II.—Physical Geography.

The Coromandel Goldfield is situated in the Auckland Province of the North Island of New Zealand, and some forty-five miles east of the City of Auckland. It lies for the most part on the western slope of the main dividing range, and about midway along the western coast of the Hauraki Peninsula, on the shores of the Coromandel Harbour—a landlocked sheet of water accessible at all times. Indeed, Coromandel is, in point of situation, an ideal goldfield. The climate is equable and healthy, water is abundant, and the township within four hours' steam of one of the great traffic-routes of the world—advantages paralleled on few goldfields.

The peninsula at this point has an average width of twelve miles, and is longitudinally bisected by the main Cape Colville or Dividing Range, which at its northern prolongation has, in Te Moehau, a height of 2,950 ft. In the Coromandel area it reaches an altitude at the Tokatea of 1,536 ft., rising over 1,700 ft. above the Success Mine, and falling to 1,200 ft. at the saddle over which the road to Whangapoua and the East Coast passes. It culminates in the south in the high castellated peak of Motutere, or Castle Rock, 1,724 ft. in height.

The sides of the main range are scored by the valleys of the principal streams, and again transversely by the tributary valleys, into which a third system of valleys runs, parallel to the first. The general valley system is, however, masked to a considerable extent, in the case of the smaller valleys, by the dense bush, which also precludes the possibility of accurately mapping the various formations.

Flanking the main range in the north-west portion of the goldfield is a smaller subsidiary ridge with an average height of 350 ft. above sea-level and a general southerly trend. Before reaching the township the ridge bifurcates, the southerly extension terminating at the Kathleen Crown Mine and the south-westerly prolongation at Keven's Point.

Again, in the central portion of the goldfields, the main range is separated from a flanking range, little inferior in height, by the head-waters of the Tiki and Cadman's Creeks, and in the southern area the Waiau River separates a low parallel range from the main Castle Rock Range.

The streams of the district in order from the north are the Kikowhakarere, Kapanga, Karaka, and Waiau on the western slope, and the Harataunga, Waikoromiko, and Waitekauri on the eastern aspect. Of these, the Waiau is the longest and carries the greatest volume of water. All, however, are short in course, falling sharply from their sources until the alluvial flats are reached, and thence meandering to the sea.

Alluvial flats occupy a considerable portion of the area under discussion. These are all derived from the denudation of the adjacent hills, owing nothing to marine action. On the northern extremity of the main alluvial area the township of Coromandel is built.

III.—History of the Goldfield.

Coromandel Harbour was well known to the navigators of the early years of this century, and many visits were made in order to recruit ships' crews, and also to obtain spars (kauri) for the navy. It is to one of these ships, the "Coromandel," which entered the harbour in 1820, that the district owes its name.

It was not, however, until 1852 that any suspicion of the auriferous nature of the district was entertained. In that year a Goldfields Reward Committee was formed in Auckland, and offered £500 for the discovery of a payable goldfield in the northern portion of the Island. This reward was immediately claimed by Mr. Charles Ring, an experienced Californian digger, who, in support of his claim, produced auriferous quartz and gold-dust obtained from the Kapanga Stream, Coromandel. The report of the Reward Committee confirmed the existence of gold, but, not being satisfied as to the payable nature of the field, withheld the stipulated reward.*

A rush immediately set in, and in a month three thousand diggers were at work. Even at that early stage of operations it was discovered that the auriferous areas were non-continuous, and, as a result, camps were formed at Coolahan's Diggings (now known as the Upper Township of Coromandel), and at the Waiau Diggings, along the course of the Waiau and Matawai Streams. The results were very disappointing, and after six months the digging population melted away, having obtained gold valued at about £1,200—the largest nugget, valued at £10, being a "shoading" from an auriferous quartz reef.

Though not the first highly payable field, yet Coromandel may lay claim to be the oldest goldfield of New Zealand, the rich alluvial deposits of Gabriel's Gully, in Otago, being discovered nine years later—viz., in 1861.

Further exploitation of the field was prevented for many years by the threatening attitude of the Natives, but in 1861 a new rush set in, and in 1862 the district was proclaimed a goldfield. The Kapanga (Scotty's) area then became the scene of great activity, and many rich "pockets" were discovered, the most notable of which yielded 2,198 oz. gold from 1,706 lb. quartz, and 1,120 oz. gold from 40 tons quartz. One mine obtained in ten months £7,143 of bullion.†

Work was carried on vigorously with more or less satisfactory results until 1866, when the discovery of the wonderfully rich goldfields at the Thames, thirty-five miles to the south, deprived Coromandel of the greater part of its digging population.

In 1869–70 a fresh impetus was given to mining in Coromandel by the discovery of gold on the Tokatea Range by a party of prospectors, who, with wonderful assiduity, had followed up the faint trail of gold from the Harataunga Creek until they unearthed the rich quartz leader now known as the Tokatea reef. From this reef phenomenally rich yields of gold were obtained. The Tokatea No. 1 reef or Tribute leader, though only 250 ft. to the south and equally rich, was not discovered until some three years later. It is curious to record that, notwithstanding the richness of these

* Hochstetter: "Reise der Novara," English edition, pp. 94–98.
† Hector: "Geology of the Cape Colville District," Progress Report, New Zealand Geological Survey, 1870.