

Our next step was to procure a tent and fly, a billy and cooking utensils, which was accomplished within an hour. Fate works quickly and direfully in New Zealand. The contract was obtained, time of train noted for the following morning, our roughest garb and guns sorted out of the luggage, the rest stored, and we settled down to a final "civilised" musical evening, full of enterprise, resolve, and Rhodesian ambition for the new life on the following morning.

Thirty past six the next morning found us steaming to a place sixty miles up country, on the Manawatu River, in railway carriages which were a sort of cross between a gipsy van and a tramcar, with a diminutive engine somewhat like those in use on the Blenan Festig line, North Wales. Then we began to see what New Zealand scenery was really like. We tore along *at about nine miles an hour* through gorges, along the eyebrows of precipitous cliffs, past miles of primeval bush and jungle, thick with matted undergrowth and cabbage palm, and occasional glimpses of Maori pas, till finally after about five hours' ride we arrived at Kereru, our supposed destination. Kereru consisted of a sentry box called a post office, a stable large enough to stable a horse and perhaps two goats, two or three back-doors which seemed to have, somehow, gone astray and led to nowhere, and miles of bush backed up by the Tararua mountains. On enquiring for our *demesne* we discovered that we had yet a nine-mile tramp over a road almost knee deep in soft sand, and in places only a track. With a large supply of determination and a glance or two at each other to discover any weak spot which might show itself at the information received, we started our tramp under a burning sun, with a rug and greatcoat each, a tent and cover, two guns, one banjo, four axes and four slashers, two billies, a cooking "clobber," and a general feeling of "altogether-ness," only to be felt to be appreciated. About a couple of hours' tramp, with an occasional view of cattle or sheep apparently as wild as we were tame, brought us to the station of the runholder for whom we were

about to do or die. After asking what on earth we thought we could do in the way of bush whacking or scrubbing, and giving us some "tucker," he informed us that we had another five miles' tramp to our ground of operations.

With a leg of mutton added to our load, we started off again at about four o'clock in the afternoon, this time over rough and unbroken country for the most part, where rabbits scattered about in great plentitude, and beautiful peacock-blue king-fishers flitted from tree to tree, the sunshine tinging them with a lovely iridescence, while the parson bird trolled its beautiful blackbird-like notes, with a most musical ting-tong at the end like a bell. This may be new to even some New Zealanders. Admiring and commenting on our surroundings, we finally located and arrived at our destination just about twilight. Darkness, which came quite suddenly, found us with the tent fixed up and the fire made, frying chops, which we had to demolish without bread, having forgotten that necessary commodity. However, we managed to make a respectable meal, washed down by tea without milk, and then commenced our pow-wow and reviewing the situation, really the first serious consideration of our undertaking.

I might here describe our surroundings, which were lovely in the extreme. For miles in front of us stretched the snow-capped Tararua and Rimutaka Mountains, with endless rolling masses of manuka scrub interspersed with fern trees and cabbage palms. At our rear rose dense bush almost impassable and fringing gloomy lagoons. Imagine a purple haze settling like a pall upon the undulating scrub and palm, and a ruddy golden hue creeping over the snowy peaks and tinging the cabbage palms a lovely lemon colour! During this transition from bright sunlight to inky darkness, the silence is almost a desolation. Then bursts forth a medley of night calls, first the weird wailing of the mopoke, the wood hen's whistle, the ting-