

A thick growth of underwood and dwarf bushes, intermixed with ferns concealed the surface, rendering it difficult to walk. Even on the places apparently most level, the ground was very unequal, and a single step would sometimes send me nearly up to the neck into a hollow filled with large fern fronds. On the highest parts, the small level spots were covered only with moss, and a description of tall grass, and in places also a kind of grain grew abundantly. The ground was dry every where, all the water being found in the streams, which were numerous and pure. Near the summit, the ground was perforated in all directions, probably by birds, who rear their young in these holes. Many of the birds, principally procellaria, were sitting on the ground: they made no effort to escape, but suffered themselves to be taken without any attempt at resistance.

"The forest was full of small birds, of three or four different species, which were perfectly fearless; one little fellow alighted on my cap as I was sitting under a tree, and sang long and melodiously; another and still smaller species, of a black colour spotted with yellow, was numerous, and sang very sweetly; its notes were varied, but approximated more nearly to the song of our blackbird; occasionally a note or two resembled the larks. Hawks too were numerous, and might be seen on almost all the dead trees, in pairs. Along the sea-coast were to be seen the marks of their ravages upon the smaller birds. The sea-birds were very numerous on the opposite side of the island, sitting upon the cliffs or hovering over the islet."

On the western side of the Auckland Island, the under-brush and young trees are exceedingly thick. Dr. Holmes remarks, that it was impossible to penetrate; that he was occupied fully an hour in making his way for a hundred yards, where to all appearance a human step had never before trodden. There was not a vestige of a track; old trees were strewn about irregularly, sometimes kept erect by the pressure on all sides. Some trees were seen upwards of seventy feet in height, although the generality were only from fifteen to twenty; every part of the island was densely covered with vegetation; the soil, from the decomposition of vegetable matter, had acquired considerable richness; specimens of all the plants were collected. The botany of these islands is nearly allied to that of New Zealand, and will be found treated of in the Botanical Report, to which I would refer. Some species resembling the tropical plants were found here, viz., the coffeaceous plants.

These islands have in many places the appearance of having been raised directly from the sea; the cliffs consisted of basalt, and were generally from fifty to ninety feet perpendicular.