

ADDITIONAL NOTES

TO THE PRESENT EDITION. MARCH, 1849.

GIGANTIC BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND.—Vol. i., p. 287.

An extensive and highly interesting collection of bones, referrible to several species of the *Moa* (*Dinornis* of Owen), and to three or four other genera of birds, formed by Mr. Walter Mantell, of Wellington, New Zealand, has recently arrived in England, and is now deposited in the British Museum. This series consists of between 700 and 800 specimens, belonging to different parts of the skeletons of many individuals of various sizes and ages. Some of the largest vertebræ, tibiæ, and femora equal in magnitude the most gigantic previously known, while others are not larger than the corresponding bones of the living apteryx. Among these relics are the *skulls* and *mandibles* of two genera, the *Dinornis* and *Palapteryx*; and of an extinct genus, *Notornis*, allied to the *Rallidæ*; and the mandibles of a species of *Nestor*, a genus of nocturnal owl-like parrots, of which only two living species are known.*

These osseous remains are in a very different state of preservation from any previously received from New Zealand; they are light and porous, and of a light fawn-color; the most delicate processes are entire, and the articulating surfaces smooth and uninjured; *fragments of egg-shells*, and *even the bony rings of the trachea and air tubes, are preserved.*

The bones were dug up by Mr. Walter Mantell from a bed of marly sand, containing magnetic iron, crystals of hornblende and augite, and the detritus of augitic rocks and earthy volcanic tuff. This sand had filled up all the cavities and cancelli, but was in no instance consolidated or aggregated together; it was, therefore, easily removed by a soft brush, and the bones perfectly cleared without injury.

The spot whence these precious relics of the colossal birds that once inhabited the islands of New Zealand were obtained, is a flat tract of land, near the embouchure of a river, named Waingongoro, not far from Wanganui, which has its rise in the volcanic regions of Mount Egmont. The natives affirm that this level tract was one of the places first dwelt upon by their remote ancestors; and this tradition is corroborated by the existence of numerous heaps and pits of ashes and charred bones indicating ancient fires, long burning on the same spot. In these fire-heaps Mr. Mantell found burned bones of *men, moas, and dogs.*

The fragments of egg-shells, imbedded in the ossiferous deposits, had escaped the notice of all previous naturalists. They are, unfortunately, very small portions, the largest being only four inches long, but they afford a chord by which to estimate the size of the original. Mr. Mantell observes that the egg of the *Moa* must have been so large that a hat would form a good egg-cup for it. These relics evidently belong to two or more species, perhaps genera. In some examples the ex-

* See Professor Owen's Memoir on these fossil remains, in *Zoological Transactions*, 1843