THE FUTURE HOME OF THE WAIKATO SETTLERS.

[By Lieut. Col. Chesney].

Although some twenty-six years' have elapsed since the first English colony was founded in New Zealand, but little is known of the interior of those beautiful islands which now form part of the scattered empire of Great Britain. A few travellers have crossed some of the rivers, ascended the hills and skirted the lakes; missionaries have fixed themselves in places where native population invited their residence; and traders were located in spots easily accessible from the settlements: but, owing to the rugged nature of the Middle Island and to the jealousy of the natives in the North Island, the English race are to be found chiefly at the seaports and near the Coast line. To the bulk of the colonists the interior of the islands has been hitherto a *terra incognita.*

Discoveries of gold combined with the explorations of Dr. Hector and others are making us acquainted with the Middle I., and the campaign of 1864 against the native races has opened a highway into the centre of the Northern Island. Whether that highway will be again closed by the action of the present ministry of New Zealand is partly a political, partly a military question and is therefore not a fit subject for discussion within these walls, but, inasmuch as many people have left Tasmania and the Australian colonies to become military settlers in New Zealand, a short account of the the physical and geographical features of the territory recently acquired may be of interest to many of the Fellows of the Society.

It is proposed to lay before you a brief account of the interior of the North Island of New Zealand, to review the causes that led to the campaign in the valley of the Waikato and Bay of Plenty, to glance at the proposed scheme of military occupation, and to describe the future home and prospects of the Waikato settlers.

Near the centre of the island the volcano of Rua-pehu rises from what is evidently the water-shed. Its snow-clad summit, and that of the neighboring mountain, Tongariro, which rises to a height considerably greater than that of Mont Blanc, may be seen from Cook's Straits in clear weather. South of Tongariro the country is of a singularly broken and difficult character, and through it winds the river Wanganui, carrying quantities of pumice floating like balls of froth upon its surface. At first a swift shallow stream, after a course of about 50 miles it enters a cleft in the rock, and for about double the distance is bounded on either side by perpendicular walls of rock, so that the traveller has some difficulty in finding

sufficient ground to camp on without climbing one of the root-ladders that form the communication between the native villages and the river. There are occasional rapids here, but the general course of the stream is quiet, in some places the current being quite imperceptible on account of the great depth of the water. Gradually the country becomes more open, and the walls of basalt are replaced by fertile banks. About 20 miles from the mouth the last rapid occurs, whence the river is navigable for small craft, and here the traveller finds the settlement of Wanganui in the province of Wellington, the town being about four miles from the bar. An attempt was formerly made to call the place Petre, but the more euphomious one of Wanganui has become the one by which it is known.

Ducks and teal abound on the upper Wanganui, amongst which a duck with a spoon bill is occasionally found. It is a shy and rather rare bird.

The river Wanganui is admirably adapted for salmon. These fish would have a run of 150 to 170 miles to their upper spawning-beds, the deep pools affording ample shelter on their way. Eels, a kind of small mullet, and a freshwater crayfish are at present the only fish in this fine stream.

Returning now to the centre of the island, we will take a northerly course. The Waikato river rises at the foot of Rua-pehu and flows into the south of lake Taupo, which is some 30 miles long by 25 broad and is surrounded by a fine, park-like country. Leaving the north end of Taupo the Waikato meanders through rugged, difficult ground, and, tumbling over a couple of cataracts, becomes navigable for steamers at Maungatautari. Thirty miles further down the rapid stream absorbs the quiet Waipa, and the joint river, still called the Waikato, flows onward swiftly in a wide channel over a sandy bottom, and is so shallow as to be almost unnavigable for boats or canoes in certain seasons. The Waikato empties itself on the West Coast and is accessible to craft of moderate size in fine weather. A township has been recently laid out within the heads.

The shores of Taupo and of the other lesser lakes to the North are of it are peopled by fine tribes of Maories, mostly heathens. The chief, Te Heu Heu, dismissed a missionary from his dominions on the ground that he interfered with his authority, and he consistently refused to be called by the English name Matene (Martin), by which he was known in the settlements. Very few of the natives in this district can speak a word of English, notwithstanding which their agriculture is extensive and well carried on. The Waikatos have been more in contact with the Europeans. As long ago as 1852 a water-

mill was finished at Maungatautari, ploughs were busy between the two rivers Waikato and Waipa, and the Maoris were large growers of wheat, maize, and potatoes for the Auckland market. The Waikato tribes are physically a fine race of men and had always been considered to rank among the most warlike of the race; many of them had been trained to the use of firearms in the Auckland police force; and, although for years it had been illegal to sell arms to the natives, they never had any real difficulty in procuring muskets and powder. The causes that led to the recent campaign in the Waikato are too complex to be treated of at length in this paper, yet it is necessary to touch slightly upon them. The Maories were nominally subjects of the Queen and amenable to the law, but were virtually as free from its power as any dweller in Connemara a hundred years ago. If an Englishman offended against a Maori he was sure to be heavily fined or otherwise punished by his countryman the magistrate, whereas when the Maori happened to be the offender, he either did not appear as defendant or ignored the decision of the bench. The few scattered English residents in the Waikato valley were there on sufferance, and the natives enforced their old custom of *utu* (*i.e.* payment, or revenge) at the will of their chiefs. They even became so insolent as to have formed a project for the attack and plunder of Auckland. Sundry of them went down to join the Taranaki tribes in arms against the Government, and they set up Te Whero Whero, a noted old warrior, as king over them at Ngaruawhia, the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato. All acknowledged the old chief under the name of King Potatou.

It became necessary to hold these restless warriors in check and to protect the scattered settlers of the province of Auckland from outrage. The valley of the Waikato approaches within forty miles of the city, from which it is separated by steep hills covered with dense forest. Two plans of defence seem to have presented themselves, the first and simplest would have been to have established a chain of defensive posts from the east to the west coasts on the accessible country between Auckland and the Forest ranges. This plan would have been no punishment to the turbulent Waikatos, who could muster at their pleasure in unknown force close to our lines; it was not entertained, and was replaced by a comprehensive scheme of conquest which was submitted by ministers on 5th August 1863. In Mr. Domett's memorandum it was proposed to open up the country by making roads, to establish military posts where necessary, to introduce 20,000 settlers from the Australian Colonies and England, to borrow 3½

millions, the estimated cost of the project, which was to be repaid by the confiscation of part of the natives' land and by the increased customs and other revenue. Owing to the presence of a large body of troops a road was made across the ranges without serious opposition and a redoubt (called after our gracious Queen) established on the plain beyond. Nobly did the Maories fight at Kohiroa, Rangiriri, and Orakau, but they were no match for superior numbers and discipline, and eventually they retired to their mountain fastnesses, leaving the whole valley a prey to their conquerors.

It was necessary to complete the first part of the plan the Waikato conquest should be connected with the Bay of Plenty, but what was to be done? The natives were loyal, and, with some exceptions, well-behaved. Orders were sent for the troops to march over their land occasionally. They resented this, and built a strong pa at the gate or entrance to their property. Reinforcements were hurried to Tauranga, and the position was taken after a desperate resistance. The Maories made one more effort to entrench themselves at the Bay of Plenty, but were defeated with great loss. The conquest sufficient for the chain of posts was complete. Unfortunately for the settlers, the Whitaker Fox-Ministry were replaced by men of Southern proclivities, the money was not forthcoming, the government steamers which supplied the transport on the Waikato are to be sold, and the pledges made to the military settlers by one set of ministers have been ignored by their successors. They might at least have built them the promised blockhouses to enable them to hold their land in troublous times. At present their only defences are slight works of earth and fern here and there, and their arms. In such situations they are to be left with their diminished numbers: we may therefore expect to hear of disasters, and either a warfare like that which was carried on with the North American tribes, or that the object gained by the exertions of our troops has been abandoned.

The soil Tauranga is of a deep volcanic nature and the settlers who have land there so near a good harbor are fortunate. The country of the upper Waikato is curiously formed, consisting of a series of plains or flats at different levels. The upper level at Cambridge, our farthest advanced post, is very good, rich soil. The river is rapid between Cambridge and Alexandra, at the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato. By the way the river is often erroneously named Horatiu in maps. Horatiu is the name of a district, not of the river. The soil below the junction of the rivers is not so good it being sandy in places.

There is a mine close to the river producing coal fit for

steam purposes. Everywhere there is sufficient wood without the ground being encumbered by dense forests. The foliage of this part of New Zealand is very beautiful, for although the kauri is not found so far south, there are other handsome pines, and the eye is refreshed by the laurel-like green of the karaka *(Corynocarpus levigata)* and other handsome shrubs, such as the *Cordiline stricta* and the bright green *Pittosporum Eugenoides.*

The banks of the Waikato and some of its islands are ornamented with the waving flowers of the Toi-toi *(Arundo conspicua)* which resembles the pampas grass, but is yet more graceful.

When peace shall have been restored to this unhappy land, the hot springs that I brought under your notice on a previous occasion, will probably become the Saratoga of these colonies, and prosperous cities and smiling villages will spring up around the homes of the Waikato settlers.