

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAPTER I.

Nine Months in New Zealand.

The arrival. — Departure of the *Novara* from Sydney. — On the coast of New Zealand. — Great Barrier Island. — Hauraki Gulf. — Off Auckland. — First impression. — Reality *versus* imagination. — Friendly reception of the *Novara* Expedition in Auckland.

Negotiations and resolution. — Plans for exploring New Zealand. — First impetus by Sir George Grey. — Further encouragements from Sir William Denison and Colonel Gore Brown. — Official negotiations. — Agreement. — Departure of the *Novara*. — Separation.

Sojourn. — Contemplations. — Residence in Auckland. — Aid and furtherance from Government and friends. — Geological map of the Auckland district. — Journey to the Southern parts of the province of Auckland. — Preparations and equipment for the same. — Sketch of the journey. — Results. — Excursion to the Coromandel Harbour. — Lecture on the geology of the Province of Auckland. — Departure from Auckland. — Journey to Nelson. — Cordial reception. — Gold-fields. — Copper and coal. — Moa-skeletons. — The Southern Alps. — Lecture on the geology of the Province of Nelson. — Departure from Nelson and New Zealand. — Appendix.

THE ARRIVAL. On the 7th of December 1858, after a stay of four weeks on the coast of Australia, the *Novara* set sail from Port Jackson, the harbour of Sydney. The frigate, which on the long voyage from China to Australia had suffered great damage from a hurricane in the Chinese sea, and subsequently from stormy weather in the neighbourhood of New Caledonia, had undergone a thorough repair in the famous docks of Sydney, and was from masthead to keel as good as new; and the wind and waves, as though they had conspired to test at once the workmanship of carpenters, caulkers, and sail-makers, began to use us very roughly as soon as we had passed the “Sydney-Heads” at 9 o’clock a. m., and were steering our course towards New Zealand.

Hochstetter, New Zealand.

1

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

The ship bore up most gallantly. The keener the South wind blew, and the more boisterous the sea, the faster she moved ahead. About noon the coast of Australia had already vanished from the horizon. Less agreeable, however, was the sudden change of scenery for us "Naturalists," who found ourselves, — together with the hundred different things we had collected and brought on board with us, a doubly helpless sport at the mercy of a boisterous sea. I was, indeed, fortunate enough, never to suffer from actual sea-sickness, yet, at every such sudden transfer from land to the upheaving sea, an invincible drowsiness would come over me, and not until I had paid the God of Sleep double or treble the usual tribute, did I feel myself entirely acclimatized on board.

After two days the wind and waves subsided, and from this time, favoured by fair weather and alternate breezes, we had a pleasant, if not a very speedy passage. In the night from the 18th to the 19th of December we passed along the North Cape of New Zealand, without, however, coming in sight of the "Three Kings," three small rocky isles, which for the navigation from Sydney to the North Island of New Zealand form, so to say, the corner-stones, behind which ships bearing South-East, are wont to pass to the numerous harbours on the East-coast of the Northern peninsula.

On the 19th of December, shaping our course South East, we sailed along the East-coast, but at such a distance from the land, that we could only just see the very prominent Cape Brett near the Bay of Islands. However, a whale, which had followed the frigate close to the larboard-side for upwards of an hour, afforded us ample amusement. Every two minutes it would appear on the surface of the water to inhale fresh air, and thus exhibit its colossal dimensions. It was from 50 to 60 feet long. At eventide, a calm having set in, boats were lowered and a party was arranged for shooting albatrosses and other sea-birds (*puffinus*, *procellaria*), which swarmed round the frigate, and from sheer curiosity flew towards the boats in greater numbers as the firing increased.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

3

On the 20th December we stood in front of the entrance to the Hauraki Gulf, the South-West bay of which forms the harbour of Auckland. Great and Little Barrier Island, or Otea and Hou-touru, as the natives call them, with their peaks about 2000 feet high, lay before us. In these parts certainly but very few vessels had occasion to complain of too fair weather and perfect calm; yet, here again we made an exception to the general rule. It was a beautiful day; but not a breath of air was stirring to waft us towards our destination. The weather was much the same on the 21th December; currents and slightly adverse winds had driven us out of the common route into the Hauraki Gulf past the "Hen and Chickens," thence between Little Barrier Island and Rodney Point as far as the East-coast of Great Barrier Island. Hence Commodore v. Wüllerstorff decided on entering by the Southern Channel between Cape Barrier and Cape Colville, a navigable passage ten miles wide, and we sailed slowly along the East-coast of Great Barrier Island.

This island, about 25 miles long, consists of a chain of steep-rising, serrated rocky mountains with many summits and sharp peaks. The highest point, in the middle of the island, named Mount Hobson after the first Governor of New Zealand, is indicated on the maps as 2330 feet above the level of the sea. Its Northern extremities are very remarkably indented rocks, called the "Needles," and the South angle is formed by the round summit of the rocky Cape Barrier. While the West-side of the island has a great many deeply excavated bays affording excellent moorings, on the shores of which both natives and Europeans have settled, the East-coast appears as a naked, uninhabited rocky shore with but one bay of any size, which is partially screened by "Aride Island," a lone, barren, and utterly inaccessible rock, so named by Cook. On the Northwest-side of Great Barrier there are some rich copper-mines; and in the woods of the island herds of wild horned cattle are said to roam.

¹ In the central part of the island, to the eastward of Wangaparapara, hot springs have been recently discovered. They spring up in the bed of a creek, which

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

During the night we passed the straits between Cape Barrier and Cape Colville, and in the morning of the 22^d, favoured by a North-Eastern breeze, we sailed down the spacious Hauraki Gulf. The weather had entirely changed by this time. The mountains were shrouded in fogs, and the horizon was so misty and murky, that we could hardly see the little islands surrounding us, or the land we were making for. Suddenly, however, the wind veered round to the opposite direction, the haze cleared away, and we now saw before us the entrance to the Waitemata Bay; — we had arrived in front of Auckland Harbour. The South-West wind had so suddenly withdrawn the veil of mist and clouds, in which we had hitherto been wrapped, that we were perfectly amazed at the first sight presented to us.

We were surrounded on all sides by islands, peninsulas and main-land, Tiritirimatangi, Wangaparoa, and the outlines of the North-shore; a low, undulating country destitute of woods, with steep shores, exhibiting regular layers of sandstone and shale, with small, sandy bays, the beach of which was dotted with small, isolated wood-huts. — Before us, in the direction of the sporadic groups of houses composing Auckland City, there lay numerous small truncated cones of hills, the form of which at the very first glance betrayed their volcanic nature. Pre-eminent among all the rest, as it were the leader of the whole host, who alone had ventured out into the sea, and here proudly reared his lofty head, arose the Rangitoto, an island mountain, 900 feet high, — the true prognostic of Auckland.

Attractive as the view of this volcanic island was to me, with

takes its rise under a dome-shaped hill at the back of Wangaparapara and flows towards the east coast into a large swamp near the sea. The water of the springs is very clear, and the temperature ranges from 50 deg. to 212 deg., boiling point. The water is strongly saline, and gives forth a strong sulphuric smell like burnt gunpowder. A large quantity of white sediment accumulates rapidly on the stones about the springs, and quickly becomes hard and cemented to them. In the neighbourhood of these springs, about half-a-mile to the east of them, and flowing from the side of a heavily wooded hill, are some clear waters very cold, and exceedingly salt.

Cambridge University Press

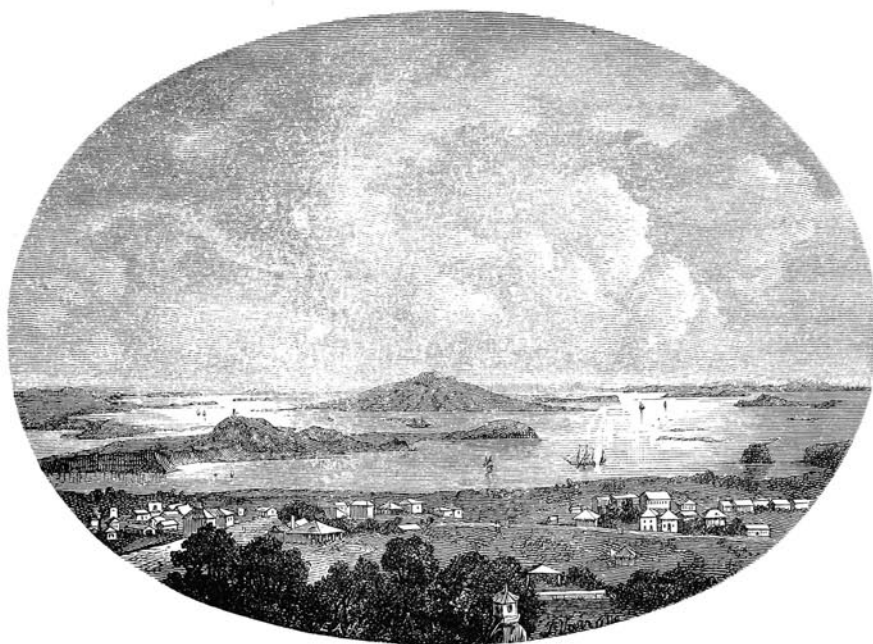
978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

its black streams of lava, with its strangely formed summit, where one small cone seemed to be set in the crater of another larger one: the first view of Auckland, I must confess, equalled by no means my brilliant anticipations of New Zealand.



Entrance to Auckland Harbour.

Is that Auckland? — I said to myself, the farfamed capital of the “*Great Britain of the South sea?*” Where is the New Zealand Thames? Where the steaming, seething geysers and boiling springs? Where are all the volcanic cones of which I had read, the ever-steaming Tongariro; the Ruapahu covered with perpetual snow and ice; the Taranaki rearing its lofty head to the very clouds; where the New Zealand Alps? The picture my imagination had created of New Zealand was quite different to that now presented to my view. The stupendous conical mountains in reality seemed to me shrunk up into little insignificant conical eruptions from 500 to 600 feet high. Although I knew full well, that those gigantic volcanoes, and the snow-clad mountains of the South-Island were no

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

fables, but that they lay at such a distance from this coast as to render them invisible; yet my eye searched inquiringly after them, and I felt quite disappointed that not even the last trace of them was to be descried.

However, I always felt so, whenever I first set foot on a land, about which I had read a great deal; and every traveller, I think, will experience the same. The reality of the spot which he first steps upon in a new country, never corresponds with the picture created by the imagination. After a long voyage he approaches the new coast with a feeling of impatience and utmost curiosity in the full belief of finding all that is attractive and remarkable collected on the very spot he happens first to set foot on, ready and waiting for him, who has come so far over the waters to see, with his own eyes, all he had read and heard of. But as it is with the traveller, who would like to see and experience at once all on one and the same spot, so it is, on the other hand, with others in regard to the traveller. He, in his turn, is expected to have seen all and every thing, to have experienced and passed through every thing, especially if he happens to be a so-called “circumnavigator.” And if he moreover should happen to have just visited the gold-fields of Australia, — why, nothing seems more natural than that he should have brought home with him all his pockets and coffers stuffed with gold dust. It is the imagination which ever speculates, brings the most distant objects near, and would fain comprise all in one grasp.

Should my friends in Auckland require any further apology after this my candid avowal, that the impression made on me on the 22^d of December 1858, on my first viewing the scenery of that country, did not realise the grand picture my imagination had drawn of New Zealand, I can only assure them, that as Auckland and New Zealand live in my memory at present, all my former expectations and anticipations have been surpassed by far, and should I live to be permitted a second view of that panorama, and to greet once more the Rangitoto, my heart would leap for joy.

On a nearer approach we could perceive, that the signal had

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

7

already been hoisted on the flagstaff upon Mount Victoria, announcing to the inhabitants the arrival of an Austrian man-of-war, and at 2 o'clock p. m. Captain Burgess came on board as pilot. I had no idea at that time, that I should make many a trip yet on those waters in the Captain's neat, fast-sailing cutter, and that to this same Captain Burgess, who tendered us so hearty a welcome, saying that we had long since been announced and expected in Auckland, — I should be indebted afterwards for many a kind favour received at his hands.

Although but a few miles distant from the harbour, the vessel laboured long and hard against the contrary wind to pass up the narrow channel between the Rangitoto and the Northshore into the Waitemata. The nearer we approached, the more enlivening was the scenery. Boats came rowing up to us; natives paddled along in their canoes, and from the deck of a ship just leaving the harbor we were hailed with loud shouts of welcome, as she passed close by us; but it was not until 6 o'clock p. m. that we arrived at the anchoring place in front of the city.

We met five other ships in the harbour; alongside of them now lay the Novara, the largest man-of-war that had ever anchored here. The whole population of Auckland appeared to have gathered together on the shore, when our frigate cast anchor, firing twenty one salutes in honour of the British flag upon New Zealand. The salutes were responded to from the fort. The Governor bade the expedition through his secretary and adjutant a most hearty welcome; messengers arrived to hail our coming also in the name of the colonists and inhabitants of Auckland; and the very first reception betokened that genuine cordiality, that amiability and complaisance shown to the expedition in so eminent a degree by the generous inhabitants of Auckland, and which I met with every where among the colonists with whom I chanced to become acquainted on my subsequent wanderings.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

NEGOTIATIONS AND RESOLUTION. I little thought, on my first arrival in Auckland, that after a fortnight's stay the *Novara* would weigh anchor, and that I should wave from the shore a last farewell to my companions, and henceforth continue my travels alone. First of all, the duty seems to devolve upon me to relate, how unexpectedly this came to pass.

My first plans and hopes of being able to travel through the interior of the North Island of New Zealand, so remarkable on account of its volcanic features, date from the stay of the *Novara* Expedition at the Cape of Good Hope, in November 1857. *Sir George Grey*, then Governor of the Cape Colony, — formerly, in the commencement of his brilliant career, from 1847 to 1853, Governor of New Zealand, and 1861 recalled to it — gave the first encouragement. He pictured to the commander of the expedition, *Commodore von Wüllerstorff-Urbair*, the grand natural curiosities of that unexplored country, its volcanoes and boiling springs, which he himself had seen on various journeys through the interior, in such lively colours, pointing at the same time to the great advantages, that must necessarily result from exploring the interior of the North Island, especially to geology and geography: — that the Commodore, who never for a moment lost sight of the scientific task of the expedition, resolved on remaining, if possible, longer in New Zealand, than had been laid down in the original plan of travel. Therefore it was at that time already, that I consulted *Sir George Grey* on the expediency of my undertaking an overland journey from Auckland to Wellington during the stay of the *Novara* in those two ports which she was to visit. *Sir George Grey* also very kindly placed his very select library at my disposal for my further guidance, and furnished the naturalists of the *Novara* with the kindest letters of recommendation to influential men of that country. It is with a sense of heartfelt gratitude I remember the cordiality and the friendly encouragements of that noble-minded man, who, wherever he was, in Australia, New Zealand or the Cape of Good Hope, invariably made use of his influential position to the furtherance of science.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

However, the fine plans we had made at the Cape of Good Hope, at the very commencement of our travels round the world, would hardly have been put into execution, had not the question concerning the exploration of New Zealand, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, been solved for me otherwise than it had been originally proposed. In November 1858, about the time of the stay of our frigate in the harbour of Sydney, *Sir William Denison*, Governor-General of Australia, to whom the *Novara* Expedition is greatly indebted for a vigorous furtherance of its purpose, and for liberal contributions to its collections, had, shortly before our arrival on the coast of Australia, received a document from the New Zealand Government, requesting the services of a geologist to examine a newly discovered coal-field near Auckland. *Sir William Denison*, on becoming acquainted with *Commodore Wüllerstorff's* intention to visit the harbour of Auckland, requested him, that he would permit the geologist on board the *Novara* to examine those coal-fields more closely during the stay of the vessel in the harbour of Auckland, and to deliver reports thereon to the Governor of New Zealand. *Commodore Wüllerstorff* gladly embraced this opportunity, of rendering the Government of an English colony at least some service, however slight; in order to prove by it our unfeigned gratitude for the cordial welcome and the vigorous assistance we had received everywhere on English ground.

Consequently, on my arrival in Auckland, I was commissioned by the commander of the expedition to undertake a close examination of the coal-field in question, to give my opinion as to the quality of the coal and extent of the coal-fields, and also to point out the place best suited for working a mine.

With pleasure I accepted this commission, and owing to the various excellent preparations, which the Government at Auckland had made for this purpose previous to our arrival, I was enabled within the short space of time from December 24th to January 2^d, to carry my researches so far as to arrive at definite results, which I presented in a special report "On the coal-field in the Drury and Hunua Districts in the province of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05965-7 - New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson

Ferdinand von Hochstetter Translated by Edward Sauter

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Auckland.’’ This report, urging most emphatically the establishing of mines, was delivered by Commodore Wüllerstorff to His Excellency, the Governor of New Zealand, Colonel *Th. Gore Brown*, while our frigate was yet at anchor in the harbour of Auckland; — it called forth further proceedings and negotiations.

In a country, as yet perfectly unknown in a geological point of view, in the various parts of which various mineral treasures, such as gold, copper, iron, coal, promised most essentially to raise the natural resources of the young and fast-rising colony, the necessity of a more extensive geological exploration seemed so pressing; it appeared to be so much the universal wish of the colonists, that the opportunity for carrying such an exploration into effect, now offered by the presence of a geologist, should be eagerly embraced: — that the Government of New Zealand applied to the Commodore with the request, that he would consent to a longer stay in New Zealand of the geologist of the expedition, for the purpose of making geological surveys in that country, but especially in the province of Auckland.

Commodore *von Wüllerstorff*, on reflecting that during the rest of the voyage no more such unexplored countries would be touched, was quite inclined to comply with the request, provided I could make up my mind to remain behind alone. Indeed, he was the more willing from the conviction, that the geological exploration of a country so little known as New Zealand, would lead to results, which through all generations to come would secure, even at the Antipodes, a lasting memento to the Novara Expedition, which had first been projected by His Imperial Highness, the Archduke *Ferdinand Max*, and which, in consequence of being sanctioned by His Majesty, the Emperor, has proved so important to Austria.

¹ Report of a Geological Exploration of the Coalfield in the Drury and Hunua Districts, in the Province of Auckland (N. Z.) by Dr. F. Hochstetter, Geologist on board the Austrian frigate Novara. It appeared first on January 14. 1858 in the “New Zealand Government Gazette,” and in a supplement to the “New Zealander;” afterwards in several other New Zealand papers.