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JULIUS VON HAAST

(continued from page 10)

science, enterprising and diligent, but with easily recognisable limitations. Sir Julius yielded only to poetic estimates: "Do I contradict myself? Then I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes."

It is in that light his son sees him, and in that light, fortunately, that he presents him. For the result is of course that he is a biographer without fear. It gives him no more anxiety to tell us that his father took no degree at Bonn than to tell us later of the letters he wrote and the manoeuvres he carried through to obtain honorary degrees and a knighthood.

At the time of the Vienna Exhibition of 1873, Haast and Hochstetter had been in correspondence about the possibility of his being knighted by the Emperor Franz Josef. Haast had sent many contributions to Imperial Institutions and in exchange Hochstetter had induced such institutions to provide Haast with valuable specimens for his mineralogical collections. But emperors, like other fountains of honour, need some motive power before the fountain plays. Three or four moas in the Imperial Museum would be worth more than a name on a glacier in the New Zealand bush. And so Hochstetter suggested that Haast should dedicate the moa skeletons and collections of New Zealand birds to the Imperial Museum at Vienna, and the appreciation of his Imperial Majesty of Haast's scientific researches would be intensified.

The stuffed birds and some Maori skulls went to the Crown Prince from Haast, and in due course Hochstetter "was able to congratulate his friend upon the fact that his Imperial Majesty had been graciously pleased to confer upon Haast the Order of the Iron Crown of the 3rd class, carrying with it the title of von and hereditary knighthood."

Whether the author includes such things because they are true, or because the truth does not disturb him, they add immeasurably to the interest and value of his book. Robbed of its indiscretions it would still be interesting, since exploration and discovery are always interesting, and whatever Haast was or was not he was a discoverer, and before age and corpulence overtook him, a bold and colourful explorer. It is impossible to follow him into the Alps, or over them, or round the end of them, without feeling that he was a born leader, bold and confident and cheerful, and without catching some of the exhilaration that marked his work each day.

The discovery of the Haast Pass, for example, whether he was first through or second, is still an exciting story after 85 years. I find it far easier to accept Haast's claims than those of Cameron; to think that knowledge and organisation carried the Pass rather than mystery and a fluke. But I would have given no consideration at all to Cameron's claims if the author had given less to them, had not laboured to destroy them step by step, and then suddenly made it clear that he was still a little afraid of them.

Assuming, however, for the moment, that both Baker and Cameron were on the saddle of the Haast Pass before Haast, I would point out that in the case of Whitcombe's Pass, Baker and Butler were on the saddle before him. Yet, as Whitcombe was the first to cross the saddle to the sea, the Pass was called after him. So, while E. Dobson, Taylor, and Mason were the first to cross the mountains by the Hurunui to the Taramakau, the Pass was called Harper's Pass after Leonard Harper, who, with Locke, shortly afterwards crossed the Pass and reached the sea at the mouth of the Taramakau River. Hence Haast is rightly considered the first white discoverer of the Pass, which properly bears his name.

If that is not a surrender to Cameron, it is a very much less confident dismissal of him as a "blow-hard" and humbug than we get a page or two earlier.

WHEN we come to the establishment of the Canterbury Museum we have author and subject at their best. It is possible to criticise von Haast's exchange system once the museum was established, to condemn his traffic in moa bones and in Maori and Moriori skulls, but it is undeniable that he gave the museum a world reputation however consistently he "outran the constable." Nowhere else is there so complete a story of the museum as we have here, so interesting a story, or a story that raises so many problems for museums in a country without enlightened traditions. Nor can I imagine where there is anywhere else—I mean in any of the paths usually trodden by laymen—so much light on the scientific quarrels of those days, or so many revealing flashes on the most frequent fighters (Haast himself, Hector, and Hutton). Hutton, for example, writing to Haast in 1872, complains that Hector will hardly speak to him:

Because I differed from him on some professional points, he has been giving out in Nelson that I am very insubordinate and ungrateful to him for getting me my appointment and that he would send me away, but that he does not wish to see my wife and children starving.

Two years later there is an "unseemly squabble" between Haast and Hector and we find Hector refusing friendly relations until Haast had withdrawn his "injurious and unfair imputation" on Hector's conduct, and Haast refusing until Hector

can show me that it is honourable to be, as you have been, by your own showing, the confederate of my former workman and paid servant in publishing the results of my labours without my knowledge and consent.

It even gets as far as Parliament, where Mantell is reported in *Hansard* in 1875 as saying that

scientific men as a rule were excessively quarrelsome—he meant scientific men who had attained a certain standard—but he gloried in the fact that he was not a scientific man, and he did hope he would be able to go to his grave without incurring that disgrace.

If Haast usually emerges victoriously from these encounters, that is not because his son thinks he was always right—he admits more than once that he was not—but because nothing can shake the son's deep conviction that these were not the quarrels of peers, but the snarling of little dogs at a big dog (who should have been, and only sometimes was, too proud to notice them).

IT is not possible, in the space available to me, to follow von Haast round the world, or even through all the phases of his remarkable career in New Zealand. It is for men of science to estimate his standing in science, and on that point his son is as humble as anyone else. He does not pretend to be impartial to his father—the son who does should be stoned—but he does take pains where the issues are scientific to let judgment be given by men who speak the language.

I STARTED by saying that the buyer gets his money's worth. What I should have said is that he gets hours of entertainment of the kind that money normally can't buy—science, history, and

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