

Floods and Otherwise

Most people at present are in mortal fear of being shaken out of bed, or of receiving a chimney on their heads.

another ed out almost now one of their some ex them ou of thing racking.

We turn on the Fr for our sh and Tom Toohy w the milky We had a after whic by this th almost ha stumpy at the return above the seen Ad C and I trot good pace a gun fro well, so w wasting (that was) or not we the anim carried th with Ad. After at J. Cron's member v nice—we I believe on foot, regained ahead to Copper Cr first of c Clay's fie we had na ing many strangely all told. I scared the and maul where we shag, whi man or Then we try to pr Friday's t coming o We rea after whi to pluck that nig far behi Cron spot time—we

Wehaka in the distance, leave nothing to be desired. The only redeeming feature of the road to the river is the backward view of the Fox Glacier. The fording was easily done, though it made me wonder however I would find the road across the river bed on my way back. However I was told that the ford is always changing so perhaps it might even be dangerous to know the old ford. However I took a good look at the country to know where the road came out.

From Cook's to Karangarua we did a slow jog trot behind the pack horses. Saltwater River was almost alive with pigeons, as was the track further on. From then on we passed through miles and miles of country where the hill had come a cropper and fallen on to the road. The mess it left did not improve the road, though after months of hard work the roadmen had made quite a good road through the debris. I could recognise Havelock Creek as the creek that had taken the travelling contract. However Bessie did not approve of the large boulders it had strewn with prodigal carelessness all over the particular part of the landscape over which she was to travel. He arrived at Mrs. Scease's just half an hour after she had returned home from a holiday, but the South Westland welcome and shelter was there nevert heless. We had a bright service that night. There was no need of a piano with George Bannister, Billy Wilson and Dick and Mrs. Trevathan to help us sing. I thought then how good it would be for me if I could take them round with me to places where I had no pianist.

Mrs. Scease and Harry both assured me that it would be raining hard in the morning. "It always does when the parson comes!" I looked out on a cloudless night, and I thought I had broken the evil spell. But I hadn't; and I could easily realize the fact after I had been awake for one minute next morning. We had Early Celebration, and then Bessie and I pattered off in the rain to Walter Scott's. I don't know whether I frightened the horse tied up there, but it certainly broke the bridle soon after I appeared. I found Charlie Smith fixing up various matters before proceeding and George Koeti ready to fix up another matter of importance to himself and a girl friend. George and I had a race for the river just in case it should feel ready to rise too soon. However we crossed quite easily and Charlie met us on the other side. Then came a long slow stretch between rows and rows of fine black and white pine trees to Manakiau where I met Mr. and Mrs. Thompson and family. I went in and had a short talk with Mr. Sam Fiddian, who carries his ninety odd years amazingly well, though suffering a good deal at present. With a promise to be back again, I went out into the kitchen to watch the cook for a while, while Charlie got rid of some of his mail. Then we pattered on through the rain to Bruce Bay, while Mrs. Ritchie had had a steam pudding waiting impatiently for us for some time. I appreciated the fire on my nearly dead hands and very wet clothes, but I think I appreciated the internal refreshment more. I had been finding it very difficult to judge distances,

more especially as the day progressed—the ten miles from Karangarua seemed fully twenty.

It was brightening up a little when we set out for Mahitahi, later on in the afternoon. The beach was heavy going, and it was quite a treat to get on to the beautiful bush track that leads up along side the Mahitahi River for four miles or so. I was very stiff when it came to getting off the horse at Mr. Condon's hospitable farm—evidently so, because Mr. Condon remarked "you are not used to riding." He discovered we had made all sorts of mistakes at Bruce Bay. The icing sugar for the birthday cake had travelled many miles too far, a loaf of bread had strayed into our pack, the way-bill had forgotten itself, and other things went astray. However, the 'phone proved useful to some extent, judging from a mysterious talk between Sarah Mahuika and Charlie. That night was wet—in fact very wet. The heaven lit up, and the artillery performed all night. The morning brought forth nothing but wetness, so Mrs. Condon had to put up with us for another day. Miss Condon and Mrs. Archie Barrett came along in the evening with Jack Condon, so we were a happy party in the evening.

It rained again the next morning, but not so hard, and so we set out for the long stage of our southward journey. Charlie and Mr. Condon both prophesied a painful ending for me. I think the middle was worse than the ending, because my knees seemed to have the wrong angle and they got a sort of toothache. But the country was becoming very interesting. First the Mahitahi River, with plenty of water in it; then a long stretch of magnificent bush country to the Paringa River which also was very full, though the ford there is excellent. We called in at the Paringa Hut to tie up a dog which had wrongfully come with us, and then on past the short glimpse of Lake Paringa, across all the small streams which flew into the "Windbag," to the Blue River. It was a sight worth seeing—the surging torrent, dark in water and white with foam and rapids, confined narrowly in its bed between the two hills, grotting angrily among boulders the size

of large rooms. As we rose rapidly up the steep five miles to the top of the hill we could hear the incessant rush of the waters below. Having crossed the Blue River, we divided the horses, each taking one to drive. Mine did not appreciate my words of urging, but when I found a long stick, it appreciated that, and we managed to catch up to the front pair again. Then came a quiet trot for twelve miles round the heads of the Little River and the so called Maori River. That twelve certainly seemed to have no ending. Fortunately it did at the iron hut, where Jack Sweeney made us welcome with a cup of tea. After introduction Jack informed me that the country was fit for "lawyers, parsons and black rats." I wasn't too sure of the second, but seeing a big bowie knife in his belt, and believing him able to use it, I did not protest. I did not know whether to feel happy or not when told that Copper Creek but was eight miles further on. I am afraid I had over estimated the distance we had done by far, and it was nearly night time then. However we pattered on down the steep six miles to where Coppermine Creek crosses the road, and then quietly on a very long two miles to Copper Creek. I was very interested in Slippery Face. One wonders however, they manage to keep a road on the hill at all—it is a soft formation of loose slate, very rotten on a greasy back.

(To be continued)

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THE FAR SOUTH

(Continued)

We were fairly comfortable at Copper Creek, so were not over early in our start the next morning. The sky was very gloomy, and the wind ominously from the north, while rain began soon after we had started. We went down Copper Creek to the Maori or rather the Waita River, which we crossed four times. The last crossing was fairly deep, as the river is joined by the Maori River proper which comes from the lakes further inland. From the mouth of the river we went along the beach to the mouth of the Haast River, and then for a mile or so along the bank until we came to the lower ford. It did not look enticing, but we plunged in, heading almost straight up stream. The current was very strong, in places the horses seeming almost unable to make any headway. However we got through with nothing worse than wet feet and legs. I appreciated the dinner which Mrs. J. Cron kindly invited me to stay to; nor was I over-anxious to make a hurried start on again. The rain was by this time almost torrential, with a fierce wind from the north, bitterly cold. I cantered to Ted Cron's, where I called, but found no one at home and then began to trot along the beach. For a while I was making the best pace that I had done on the journey, but it had a sudden ending. Bessie found a soft sandy place near a culvert, and dug a big hole out, promptly losing one of her legs in it. She then found it awkward to stand on three, and so ceased to stand with remarkable suddenness. I also ceased to sit. When Bessie had rolled off me, I got up to have a look to see what had caused the delay, but when I looked back again Bessie had moved on. She moved on with movements parallel to mine, when I stopped, she stopped; when I walked, she walked; when I ran, she trotted. This rather humorous proceeding (on her part) lasted

for the best part of an hour, in which time I suppose we had covered almost four miles. Then, Bessie disappeared around a corner and off the track. After some minutes fruitless search, I found her waiting for me behind a flax bush. I considered myself lucky, and proceeded very quietly to the Okuru River. There I saw Charlie on the other side, having been ferried across, so I recalled Din Nolan, and he took me across. A gentle trot brought us to Okuru, though Bessie looked twice at all the culverts she crossed. Well and truly moist, I was very glad to find a seat alongside a roaring fire at Mr. Ad. Cowan's. Both the weather and myself were far too wet to go visiting, so I changed into other clothes while mine dried. In the evening we had a happy service, though parts of it were hopelessly drowned by the music of pouring water on the roof.

Next morning turned out fairly well, though the wind was still north, and there was plenty of water in all the streams. After early celebration, we set off, but found the Okuru River far too full to cross, and so had to rouse Din Nolan again. Then on to the Haast, where again I was fortunate in arriving just at dinnertime. The Haast too, was much too full to let us risk the crossing, so again we pressed Mr. Jack Cron into service and ferried across. Then down the river, along the beach for a few miles, where we saw hundreds of rabbits of all shapes and colours; and on up the Waita River. It too was too full to cross in the

lower ford, so we went gingerly over the bridge across the Maori River. The said bridge has one end hanging, and is also narrow and slippery, so one has to watch where one walks. Going down towards the bridge, the pack horse had quite an interesting step dance with a fallen branch, but fortunately arrived at the other side of it without falling. Then we went on up the Waita River and Copper Creek to the hut, where we found Jack Sweeney in possession, with the billy boiling. That evening we had a resume of his life, with many interesting details. Early next morning we set out for the long trail. The weather was gloomy and bitterly cold. Jack reckoned that this gully where the Iron Hut was had a mortgage on any rain that might be about. He promised us that we would meet it there, if not sooner. However Charlie packed the covers up with the mail as a guarantee that we wouldn't, and he was right. This time I found the trip across the heads of the rivers more interesting as I knew by then the lay of the land, and the reason behind the course of the road. Just before the Blue River we came on Mr. Carroll on his monthly jaunt. At the Paringa hut we made arrangements for early tea at Mahitahi, and then pushed on quickly. The Paringa was very low, with an excellent ford. On the other side we passed Tom Condon and one of the Mulvaney boys, going down to look at their stock at Paringa. We soon crossed the straight level going to the Mahitahi, 8 miles further on, and came in to Mr. Condon's just as the storm began to break.

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Ruin was supposedly lodged to the Cass again a Fox. 151