

description of it, but I'm sure they will acknowledge that I haven't exaggerated one bit. There is no doubt that if our horses had made a slip they would have been killed, and I confess to a mean feeling of pleasure in being first, for there was no one above to fall on me.

When we reached the top both horses and men breathed a sigh of relief, and felt as if they had accomplished a dangerous and difficult task. The track still continued along a razor-back ridge, but after a mile or so it descended, and the ridge broadened. We wound down a gully, swam our horses across a narrow, deep tidal creek, and began to climb again. We saw ahead of us a small pack team going like the deuce, and hastened after it. We caught it just as it was ascending a pinch not unlike the White Horse Track, and hailed the man with: "How far is it to Whangamata?"

"Oh, a deuce of a way if you follow this track!" was the reply. "You can get to Whangamata if you can get on to the main ridge, and if your horses can get through the bush; but I'd advise you to try the ordinary way, as it's about ten miles nearer."

He told us where we should pick up the ordinary way, and we made back to it. In time we descended to the shores of the Whangamata Harbour, and had to ride along the mud flats, but it brought us one of the finest sights in the way of flowering trees that I have ever seen. Late in the evening we came to a long, narrow peninsula jutting out into the harbour. The peninsula was fringed with a belt of noble pohutukawas, which were one mass of crimson blossom. The tide had risen, and we had to ride in the shallow water to escape the low spreading branches, and the reflection of the flowers made the water a vivid red, so that when the horses churned it up it looked like—well, I can't find a simile that isn't gory.

After rounding the peninsula we had to swim our horses across a tidal river, and when we came out on the other side there was a swamp with no signs of a track. We simply let the horses follow their own sense of direction, and they brought us out all right at our destination.

My friend rode on the next day, and took with him the little skewbald mare, as clever and good a little animal as ever I rode. Climb like a cat, swim like a dog, go anywhere and face anything, and be as chirpy at the end of a journey almost as at the beginning.

I inspected the claims and went down to the steamer. She was resting, with her nose on a beautiful, sandy beach and her stern in deep water. There being no wharf this was her usual position for discharging cargo. Soon after I got on board she steamed out of the harbour. Whilst we were at tea the captain asked me if I was going to Auckland.

"No," I said; "only as far as Tairua."

"But we're not going to call in there," he replied.

I was determined not to be put off my expedition, so I prevailed on the captain, for extra payment, to land me on the beach in a boat. He remarked that if the barometer was any guide there wouldn't be much show of launching a boat by the time we got to Tairua; but at four o'clock the next morning I was awakened—the boat was lowered, and I got into it and was rowed shoreward. I had bargained to be landed on the beach, but I saw there was a nasty surf on, so I bribed the men to pull me across the bar inside the Tairua estuary, and they did so cheerfully. When I stepped ashore it began to rain heavily, but after walking about a mile along the beach I came on a snug little whare, and found its owner at work lighting the fire. He told me that the hotel was on the other side of the estuary, and offered to pull me