ancestors. He it was who brought the sacred fire from Hawaiiiki in his canoe. He it was who started the fire here on the hill, named after him even to this day; and as long as this fire burns shall we his descendants enjoy the fruits of the soil of Aotearoa. You see Mount Egmont over there in the distance?"

Long years ago he stood by the side of Lake Roto-aira. We Maoris called him Taranaki. On the opposite side of the lake stood, and still stands, Pihanga, the mistress of Tongariro. This wicked mountain Taranaki was caught making fierce love to Mrs. Tongariro, which aroused the wrath of the giant Tongariro. He hurled his fires in fury at the wicked wretch, and made him fly to where he now stands. Then he turned his wrath on unfaithful Pihanga, and gave her a good beating. When daylight came a large round hole was observed in her side, and on the self-same day a round island, just the size and shape of the piece knocked out of Pihanga's side, made its appearance in Lake Taupo. To this day it is called Motutaiko, the child of Tongariro and Pihanga. You must not laugh at me, O Eke! I am telling you the words which our ancestors have handed down to us through many generations, and we know that their words are true."

"I am not laughing at you, my dear girl, but at the manner in which Mrs. Tongariro got her deserts," I replied.

We now descended into a deep gully, through which flowed the Mangaone Creek. The underscrub was so thick here that my

companion had to walk on ahead and find the old Maori marks cut on the trees, thus directing me, while I cleared the way for the horses with my axe. We camped on the margin of the stream and I could not resist the temptation of shooting some pigeons which were feeding on the lofty *miro* trees. Whara made a Maori oven, and cooked them to perfection by rolling them in balls of clay, and putting them amongst the heated stones. On breaking the clay off, the feathers adhered to



I HAD THE HORSES READY, AND WE WERE OFF.