

1900.

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.

NIEUË (or SAVAGE ISLAND).

Nieuë, 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 Nieuë 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 *nangia*, 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 *nangia* 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