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NEW ZEALAND.

# PACIFIC ISLANDS ANNEXATION

(FURTHER PAPER RESPECTING).

*Laid upon the Table of both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.*

## EXTRACTS FROM MEMORANDA ON SOUTH SEA ISLANDS, BY MR. H. B. STERNDALÉ, IN 1874.

### NIEUÉ (or SAVAGE ISLAND).

Nieué, or Savage Island, is about thirty-six miles in circumference, and about 200 ft. high at the highest point. It consists entirely of upheaved coral, and has no lagoon (as has been said). There is anchorage in several places (though it has been reported otherwise), and great pools of fresh water in caverns of the coast. There are about three thousand inhabitants, who profess Christianity, but are of a very low type of intellect; nevertheless they are industrious, kindly disposed, and on the whole a good people, though exhibiting occasional outbreaks of barbarism. They are of a different race from the Tonguese or Samoans, being allied to the Tokerau and Kingsmill natives. The land has a barren aspect from the sea. It consists entirely of broken coral, pierced with great crevasses, being only an uplifted reef; but there is good soil upon it, and the place is productive, yielding a great quantity of arrowroot, and good cotton. Fungus is plentiful. Cocoanuts have been introduced from Samoa. They raise great quantities of yams, and have very many hogs.

### PALMERSTON ISLAND.

Eastward of Nieué some five hundred miles is Palmerston Island. This was the first discovered in the South Sea, being the San Pablo of Magalhaens. It has no harbour, but there is good anchorage in a bight on the lee side. The land is low, in the form of a coral ring, upon which are nine or ten islets, from one to three miles long, enclosing a lagoon about eight miles in diameter. There is a large pond of fresh water. Arrowroot, turmeric, and other plants grow wild. The cocoanut groves are very dense. The trees are uncultivated, as there are no permanent inhabitants. In their present state they are capable of yielding 100 tons of kobra in the year. With proper attention, this return would be enormously increased. Here is a great deal of *tomano* timber of large size: it is valuable for shipbuilding, being like Spanish mahogany. There is also a great quantity of a wood which is called *nangiia*, which is not generally known to Europeans, and has never been utilised by them. It is never found except on desert shores, on the brink of lagoons, where its roots are bathed by the tide. Its peculiarities are great weight, intense hardness, and close grain. It is used by savages as a substitute for iron, but it is altogether different from the *toa* (ironwood so called). They make fish-hooks of it, and various implements. For all the uses to which *lignum vite* is applied, it is still better adapted. For this purpose alone, it would, if extensively known, become valuable as an article of commerce; boxwood, which is at present the only material generally employed in wood-engraving, being exceedingly expensive, fluctuating in price between 2d. and 1s. 6d. the square inch. Logs of *nangiia* wood are obtainable on Palmerston's and other similar isles in great quantity, of a diameter of 18 in.

### MANIHIKI ISLAND.

Eastward of San Bernardo about four hundred miles are the two atolls of Manihiki, or Humphrey's Island (about thirty miles in circumference), and Rakahanga, or the Grand Duke Alexander (about twenty miles in circuit); they are thirty miles apart: the latter is the Gente Hermosa of Quiros. These are lagoon islands, and are very valuable from the great extent of their cocoanut groves, the like of which, for density and productiveness, are scarcely to be seen in the world (meaning, of course, trees which do not owe their luxuriance to cultivation). The interior lagoon of Manihiki is about six miles in diameter, and contains a vast deposit of pearl shell of the best quality; pearls, also, are very plentiful in them, and of considerable size. This lagoon has never been systematically fished for more than fourteen years. Upon that occasion (the first and last), Messrs. Hort Brothers, of Tahiti, established an agent upon the island, with two boats' crews

of Paumotu divers, and by their means obtained from it over 100 tons of shell in less than eighteen months. These strangers established themselves upon the fishery by force of arms, and after their departure it was no more prosecuted, for the same reason which had necessitated their employment—that is to say, the incapacity of the Manihikians to perform the work. This is so, because they subsist in a great measure upon the *Paahua* or *Tridachna*, a sort of clam, which is obtained by diving in shallow water. According to their custom, it is the duty of the women to procure these shell-fish, the occupation of the men being the gathering of cocoanuts, and fishing with lines and nets in the deep sea, outside the coral reefs. The lagoon, therefore, is the domain of the women, who alone are skilled in diving. When the pearl-shell traffic had been introduced to their notice by the intrusion of the Paumotans, the Manihikians would have continued it by the labour of their women; but they, finding it as much to their profit and more to their comfort to manufacture cocoanut-oil, rejected the task. There are upon this Isle of Manihiki cocoanut groves of an area sufficient, if the produce were economized, to yield annually 300 tons of kobra (value £3,000); in two years, by a little labour and care, this return would be greatly augmented, and in seven years increased at least fourfold.

#### RAKAHANGA ISLAND.

The island of the Grand Duke Alexander, or Rakahanga, resembles Manihiki, except that it is not quite so large, and contains no pearl shell in its lagoon. The density of its cocoanut groves has excited the astonishment of all mariners who have visited it. This place is, however, very little known, much less so than even Manihiki, for the reason that, its villages being built out of sight, and its anchorage difficult to find, it has more frequently been passed by under the supposition of being uninhabited. There are, however, about four hundred people upon it, who are even superior to the Manihikians in hospitality, ingenuity, and the possession of everything necessary to their comfort and happiness. The village which they inhabit is built entirely of stone. The houses are large and substantial, plastered with snow-white coral lime; they have panelled doors and Venetian shutters; the floors are laid with fine mats of variegated pattern, in the manufacture of which they are more skilful than any other people of the Pacific. These mats they barter to traders when they have opportunity, at the rate of one fathom of mat for the same dimension of unbleached calico, of which the men make their clothing. The mats themselves are of so fine a description that in civilised lands, when obtainable, they are highly prized for covering the floors of even the best houses. Those of one kind are even used as table-covers. The natives have good furniture, made by themselves, of their own island wood. Their hats, which they readily barter to traders, sell in the Pacific ports at one dollar each. They are similar to those of Panama. Their boats, of the fashion of a whaleboat, are handsome and seaworthy. They profess Christianity, and can read and write. They have a church in the middle of the village, handsomely decorated within, the wood-work inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The vessels which they use in their religious ceremonies are of solid silver, and were purchased from traders who had procured them from a wreck. Their laws are just and well administered; they have no superstitious customs.

#### PENRHYN ISLAND.

North-east of Manihiki four hundred miles is Fararanga, or Penrhyn Island. It is about thirty-five miles in circuit, and contains a lagoon twelve miles long by eight miles broad. There are but few inhabitants now, the place having been almost entirely depopulated by Peruvian slavers, who carried away not less than a thousand persons (probably more); the present inhabitants number about a hundred and fifty. It is one of the most famous pearl islands of the Pacific. There have been taken from it annually, for the last twelve years, certainly not less than 200 tons of pearl shell. It belongs to no one but the remnant of its aborigines, who must soon be extinct. *Bêche-de-mer* is in vast abundance. There are very few cocoanut-trees upon this island, the natives having cut them down during wars in past years. If planted out again, the place could be made a valuable possession. The harbour is a splendid one for ships of any draught, being a lagoon with two entrances.

Hervey or Cook's group consists of seven islands, all but one (Hervey Island, or Manuai) inhabited by a well-disposed and highly intelligent people, now greatly reduced in numbers by mortality, apparently caused by the adoption of European habits of clothing and living. They can all read and write, and are Protestants; and they practise many useful industries, as the cultivation of coffee, cotton, arrowroot, and other products. The largest islands are Mangaia and Rarotonga, each of them being about thirty miles in circumference. The former is about 700 ft. at its highest point, and is of volcanic origin. There are over one thousand inhabitants (reduced from four thousand in 1848). They are industrious, hospitable, and respectable in every way. They make a considerable quantity of cocoanut-oil, arrowroot, tobacco, &c. They have an English missionary residing among them.

#### RAROTONGA.

*Rarotonga* is a magnificent island, resembling in aspect Ropoa, in the Marquesas. It is about 3,000 ft. high, and is clothed to the very tops of the mountains with splendid vegetation. It has abundant streams, considerable tracts of sloping land, and rich alluvial valleys. There are two small harbours, not secure at all times, but sufficiently so for the most part of the year. A steam-vessel might make use of them at any time. The population of this island is about 3,000; they are governed by a Queen. They are in an advanced state of civilization; one sees nothing like it in the South Pacific, not even in Tonga; and as far as concerns sobriety, decency, and quiet behaviour, they are superior to the Sandwich-Islanders. Their villages are all laid out in streets; their houses are of stone and lime; they have furniture; they dress nicely in European fabrics; they are all well-fed, happy, and prosperous. Their laws are just, and well administered; they fear God, and

deal hospitably and honestly by all who visit them. There is no superstition, no barbarism, no want or discontent among them. They are industrious, and cultivate the ground assiduously when assured of a market for their produce. They also practise all manner of handicrafts; among them are good carpenters, smiths, sailmakers, stonemasons, &c. They plant cotton and coffee, and export great quantities of oranges. They have stores, plantations, cotton-gins, and several small vessels trading round the Hervey group, and running to Tahiti and Auckland with their produce.

All the sympathies of the Rarotongans are English. The islanders of Rarotonga regard Auckland as the centre of civilisation. About the year 1864 they made a formal application to Her Majesty's Government, in the shape of a letter addressed to the then Governor of New Zealand, signed by the King and his chiefs of Awarua, Ngatangia, and Arorangi, which represent the whole people of Rarotonga, praying to be taken under the protection of Her Majesty, or to be made subjects of Great Britain. The same feeling continues. Unfortunately, no notice was taken of the petition of the Rarotongans; but the same desire animates them now, and no doubt can exist in the minds of all true friends of these islanders but that their annexation by some British colony would be to them the commencement of a new era of prosperity.

The other islands of the Hervey group, Atiu Maukè and Mitiaro, are from ten to twenty miles in circumference; they are of upheaved coral, with fertile soil. There are altogether about 1,000 inhabitants, of a like disposition to those of Rarotonga. The islands are not much visited. Their products are cotton, coffee, cocoanut-oil, fungus, Tomano wood, tobacco, and dried bananas. These islands, especially Maukè, bear great quantities of splendid ironwood; it is obtainable in long lengths, from twenty to forty feet and even more, and from a foot to three feet in diameter. The value of this timber I believe to be very great at this time, when heavy and hard wood is so much in request for the timbers of armour-plated ships, for slides of heavy ordnance, and similar purposes. Some of this wood is so extremely heavy that the interior portions weigh within a fraction of two ounces to the cubic inch.

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## EXTRACTS FROM REPORT ON SOUTH SEA ISLANDS BY MR. W. SEED, SECRETARY FOR CUSTOMS, IN 1873.

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### COOK'S ISLANDS.

This group of islands, which lie scattered over a considerable space, extending from lat. 18° 54' S. to 21° 57' S., and from long. 157° 20' W. to 160° W., without any intimate connection between each other, consists of nine or ten separate islands, the greater part of which were discovered by Cook; hence the appropriateness of their collective appellation.

*Mangaia* is the south-easternmost of the group, is of volcanic origin, and is about thirty miles in circumference; population, 2,000. The productions of the island are numerous and cheap; they consist of pigs, turkeys, fowls, ducks, yams, sweet potatoes, pineapples, which the inhabitants obtain, in spite of the poverty of the soil, by assiduous labour and care but little common to these islanders.

*Rarotonga* is a beautiful island; it is a mass of mountains, which are high, and present a remarkable and romantic appearance. It has several good boat-harbours. The productions of this island, which is much more fertile than Mangaia, are exactly the same. The population does not exceed 4,000.

*Atiu* resembles Mangaia in appearance and extent. It is a mere bank of coral, 10 ft. or 12 ft. high, steep and rugged, except where there are small sandy beaches and some clefts, where the ascent is gradual.

*Mitiero* is a low island, from three to four miles long and one mile wide.

*Mauki* or *Parry Island* is also a low island; it is about two miles in diameter, well wooded, and inhabited.

*Hervey Islands*.—This group consists of three islands, surrounded by a reef, which may be six leagues in circumference.

*Aitutaki* presents a most fruitful appearance, its shores being bordered by flat land, on which are innumerable cocoanut and other trees, the higher ground being beautifully interspersed with lawns. It is eighteen miles in circuit. Population, 2,000.

