

of copper cash, bows the head for a few seconds in prayer, and the next moment is laughing and joking with the friends below.

In truth, Japan has been rightly called the Paradise of Children. In all directions, upon the day of this festival, we meet them, from the two-year-old slung upon its mother's back, to the knowing little miss of twelve all radiant in new garments, her hair carefully pomatumed and plastered, and garnished with fanciful stuff and pins, her lips tipped with gold, the three lines of brown skin showing through the powder on her neck: her *obi* of the brightest colours, her socks of the whitest, and her clogs shining with brand-new black varnish. Kite-flying and battledore and shuttlecock playing are *de rigueur*: shuttle-cocks darken the air, alight on the noses of passers-by, fly about in all directions, pursued by shrieks of laughter and shouting which it does one's heart good to hear.

And so the mirth and revelry continue until the peerless blue sky grows darker, and the last rays of sunshine have deserted the great red roofs of the temples; the streets are gradually deserted, the house-

shutters are pulled close, and the sounds of jollity issuing from every house proclaim that the great feast of the day is in full swing: a curious feast, according to our ideas; sweets to begin with, probably candied sea-weed and ginger; then slices of raw fish, fried fish, boiled fish, followed by pork or chicken soup, finishing up with cakes and sweetmeats *ad libitum*.

The wine-shops are full of great sturdy fellows waxing merry over measures of "Flower in full bloom," or the "Wine of three Virtues;" the tea-houses are crowded, and the noise therein of twanging guitars and revelry is deafening. A little later and the streets are crowded with folk bound to the theatres, for your Japanese citizen is a blind votary of Thespis, and will sit until the small hours of the morning, absorbed in the adventures of the Forty-seven Rônins, or roaring with laughter at the broad jokes of the "Bewitched Kettle." And with the next day he resumes his ordinary life, conscious of having done his duty to himself, his neighbours, and his country, by a faithful, though in many respects by no means wise or profitable, observance of the New Year's Festival.

A NEW CITY OF HEALTH.



IT seems that at last the Government of New Zealand is becoming alive to the great importance of the medicinal springs and hot lakes of their North Island, as they have determined to found and establish a species of National Hygeia in that district, where it is hoped the sick of all nations will flock to be cured by the healing waters. The new city is called—

for it is already established on paper—Rotorua, after the celebrated lake upon whose southern shore it is to be built. The site of the city is chosen with singular happiness; not only is it among the most valuable of the springs, but the view of the lake obtained is very beautiful. A large expanse of clear blue water, on which seems to float the island of Mokoia, surrounded with hills densely clothed with the evergreen forest of New Zealand, lies in front of it; on one side is Ohinemutu, the old Maori town, with its countless hot springs and lakelets; and on the other Whakarewarewa, with the magnificent geyser that sometimes throws an enormous volume of boiling water high into the air.

Plans of the town are already drawn, and a good

deal of the land has been sold in lots for building and other purposes, and the erection of houses has doubtless commenced before this, the forests upon the opposite side of the lake affording an almost unlimited supply of most excellent timber for that purpose. The Government has, with wisdom, marked off large reserves for recreation and sanatorium grounds, which, as this is especially designed for a health-resort, will eventually be of the utmost importance. A medical superintendent has been appointed, who will see to the sanitation of the new city, and who will also, doubtless, be of great service in overlooking the erection of suitable baths.

It would seem that the scheme possesses every element of success. Not alone are the waters known to be more efficacious than any others, there is also the exquisite scenery of the whole district, and the wonders of the hot lakes, geysers, and terraces, the wild weirdness of which is unequalled through the world, which will attract, doubtless, many travellers thither. It is only lately that the Government has been enabled to make terms with the Maori possessors who, till quite recently, have considered it their policy to retain a strict seclusion in this district. Of late years, certainly, travellers have been enabled to visit the hot lakes, but the natives have held absolute possession, and have shown a jealousy in the preservation of their rights, and a strong determination to resist the encroachments of the *Pakehah* (the white man), that are somewhat singular when the freedom with which they parted with so much of their land is considered. For a long time they would have nothing on their lakes but the uneasy, if trustworthy, native canoe,

and the visitor had to be satisfied with the comforts, or discomforts, of a Maori *wharare*, or hut.

But *nous avons changé tout cela*, and now that an English town is to be built close to the famous village of Ohinemutu, with its quaint houses, rich with carvings, and a railway, execrated of artists, to connect it with Auckland, the change will be still greater. There is a certain element of sadness, that would not be felt perhaps by a stricter utilitarian, in thus desecrating with the commonplaces and uglinesses that always go hand-in-hand with European occupation a place that has so long been free from any vulgar detraction from its beauty. One regrets the grand loneliness of the place, that will be broken up by the bands of holiday-makers and sight-seers, and that the Maori, to whom this has been so sacred a spot, should have sold his birthright to the *Pakehah*. But when one thinks of the mighty blessing of health restored to untold numbers of suffering humanity by the very waters that have flowed until now comparatively to waste, such considerations as these must necessarily vanish, and nothing remain but wishes for the success of the new health-city.

The region that is marked by the innumerable hot springs that flow in all parts of it is a large one, commencing at the Bay of Plenty on the north-east coast, and extending south-westerly as far as the two great mountains, Tongariro and Ruapehu, where the volcanic district may be said to end. From Tongariro, an active volcano, to White Island, in the Bay of Plenty, which is another, half hid in the sulphurous fumes that eternally hang about it in strange veils and festoons of vapour, is about 150 miles; thus this fiery region is fitly bounded at either end by a mountain itself of fire. But it is not the hot springs alone that constitute the charm of this wild land; the many lakes which lie amongst its mountains are its chiefest glory. Rotomahana, Rotorua, Taupo, Rotoiti: all are names synonymous with grandeur, mystery, and beauty; while the Waikato River alone gives more enchanting scenery, with its falls and grand cliffs and sudden rapids, than can elsewhere easily be found.

The river is of an exquisite colour; so clear and green, that where it flows round the numerous islets that interrupt its course, one scarce can tell where the verdure of the vegetation ceases and that of the water begins. The Huka Falls in this river are exceedingly lovely, although in size not of the greatest grandeur; the river for some miles descends over rapids, and then entering a narrow gorge, is confined suddenly between high cliffs of rock, all verdant with graceful ferns and lycopodium, that the constant spray and moisture keep fresh and green through the hottest months of the hot New Zealand summer. Rushing madly along between the narrow walls, and vainly beating itself into sheets of foam, the river nears the verge of the falls, and shoots in a glorious cataract of raging water into the clear basin that awaits it below. From thence it flows, calmed and peaceful again after the plunge from the heights above, in broad reaches dimpled here and there with laughing eddies.

There is a strange legend attached to this spot, as

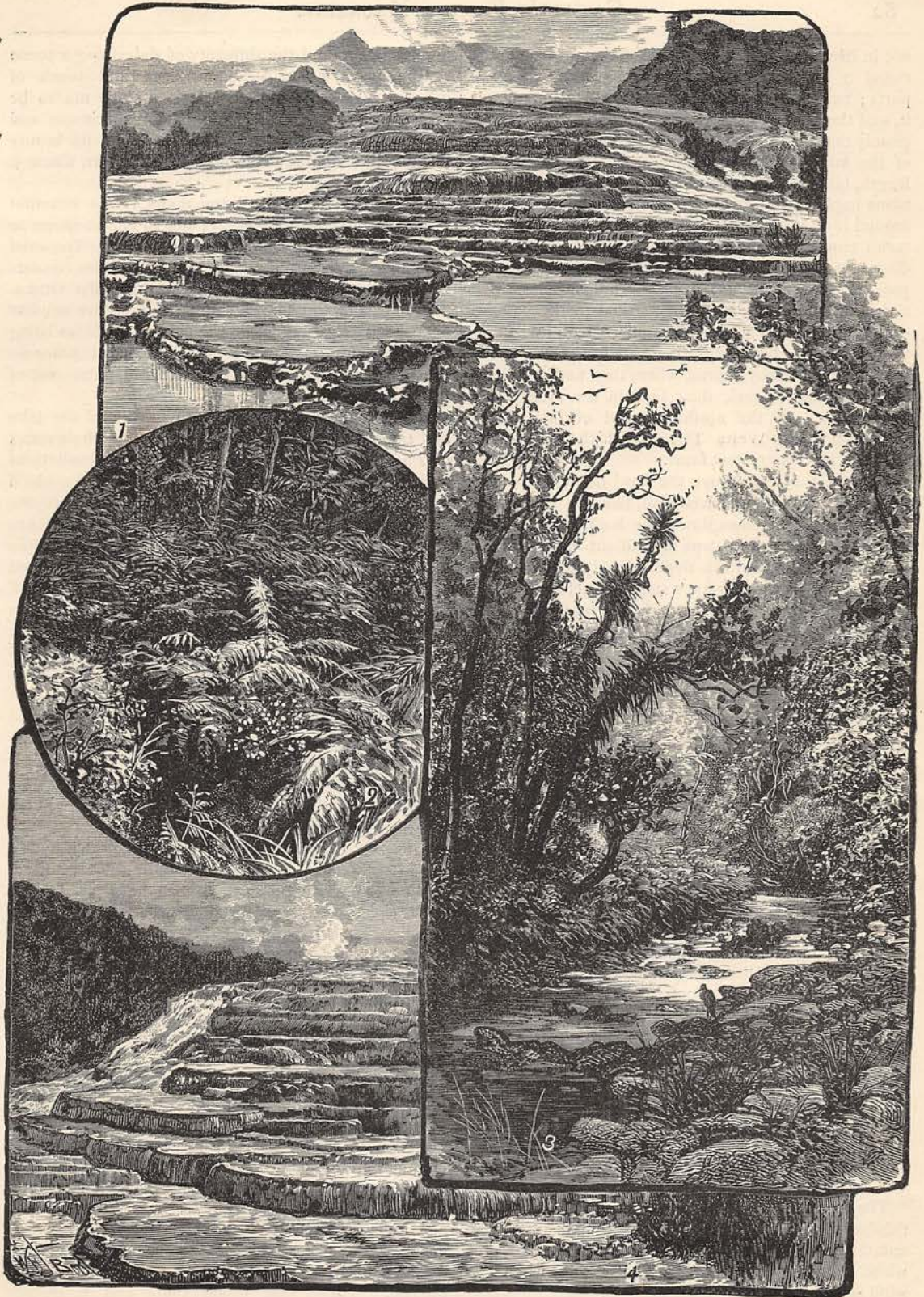
there always seems to be to similar places all the world over. It runs that a party of Wanganui Maoris, seventy in number, were visiting this part of the island, and in a mad spirit of bravado, excited perhaps by the hoarse voice of the cataract and the wild surging of its waters, they challenged the resident Tapuaeharuru Maoris to dare the falls, and descend them in their canoe. This they declined to do; so the Wanganui men, with a foolhardiness born of vanity, entered in full array their long canoe, and paddling along at their greatest speed, exciting one another with their frantic cries, they reached the awful gorge, where in the whirling waters their canoe was sucked under and sunk. Only one Maori escaped from the seething pool below to live to tell the tale.

The dim great forests of this part of New Zealand, too, possess a majestic charm that once felt is for ever acknowledged, so mighty are its trees, and glorious the grand umbels of the ferns that grow here with greater richness than in other part of the world. Great lianes of supple-jack entwine the trees in places into one almost impenetrable mass, and parasites of exquisite beauty, ferns and hoary mosses, clothe the trunks in a grand wild drapery. Here and there some giant of the bush has fallen a victim to the insidious *rata*, which has enfolded it with its creeping stems, and using its support to gain the upper air and sunshine, it, snake-like, stifles with its embrace the very thing that gives it strength to live. When the time of flowering comes it bursts out with a glorious profusion of bright crimson blossom, standing, flaunting as it were, in the mischief it has done, but standing hollow-hearted. The holy silence of the bush is almost undisturbed save for the occasional musical call of some *tui* to its mate, and this clear bell-like note serves but to make the ensuing calm profounder.

In the early morning when the stars still shine, though the first lilac of the coming day tinges and flushes the east, the whole forest resounds with the music of the birds. The first act of these beautiful creatures, awaking to new life as each joyous day breaks with promise of light and warmth and pleasure, is to chant a hymn of praise in that dim primeval temple where they are the only choristers; but when the sun is wholly up and the day in full earnest commenced, the throbbing throats are silenced and the daily work begins.

From Taupo, the most southern of the lakes, Tongariro and Ruapehu form a most magnificent spectacle, standing as though twin sentries at the entrance of this wild land; snow-clad when first seen by the writer, and flushed rose with the light of the setting sun as the clouds drifted apart; as if conscious of their beauty, at the day's decline, they drew the veil that hid them and blushed to see the sun. Oftener their summits are obscured with the clouds which their snows condense from the moisture-laden air; and at these times they seem almost more impressive than when fully exposed to view, so solemn seems the silent majesty with which they bear the burden of their crowns.

Rotomahana, the most celebrated of the lakes, is



A NEW CITY OF HEALTH.

1. OTUKAPUARANGI: THE PINK TERRACE. 2. TANGLED UNDERGROWTH. 3. A BUSH-STREAM. 4. THE HOT CASCADE.

not in itself so beautiful as many of them, the country round it being less wild and rugged than in other parts; but the heavy clouds of steam that hang about it, and the strange aspect of the ground around it, tell plainly that it is a lake apart. It is one of the smallest of the lakes, being not much more than a mile in length, but the whole of its waters are quite hot, as its name implies, from the hot springs in it and the many around it on the shores, whose waters flow into it; the mean temperature is about 80° Fahr., but one soon discovers that it varies very much according to the proximity to, or distance from, the hot springs which rise in it, whose positions are marked by the bubbles of rising gas. No fish nor mollusc can live in it, the Maoris say, but a very great number of water-fowl frequent the marshy shores, where they find brooding-places, having to seek their food in the other lakes and rivers. At the north-east end of the lake is Te Tarata, the White Terrace, which has gained Rotomahana its greatest fame.

About eighty feet above the level of the lake, on a great hill, verdant and fern-clad, lies the huge cauldron from which flows down the boiling water over the great terraces and steps of brilliant white marble which it builds up with its deposit of siliceous rock as it flows. These great giant's steps project far into the lake itself, whose waters lave their lowest stair; on either side the green fern and tangled growth of the hill approach quite near, contrasting superbly with the vivid white of the marble and the turquoise-blue of the water which lies in each of the terraced basins. The great font at the summit, backed by its red and crater-like wall, from whence flows the stream, is about eighty feet long and sixty broad, and is always filled to the very brim with the perfectly clear water whose crystal transparence, suffused with the light reflected from the pure white stone of the basin, shines like some great jewel, bright with heaven's blue. The terraces near the summit are four, five, or six feet deep, but each one grows less and less as they approach the lake; every level surface contains its several pools of turquoise water which, flowing from the edges, has formed a glorious mass of stalactites chiselled into exquisite overhanging cornices of frosted work like festoons of drifted snow. It almost looks as though some great cascade, when dashing wildly down the hill over shelves of rock, had been stayed in its course, and the water plunging wildly down the terraces with every spot of its spray and fleck of its foam turned suddenly to stone. Great clouds of light steam rise from the cauldron, now revealing parts not seen before, then obscuring them again as quickly, which, floating gauze-like, half hide the hill beyond, with an effect as beautiful as magic.

The Maoris say that at times the whole contents of this basin are thrown out in a huge volume of water, and that then the sides and bottom are seen fair and white. This occurs, they say, but rarely, when the wind is blowing fiercely from the east.

Think of all this beauty shining in the intense light of a clear New Zealand day, the azure vault above a blue so intense, and yet ethereal, that the eye finds rest

in piercing it, and the difficulty of describing a scene so unique in its wild magnificence and touch of *diablerie* will be recognised. It is a place not to be measured and paced, and chipped for specimens and tested for heat, but to be looked upon, and its beauty taken with delighted reverence into the heart, where it will rest for ever.

At the other end of Rotomahana is the beautiful Pink Terrace, Otukapuarangi; not so fine in shape as Te Tatara, it is still a most glorious object. The chief difference between these two great altar-stairs consists in the colour, Te Tatara being white, whilst Otukapuarangi is of the softest salmon tint. Pure sulphur deposits are found about it, the ground in places being encrusted with its delicate crystals, whose pale primrose contrasts most exquisitely with the still paler rose of the stone.

Between the terraces, along the shore of the lake and extending back for some distance, is a whole series of *Puias*, as the active geysers are called, solfataras and large springs of hot water suitable for baths, which the natives use, they having a method of conveying water from one of the cold springs along a channel to a hot one, thus making a hot bath of any temperature desirable; the flow of cool water being easily stopped by damming up the stream with fern or a sod of turf. But the finest baths are to be found on the terraces themselves, where in the different basins any depth may be found, and any temperature too, for, commencing quite cool at the bottom, they gradually get hotter and hotter as the summit is neared, where the water is boiling. In places, near the mud volcanoes, the crust of hard earth is so thin over the bubbling that it seems as though a heavier tread than usual would break it through. Accidents have been frequent and it is wise to follow strictly in the footsteps of the Maori woman who often acts as guide.

Tarawera lake is near to Rotomahana, which indeed flows into it, and is perhaps one of the most beautiful in the whole district; it is overshadowed by the mountain of the same name, whose rugged heights and wooded sides give a majesty and grandeur that are wanting in the others. The word Tarawera means "burnt cliffs," the Maori giving some name to every locality either descriptive of its appearance or of its products and uses, and burnt cliffs are very characteristic of the place, for great bare crags almost surround the lake. The woods about Tarawera, too, are very beautiful—so dense and green and dim.

It seems almost foolish to have attempted a description of this very marvellous country, for truly all words must fail to convey a true impression of its wonders; but perhaps enough has been said to show that, besides possessing waters of the most astonishing curative properties in rheumatic and skin disorders, and indeed almost every ill that flesh is heir to, the new town of Rotarua lies in the midst of scenery the most attractive, which is full of a great and unique interest. These, one would think and hope, are sufficient to insure the success of the last undertaking of the energetic New Zealand Government.

ALFRED ST. JOHNSTON.