

Tongariro is not an isolated conical mountain, like Ruapahou ; on the contrary, it is rather a very complicated volcanic system of powerful and still active cones : Ngauruhoe, a very superb and regular cone of eruption, with a vast funnel-shaped crater, is the most important part of it. This cone of cinders and scoria exceeds the other loftiest points by about 500 feet.

I have never heard, says Hochstetten, that any native has ascended Tongariro ; the dread of the infernal powers seems to have diverted them from such a design.

Only two Europeans have succeeded in climbing the cone of eruption, Ngauruhoe—namely, Mr. Dyson, in March 1839, and Mr. Bidwell, in March 1851. The following extract is from the narrative of the latter, as it appeared in the columns of an Auckland journal, *The New Zealander*.

“In the month of March 1851,” says Mr. Bidwell,* “a little before sunrise, I started from lake Rotorua. I traversed the plains, and ascended the heights to the north of the river Whanganni ; I then arrived in a valley covered with great blocks of lava, which greatly obstructed my progress. It is in the bottom of the valley the Whanganni flows ; I crossed the river, which at this point is only three feet broad, and found on the other side a soil of great unevenness, and very difficult to traverse. I ascended as straight as possible towards the most elevated summit, and at length I reached the foot of the cone, round which huge fragments of lava were lying, that had evidently been ejected from the crater. This was the most critical moment of my perilous enterprise. I had to scale the precipitous cone, which seemed to me to form a fourth of the total elevation of the mountain. I climbed for some time on my hands and knees, and as the slope is covered with scorix and friable ashes, it frequently happened that I slipped down several feet. There was no snow on the mountain, except in some deep chink where not a single sunbeam could penetrate ; no vegetation, not even the large coarse grass scattered in patches at the foot of the cone.

“At least four hours, I think, were occupied in the ascent ; but as I had no watch, it is possible that, owing to my fatigue, the road seemed much longer than was really the case. I hailed with joy the opening of the vast shaft or pit, near which I had experienced so much difficulty in arriving. It may have been then about an hour past noon, so that I had been climbing for about eight hours, but I ought to say that I walked at a good pace, and without stopping.

“I had expected a beautiful prospect from the summit of Tongariro, but it was wreathed in clouds, and I could scarcely distinguish a single object. The crater of

* [The Translator, not having been able to obtain a copy of *The New Zealander*, is indebted for the above extract to Hochstetten.]