

Wild Goat Hunting in the Tararua Ranges.

BY A. H. MESSENGER.

Illustrated by the Author.

FROM Palliser Bay right through to the summit of the Rimutaka Range lies a great stretch of wild broken country formed by the lower end of the Tararua Range and its innumerable offshoots. Some of the peaks run fairly high, Mount Matthews being about the highest south of the Rimutaka, running up to something over 3,000 feet, and situated in the midst of country that would rejoice the heart of a professional Alpine climber. Most of this great watershed has now been formed into a Government forest reserve, the country being too rough for any attempt at settlement, and its forest-clad ranges and rushing torrent beds have naturally become a sort of sanctuary for all kinds of native game. Wild pigs and goats are also here

in hundreds, roaming the great gorges and boulder-strewn river beds in almost perfect immunity, whilst further back still may be found wild cattle, and even, I believe, occasional wild sheep.

To three of us who are keen sports, this country had always loomed full of interest, so after months of planning we arranged to devote a week of our Christmas holidays, in 1898, to satisfying this longing to reach the great ranges, which even from Wellington Harbour seem to tower a silent barrier against the sky.

It came about that just before Christmas there was a great stir in our little circle. The old tent, which had done duty often before, was once more overhauled and patched, rifles were polished up, knives



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