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**Brighter Britain! (Volume 1 of 2) or
Settler and Maori in Northern
New Zealand**

William Delisle Hay

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

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"Queen of the seas, enlarge thyself!
Send thou thy swarms abroad!
For in the years to come, —
Where'er thy progeny,
Thy language and thy spirit shall be found, —
If —
— in that Austral world long sought,
The many-isled Pacific, —
When islands shall have grown, and cities risen
In cocoa-groves embower'd;
Where'er thy language lives.
By whatsoever name the land be call'd,
That land is English Still."

Southey.

PREFACE.

[Pg vi] This book is descriptive of things as they are in a part of New Zealand, together with some reference to past history. It does not attempt to handle the colony as a whole, but refers to scenes within the northern half of the North Island only. This part of the country, the natural home of the kauri pine, is what I here intend to specify under the title of Northern New Zealand.

I am not an emigration-tout, a land-salesman, or a tourist. When I went to New Zealand I went there as an emigrant. Not until a few days before I left its shores had I any other idea but that the rest of my life was destined to be that of a colonist, and that New Zealand was my fixed and permanent home. I have, therefore, written from the point of view of a settler. Circumstances, which have nothing to do with this chronicle, caused me to lay [Pg vii] down axe and spade, and eventually to become a spoiler of paper instead of a bushman. The materials of this work, gathered together in the previous condition of life, are now put in print in the other.

I trust no one of my colonial friends will feel offended, should he think that he discovers a caricature of himself in these pages. I have used disguises to veil real identities, occasionally taking liberties as regards time, situation, and personality. I think that no one but themselves could recognize my characters. [Pg viii]

The substance of one or two chapters of this book has, in part, been already placed before the public in papers that I contributed to *The Field* last year, and is used again here by kind permission of the proprietor of that newspaper. Also, I have made the Kaipara the scene of several tales and sketches, which have appeared in sundry periodicals.

If, in writing this book, I had any object beyond that of amusing the reader, it has been to give accurate information to young Englishmen belonging to the middle-classes. From this section of home [Pg ix] society a considerable number of emigrants go out who had much better stop at home. On the other hand, there are many who do not stir, and who would be much better off in a colony. Perhaps, from the record I am now able to put before them, some of these young gentlemen will be more able to decide whether they are per-

sonally adapted to become colonists in Northern New Zealand or not. If one unsuitable emigrant is hereby deterred from leaving home, and if one capable colonist is added to the population of "Brighter Britain," my labour will not have been altogether useless.

For the rest, I throw myself again upon the indulgence of critics, and on that of a public which has already abundantly favoured the efforts I have made to please and serve it.

THE AUTHOR.

London,
June 25th, 1882.

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BRIGHTER BRITAIN!

CHAPTER I.

A "NEW-CHUM'S" INTRODUCTION.

Three months on board ship seems a long while to look forward to, yet it is but a short time to look back upon. Emigrants, being for the most part drawn from among dry-land-living populations, are apt to be daunted by the idea of a long voyage. People would be more ready, perhaps, to contemplate becoming colonists, were it not for that dreaded crossing of the sea which must necessarily be their first step. Their terrors may be natural enough, but they are more fanciful than real; and once overcome, the emigrant smiles at his former self.

After the first week or two at sea, the most inveterate "land-lubber" begins to feel at home; in another week or two he has become quite nautical, and imagines himself to have been a sailor half his [Pg 4] life; while, when the voyage is over and the time come to go ashore, there are few who leave their floating home without regret.

As things are managed nowadays, there exists no reason for apprehension of the voyage on the part of would-be colonists. Emigrants who are taken out "free"—that is, at the expense of the colonial government—as well as those who pay their own passage, are cared for in most liberal and considerate style. The rivalry between the various colonies of Australia has had this effect among others—that the voyage is made as safe, smooth, and inviting to emigrants as is possible. They are berthed with an ever-increasing attention to their care and comfort, while they are absolutely pampered and fattened with abundance and variety of the best food.

No one expects to commence life in a new country without undergoing some amount of hardship and difficulty, and when the emigrant gets on shore, and begins to experience the various little annoyances that a "new-chum" must necessarily undergo, he realiz-

es most thoroughly the pleasures and comforts he has left behind him on board ship; and, very frequently, vainly endeavours to suppress the wish that he was back on board "the old hooker" making the voyage out over again.

As to *danger*, nothing amuses an old salt more [Pg 5] than the bare idea of the "perils of the sea." To him, a railway journey, short or long, appears an infinitely more terrible and risky undertaking than a voyage half round the globe; and he will enumerate the various dangers to which a landsman is exposed as vastly in excess of those which may happen to the mariner.

Life on board an emigrant-ship would, it might be thought, be somewhat dull and monotonous. As a matter of fact, it is scarcely ever found to be so. First of all, the little community of two or three hundred souls—men, women, and children—contrives to find sufficient fund for amusement in itself, in all the varieties of social intercourse.

The progress of each day is marked by some fresh events that, insignificant as they may seem when regarded from a distance, do yet bear the strongest interest to all on board. A glimpse at some distant land, the signalling or speaking of other vessels, the appearance of strange birds and fish, the passage into different climates, the excitement of a storm, or the opportunity which a calm gives for general junketing; all such incidents are looked upon as a real gain by the voyagers, while there is always something stirring on board to divert and enliven them.

All kinds of games are resorted to, many more, in [Pg 6] fact, than landsmen have any idea of; a vast amount of reading is done; there are sure to be one or two on board who know how to spin a yarn with due effect; some are musical, and others can sing. Concerts, lectures, theatricals, and dances are got up; while, as there is generally a due admixture of the sexes, not a little flirting and downright courting is carried on; and, lastly, if there is any quarrelling and bickering, the differences of those who engage in it afford much amusement to the rest.

Altogether, the modern emigrant's existence on board ship is a calm, easy, indolent, well-fed, and cheerful interlude of repose, amid the storms and worries of the great battle of life. If existence

has been to him hitherto rather hard and thorny than otherwise, he finds the voyage out a pleasant interval of rest and refreshment; and, in any case, it recruits and prepares him to better commence the new life in the colony, with good spirits and high hopes, with invigorated strength, and renewed health in both mind and body.

Although it might be thought that social equality would necessarily prevail on board ship, such is by no means the case. Of course there are great differences in the social tone of various ships, but, as a rule, "aft" seldom condescends to mix much with "farrard." Yet there are generally many inter [Pg 7] changes of courtesy, as between upper, middle, and lower classes; and different messes will sometimes banquet one another. The "cuddy" will, perhaps, get up amateur theatricals or charades, to which spectacle the whole vessel will be invited; while the "steerage" will return the compliment with a concert, more or less brilliant in performance.

Thus, a pleasant interchange of civilities goes on aboard most ships, and serves to help make the time pass away. Differences of rank and station are supposed to be pretty well levelled down in the colonies. Most of the time-worn prejudices of the old country, it is true, melt away before the revivifying breath of colonial life, yet sometimes "Mrs. Grundy's" awful features will show themselves, hiding the old foolish face under a new and somewhat strange aspect.

It would be interesting to note how many of the most prominent and influential citizens of a colony came there originally in the humblest possible way; and how many of the dregs of colonial society—the occupiers of the lowest rung on the colonial ladder—reached their new home with all the pomp and circumstance of quarter-deck sublimity, and all the humbug and pretension of real or fancied aristocracy. Is the result we see—for these contrasts are to be found plentifully in all the colonies at the [Pg 8] Antipodes—what it ought to be, or not? That is the question.

In the colonies, and particularly in the younger and newer among them, a man must perforce be the sole architect of his own fortunes. Industry and energy, enterprise and perseverance pave the pathway to success, and yield a real and lasting benefit to him who holds such endowments. A man must prove what he *is*, not what he *was*;

his antecedents go for but little, and his "forbears" for nothing at all. In the Antipodean colonies of Great Britain is realized, perhaps, the nearest approach to true freedom; and, in a wide social sense, the closest approximation to the ideal republic.

However, we are still on board ship, and, after an easy and not too eventful voyage of some three months, are looking eagerly out for the first sight of the promised land. Bound to Auckland, New Zealand, our vessel is one of the largest that has yet sailed from Gravesend to that port; and she carries some three hundred emigrants and passengers on board. We have grown so accustomed to our good ship, and to our life on board of her, that we have got a strange feeling that this voyaging will never end; nor does the idea altogether arouse our discontent.

We have had one or two births, and, alas! one [Pg 9] poor child has been taken from our little company. There have, of course, been no weddings on board, but the prevailing opinion is that several have been arranged to take place as soon as we get on shore. And the time is very near now.

At last, late one afternoon, as the ship is bowling steadily along with a ten-knot breeze on the port quarter, the deck is hailed from aloft, and the cheery, long-expected, and long-wished-for cry of "land ho!" is taken up by a hundred voices, and rings out across the sea. But there is nothing to be seen for all that; and though more than three hundred pairs of eyes keep anxious ward and watch, darkness falls before an almost imperceptible cloud upon the far horizon is pronounced oracularly by the mate to be Cape Maria Van Diemen, New Zealand's north-western-most promontory.

One may easily imagine that it is difficult to "turn in" on a night when such a fresh excitement fills every mind, but, I suppose, most of us do contrive to get to sleep eventually. With the first break of dawn in the morning there is a stir and commotion all through the ship. Rules are forgotten, and etiquette broken through, as men, women, and children rush hastily on deck to take their first look at our future home.

It is a beautiful summer morning. There is [Pg 10] only a slight ripple on the surface of the water, and not a cloud in the blue sky overhead. The gentle breeze that just keeps us in motion blows off

the land, bearing with it a subtle perfume of trees and flowers and herbage; how unspeakably grateful to our nostrils none can tell so well as we, who inhale it with ardour after so many weeks at sea.

Yonder, a mile or two to starboard, and seeming within a stone's throw, is the land we have come so far to seek. A wall of rock, the northern cliff of New Zealand rises abrupt and imposing from the sea, broken here and there into groups of pillared, pinnacled islets, nobly irregular in outline, piled and scarred, indented and projected, uplifted and magnificent. On the summit of the cliffs, on ledges and terraces, down at the bottom of the rocks, filling every little bay, and sweeping down the gullies and ravines, is everywhere abundant the wild foliage of the evergreen forest. Glorifying the rich and splendid scene, diversifying with numberless effects of light and shadow the whole panorama, shining upon the glowing sea, touching the topmost crags with sparkling grandeur, and bathing in beauty the thousand-tinted green of the forest, is the sun, which, on the eastern horizon, is rising clear and bright and steady. And so we gaze rapturously on the wide and beautiful picture—a picture the remem [Pg 11] brance of which will remain with us long: our first sight of the new land of hope and promise.

Varied are the emotions that take possession of the individuals of our company; but I think there are some among us, more thoughtful or sentimental, perhaps, who, unconsciously to themselves, draw a kind of inspiration from the noble scene. To such there seems, in those majestic cliffs, sea-swept and forest-crowned, first seen as lighted by the rising sun, a nameless sermon preached, a wordless lesson taught, an everlasting poem sung. And our minds and spirits are calmed, refreshed, and invigorated; while in some dim way we grasp ideas that the silent scene irresistibly conveys to us. Rising within us, as we gaze, comes with fresh new force the knowledge of the qualities that should be ours: the high-hoping courage, the unshrinking energy, the dauntless resolution, and the unfailing industry that must animate the colonist, and be the best endowments of an inceptive nation!

Later in the day we round the North Cape, and go sailing on down the coast, with light and rather baffling winds that eventually bring us to port on the following evening.

Among our passengers are several old colonists, who are returning from a visit "home." In the colonies Great Britain is always spoken of as [Pg 12] "home," even by colonial-born people. Talk about the raptures at returning to "my own, my native land!" that is nothing to the transports of joy that now infect our colonists. They laugh, they sing, they dance about the decks, they chatter "sixteen to the dozen," and display every eccentricity of unbounded delight and satisfaction.

Probably a good deal of this is put on for the edification of us new chums, but there is no question that most of it is an expression of real feeling. All through the voyage these good people have been in great force, relating numberless yarns of their past experiences, more or less truthful in detail. But now their self-importance is overwhelming and superior to all considerations. Every headland, bay, or island that we pass is expatiated upon, and its especial story told, in which, I note, the narrator generally seems to have been the most prominent figure himself. No one is allowed to remain below, even for meals, scarcely for sleeping; he or she must be up on deck to hear strange-sounding names applied to every place we sight.

Cape Kara-Kara is a name to us and nothing more. Whangaroa Heads, that guard the harbour of that name, with its settlements and saw-mills, is but little better, though some few, who have been industriously reading up, remember Whangaroa as [Pg 13] the scene of the ghastly massacre of the crew of the *Boyd*, half a century ago. Capes Wiwiki and Brett we have no previous acquaintance with, though we have heard of the Bay of Islands, over whose wide entrance they are the twin sentinels. And then in slow succession we sight the Poor Knights Islands, Bream Head, the Hen and Chickens, the Barrier Islands—Great and Little, Cape Colville, Rodney Point, and the Kawau, Sir George Grey's island home.

And now, on the afternoon of the second day, we are running closer and closer to the shore; islands and islets are becoming more numerous, and the seas are getting narrower. Right ahead a conical mountain top is perceived, Tiri-Tiri is close to, and it is high time the pilot came aboard. That mountain top is Rangitoto, an extinct volcanic cone upon a small island that protects the entrance to Auckland Harbour. Presently we shall see the similar elevations of

Mount Eden and Mount Hobson, that look down on Auckland from the mainland.

Of course, we are all on the *qui vive* of expectation, looking out for the first signs of life. Hitherto we have seen nothing to rob us of the notion that we are a veritable cargo of Columbuses, coming to colonize some new and virgin land, until now utterly unknown to the rest of the world. The shores we [Pg 14] have passed along have presented to us every possible variety of savage wilderness, rocks and bush and scrub and fern, but no appearance of settlement at all, not even any signs of aboriginal life have we descried.

There is a growing idea getting the better of our common sense — an impression that there has been some sort of mistake somewhere or other. For, how can it be possible that we are just outside the harbour of a considerable city, with the shores of mainland and island as far as we can see, just as wild as Nature made them, wilder than anything most of us have ever seen before. The utmost recesses of Scotland, or Ireland, or Wales would look quite tame and domesticated contrasted with these rugged solitudes. Not a house nor a hut anywhere, not a trace of the presence of man, not even — so it chanced — another sail upon the sea!

It is close upon sunset, the foresail is backed, the pilot's signal is flying, and the foghorn sounding, and soon we shall see if there is any life or not in this weird new land. Presently, comes a shout of "Ship ahoy! ahoy!" apparently from the sea, and a little boat emerges from the shadow of the shore and makes its way alongside.

Of course every one rushes to the side to see the pilot come aboard. It being more than three months [Pg 15] since we saw a strange face, we are naturally consumed with a burning curiosity. It is rather disappointing though, to have come half round the world only to be met by men like these. The pilot might be own brother to his fellow-craftsman who took us down the Channel, and his crew are just the same kind of brawny, bearded, amphibious-looking men that are to be seen any day in an English seaport. We had nourished an insane kind of hope that we should have been boarded by a canoe full of Maoris, in all the savage splendour of tattooing and paint and feathers; but here, instead of all that romantic fancy, are

three or four ordinary "long-shore" boatmen, with a pilot who steps on board in the most matter-of-fact manner possible.

Well, we must make the best we can out of the circumstances; so, when the pilot has come out of the captain's cabin, where he has shown his certificate and discussed his "nobbler," when he has formally taken charge of the ship, and we are once more moving through the water, we begin to pester him with the question, "What's the news?"

Now, as we have been between three and four months at sea, isolated from the rest of the world, we are naturally all agog to hear what has happened in our absence. New Zealand's news of the old world is at least a month old, but then that is con [Pg 16] siderably in advance of our dates. The pilot has, therefore, enough to do in answering all the questions that are levelled at him, and as he is probably pretty well accustomed to similar experiences, he is, I fear, in the habit of allowing his fancy to supply any gaps in his actual knowledge of the progress of events; hence we glean many scraps of information that on further inquiry turn out to be more or less imaginative.

And now that we are entering the harbour of Auckland, it is unfortunately getting too dark to see much. There is not a long gloaming in northern New Zealand—once the sun has dropped below the horizon darkness succeeds very rapidly; so, though we get an indistinct glimpse at some houses on the shore as we sail along, it is quite dark as we round the North Shore and come into Auckland harbour.

There goes the anchor at last, with a plunge and a rattle! Now the good ship is swinging in the current of the Waitemata, and the voyage, that at its commencement seemed so long and that now appears to have been so short, is fairly terminated. Before us, extending to right and left, and up and down, are thousands of lights glittering and twinkling over the shadowy outlines of the city; while into our ears is borne the welcome hum and stir of city [Pg 17] life. There is no going ashore until next morning—until the health officer and the customs shall have boarded and inspected us. So that night is devoted to the bustle and confusion of packing up; and various

spoonly couples moon about the decks, renewing promises and vows in expectation of their parting on the morrow.

When morning comes we make our bow to Auckland. There it lies, this Antipodean city, looking so white and clean and fair in the morning sunshine, stretching away to right and left, rising in streets and terraces from the shore, cresting the heights with steeples and villa-roofs, and filling up the valleys below. In the far background is the heavy brow of Mount Eden, whose extinct crater we shall explore by-and-by, and whence we shall obtain a splendid view of the entire city, its suburbs, and the surrounding country.

From our point of view out in the harbour the city presents a scattered and uneven appearance, that adds to its generally picturesque aspect. As a central feature are the long lines of wharves and quays with their clustering shipping; just beyond these is evidently the densest part of the city. Huge and imposing stone buildings stand thickly here, showing that it is the centre of the business part of Auckland. To right and left the ground rises [Pg 18] abruptly and steeply, and the streets become irregular in outline. Nor is the shore a straight and continuous line; these heights on either hand are promontories jutting out into the stream, and hiding deep bays behind them, round which, straggling and irregular, sweeps the city.

The further our eyes travel from the centre of the picture, the more do we lose sight of any trace of uniformity in building. Quite close to the busy parts, so it seems to us, houses stand in their own wide gardens; the streets and roads are lost amid the embowering foliage of trees and shrubs. The house-structures are built on every conceivable plan, up and down the wooded shores; every builder has evidently been his own architect to a great extent, and there is no lack of elbow-room hereaway.

What surprise us most are the evidences of taste and cultivation and general prosperity everywhere in view. Our previous glimpses at the shore of our new country had not prepared us for anything like this. It is decidedly encouraging to new-comers, who are disturbed somewhat by the prospect of doing battle with the wilderness, to find a sort of Anglo-Saxon Naples here in the Southern Sea.

We had an idea that our arrival would have been quite an event in this little place. Nothing of the sort; Aucklanders are too well used to the arrival of [Pg 19] emigrant ships. One or two enter the harbour every month, besides other craft; and then the Pacific Mail steamers, large and splendidly equipped vessels, call here twice a month on their way to and fro between Sydney and San Francisco.

There are one or two vessels like ours lying out in the stream at the present time, others are lying alongside the principal wharf, or its cross-tees, amid a forest of spars belonging to small coasting craft. Plenty of shore boats have come off to us on one errand or another; but it is evident that our arrival has not created that impression upon the city which we had had a notion that it would have done.

The morning papers will notice our advent, with a brief account of the voyage, and will give exceedingly inaccurate lists of our passengers. Only those people who expect friends or cargo by us will take any special interest in us; the evening promenaders on the wharf will glance at our ship with a brief passing interest; and the current of Auckland life will flow on unchanged, regardless of the fact that some three hundred more souls have been absorbed into its population.

Breakfast this morning is partaken of in the midst of a hurry-scurry of excitement, but, for all that, it is an imposing meal, and comprises all sorts [Pg 20] of luxuries to which we have long been strangers. Beefsteaks, milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables, fresh fish just caught over the side, and other fondly-loved delicacies are on the bill of fare. By-and-by, all formalities having been gone through, comes the parting with shipmates and the confusion of landing.

It is not without a strong feeling of astonishment that we step out of the boat that has brought us off, and enter the city. We were totally unprepared for the scene before us. From the accounts we had read and received, we had pictured Auckland to our minds as little better than a collection of log-huts, with here and there, perhaps, a slightly more comfortable frame-house. And here is the reality. A city that would put to shame many an old English town. A main street—Queen Street—that might even compare favourably with many a leading London thoroughfare in all its details. Fine hand-