

Haast's Past: The Forgotten Files

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Sir Julius von Haast (1822 – 1887) is celebrated as an explorer, geologist and museum founder. His enthusiasm for science and his commitment to Canterbury Museum are well documented; however, little is known about his life before he arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1858. When conducting research in German archives for a biography of another historical figure migrating to New Zealand, I came across previously overlooked documents relating to Haast's family affairs and business ventures in the states of the German Confederation. These newly discovered archival records shed light on the circumstances that led to Haast's emigration and abandonment of his family in Frankfurt am Main. His first wife, Antonie Johanna Carolina née Schmitt (1825 – 1859) and their son, Mathias Robert Haast (1848 – 1895) are reintroduced into Haast's life narrative, emerging from obscurity. While the Haast Collection held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington represents one of the most comprehensive records of the life and work of a nineteenth-century New Zealand scientist, documents preserved in overseas archives are also crucial for an accurate portrayal of Sir Julius von Haast as a complex human being.

Keywords: biography, court records, debts, fraud, German immigrants, Sir Julius von Haast

Introduction

The Sir Julius von Haast Collection, held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, was added to the UNESCO New Zealand Memory of the World Register in 2019. Haast's archive, comprising his official and personal papers, correspondence with scientists, manuscripts, photos and drawings, constitutes the most comprehensive record of the life and work of one of the nineteenth century's most influential New Zealand scientists (Memory of the World Aotearoa New Zealand, 2019). Before this collection was donated to the Alexander Turnbull Library, Haast's son, Dr Heinrich Ferdinand von Haast, wrote *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast*, based on his father's papers (von Haast, HF, 1948). This comprehensive biography of over 1,000 pages covers in detail Haast's life and work since arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand. His correspondence with scientists in New Zealand and overseas, including with Dr Ferdinand von Hochstetter from Austria, has been transcribed, translated into English, and published as a valuable source of insights into Haast's personal thoughts and aspects of science communication at the time (Nolden 2013; Nolden et al. 2013; Nolden et al. 2012). Hence, Haast's enthusiasm for science and his untiring dedication to Canterbury Museum are well documented. The story of his life, however, remains incomplete.

Little is known about Haast's life during the 36 years prior to his arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1858. In various biographical accounts it is mentioned that Haast hushed up the events of his time in Europe. After arriving in Auckland, he changed his first name from 'Johann' to 'Julius' (Nolden 2016). He published articles about his travels in New Zealand in German and Austrian newspapers under a pseudonym.¹ When Haast applied to be awarded a doctorate from the University of Tübingen in 1862, he fabricated a curriculum vitae with a wrong date of birth and claims to academic studies he never undertook (University of Tübingen Archive

UAT 131/12b,9; Langer 2004). The Haast Collection at the Alexander Turnbull Library and the voluminous biography written by his son do not provide any explanations for Haast's significant amount of "careful falsifications" or "carefully worded" deceptions in his life (Nolden 2016: 75, 80). It seems that Haast took some well-guarded secrets with him to the grave at the Avonside Anglican Cemetery in Christchurch, ironically sealed by a tombstone with the inscription "vitam impendere vero" - a life devoted to truth (Fig 1).²

When conducting research in German archives for the biography of another nineteenth-century immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand (Eddy 2017), I came across records relating to Haast's family and business affairs. These records, which miraculously survived destruction by fire during World War Two, are held at the Institute for the History of Frankfurt and at the Hesse Central State Archives in Wiesbaden. The documents contain probate and custody records concerning Haast's first wife, Antonie Johanna Carolina née Schmitt (Fig. 2) and their son, Mathias Robert Haast (Fig. 3), filed at the Court of the City of Frankfurt between 1859 and 1871 (Haast, A J C, 1859, IHF, Sig. 152; Haast, M R, 1871, IHF, Sig. 228; Haast, M R, HHStAW Bestand 469/6 Nr. 3695, H20/1895). With the rediscovery of these hand-written German archives, crucial missing parts of Haast's past can be pieced together, and the circumstances leading to his migration to Aotearoa New Zealand finally come to light. Alongside the German court records, a previously overlooked diary from a travel companion, Hannah Ormond née Richardson (1833 – 1929), offers firsthand accounts of encounters with Haast during his voyage to New Zealand (Ormond (Richardson), H, ATL, MS-1747). Thus, in line with Haast's motto "vitam impendere vero", it is time to unveil an inconvenient truth, and bring his first wife, his oldest son and his not so glorious deeds back into Haast's life narrative.



Figure 1. Gravestone of the Haast Family at Holy Trinity Avonside, Christchurch.
Photo by Schwede66 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16105749>

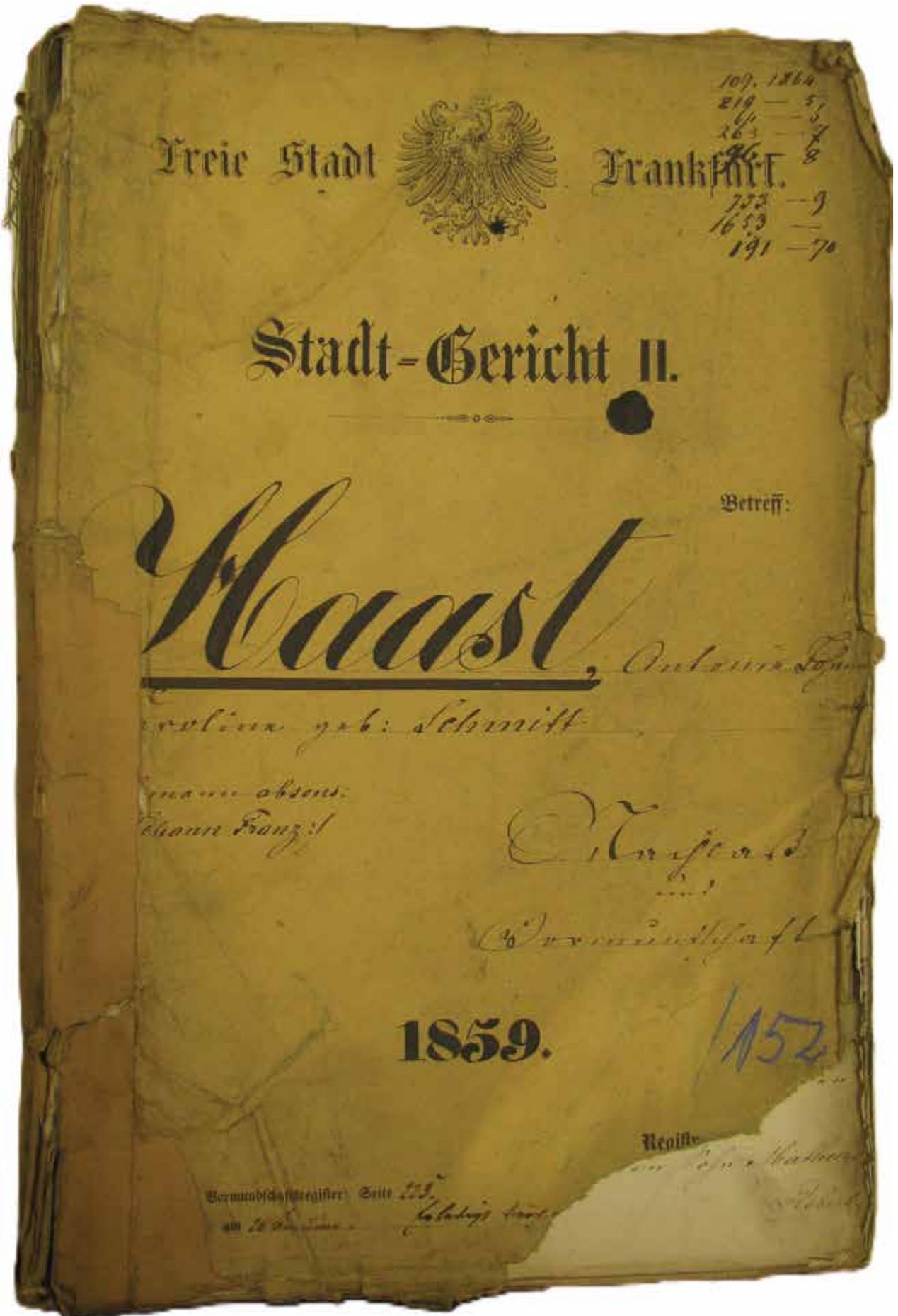


Figure 2. Front page of Antonie Haast's probate and custody records Nachlassakten, 1859. Institute for the History of Frankfurt, Sig. 152

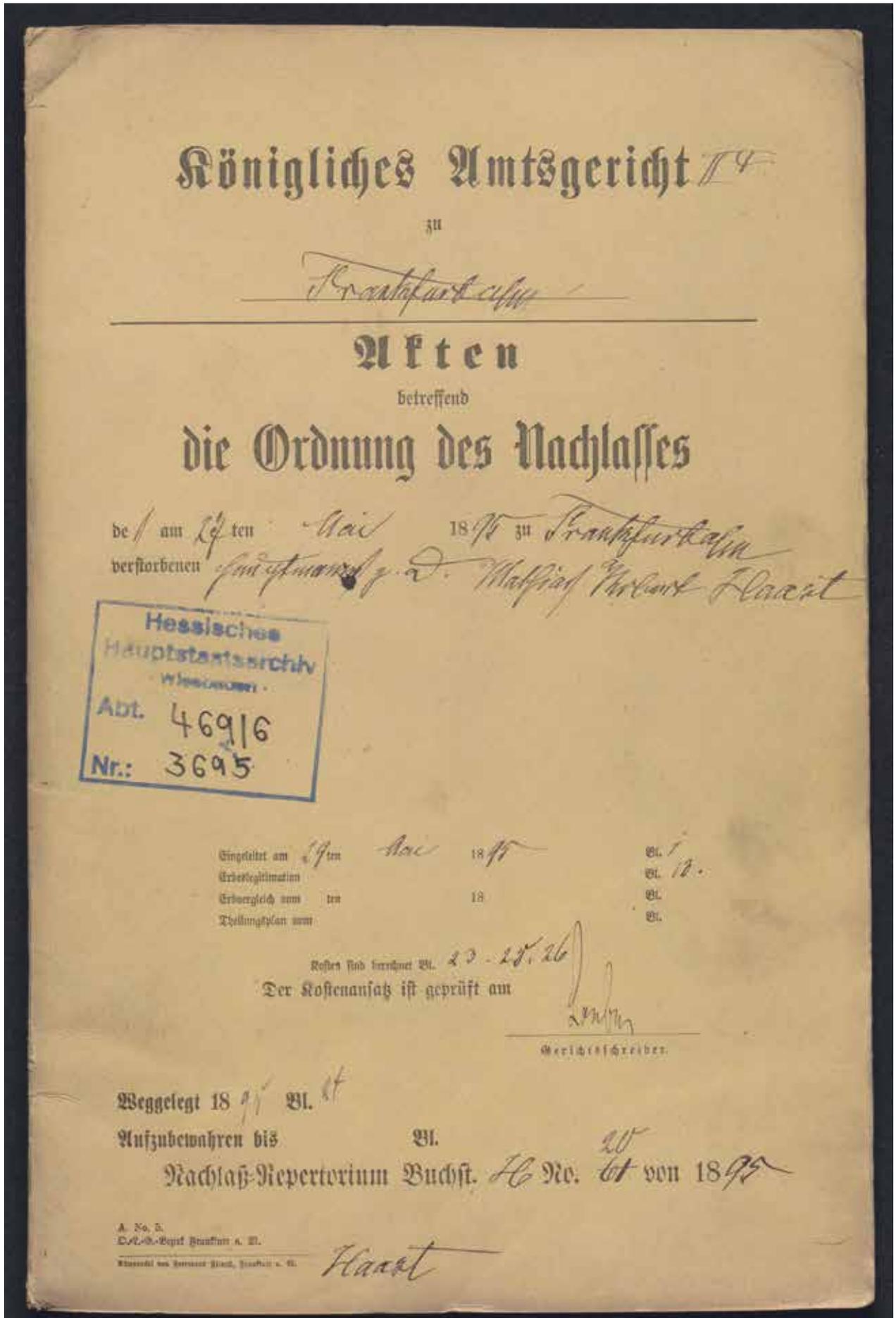


Figure 3. Mathias Robert Haast's probate records Haast, Mathias Robert, Hesse Central State Archives HHStAW Bestand 469/6 Nr 3695, H20/1895

First Cabin Passage to New Zealand

In the opening pages of *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* it says Haast felt like a broken and lonely man after leaving Frankfurt for London in 1858. The author, Heinrich von Haast, refers to entries in his father's notebook:

He compares himself to a ship sailing away proud and hopeful, but wrecked on the jagged cliffs, the polypi inhabiting its interior, the swordfish boring its ribs. He ends: "Like it I flew proudly through the world; now I stand lonely and broken, and like the desolate wreck, I still exist and weep." (von Haast, HF. 1948: 6).

On 11 September 1858, Haast sailed from Gravesend to Auckland on board the *Evening Star*. Just before arriving in Auckland, Haast wrote: "My heart was heavy, my soul cast down" (von Haast, HF. 1948: 1). What made him feel so sad and lonely, and why did he leave his family behind to emigrate to New Zealand on his own? Unfortunately, the notebook from which his biographer cited has since disappeared and with it the remainder of Haast's thoughts during his journey to the other side of the world. However, there is another source that offers a glimpse into Haast's voyage on board the *Evening Star*. A fellow passenger, 25-year-old Hannah Richardson, who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand with her mother, kept a diary in which she recorded her encounters with Haast. According to her journal, Haast did not seem particularly sad or disillusioned.

Miss Richardson travelled as first cabin passenger, just like Haast. To pass time on board ship, they regularly made music together in the saloon: Richardson played the piano and Haast accompanied her with his tenor voice. While Haast dined at the captain's table, Miss Richardson and her mother sat at the table next to them. That is how she overheard her neighbours' conversations and after mealtime she often joined in the discussions.

Haast seemed to thoroughly enjoy the company of Miss Richardson and of another woman, Miss Sepha, as Hannah Richardson wrote on 16 October 1858: "Mr Haast had headache, and while I practised, rested it first in the lap and then on the shoulder of Miss Sepha who seemed to feel a secret understanding between them" (Entry 16 October 1858, ATL, MS-1747). Just over a month later, though, Richardson observed: "Miss Sepha and Mr Haast are decidedly out, but I do not know the cause" (Entry 26 November 1858, ATL, MS-1747).

On board ship, Haast evoked the impression of being a widower. One day, he listened to Miss Richardson performing a piano piece by Carl Maria von Weber. Richardson recorded Haast's comment: "Weber's *Invitation*, he says, he likes very much, but it makes him sad; his wife used to play it" (Entry 28 September 1858, ATL, MS-1747). In various ways, Haast courted Miss Richardson. She described how Haast chose her in the flirtation game *Philipine*, how he confided that he is sorry not to be seated at the same table, and therefore not being able to say, "Good night, Hannah Dear", and that

he regretted not having his violin to play with her (Entries 25 September and 24 November 1858, ATL, MS-1747). She also found out that Haast had enquired about her fortune. On 19 November 1858, Richardson wrote: "Mr Haast made a bet with me: If I be married before this day two years, I shall give him a present of £5 value. If single, then he will give me a present of £5 value or more" (ATL, MS-1747).

Whether Hannah Richardson and Haast ever met again after disembarking from the *Evening Star* at Auckland, and whether Haast honoured the bet he made with her, is not known.³ Certainly, none of Haast's fellow passengers would have imagined that, while dining at the captain's table and flirting and singing with the ladies, he was convicted in absentia by the Court of Frankfurt and his wife, very much alive, tried desperately to rescue the family's furniture from seizure by the court's bailiff (Haast, A J C, 1859, IHF, Sig. 152).

On the Run from Frankfurt

The circumstances of Haast's departure for London and his conviction by the Court of Frankfurt can be reconstructed based on the surviving probate and custody records relating to his first wife, Antonie Johanna Carolina and their son, Mathias Robert (Haast, A J C, 1859, IHF, Sig. 152; Haast, M R, 1871, IHF, Sig. 228). Among the numerous documents contained in these files, a statement by the Frankfurt lawyer, Dr Maximilian Reinganum (1798-1878), outlines Haast's business ventures during his marriage with Antonie née Schmitt.⁴ In the following, a summary of the information derived from these records will be set out; any direct quotations have been translated from German into English by the author.

Antonie Johanna Caroline Schmitt, pianist, and Johann Franz Haast, merchant, married on 26 October 1846 in Frankfurt am Main. Antonie was the oldest daughter of the music director and composer, Dr Aloys Schmitt and his wife, Auguste Caroline née Wohl. The Schmitt family were wealthy and Antonie brought a dowry of nearly 40,000 Gulden [equivalent of about \$NZ 1.6 million in today's money] into the marriage.⁵ Johann F Haast invested large parts of his wife's money as a partner in the company Steinhardt & Haast, trading with silk ribbons and fabrics. The business became insolvent three-and-a-half years later.

On 10 January 1848 their first child, Mathias Robert, was born. In 1851, after spending some time in Vienna trading with mother-of-pearl buttons, Johann F. Haast intended to establish a starch factory in Bonn, his hometown. His wife, having lost money through her husband's previous failed business ventures, was sceptical and refused to follow him. Thus, Haast moved to Bonn without her and took their three-year-old son with him. A court decision regulated the return of the child to his mother and a patrimonial agreement for the protection of Antonie Haast's property was drafted by the court.

After Johann F Haast gave up his idea of a starch factory, he invested 10,000 Gulden as a silent partner in a renowned

leather factory Rupp & Bechstein in Frankfurt. Again, he lost this investment due to his “Schwindelspekulationen” (fraudulent speculations) (IHF, Sig. 152: 22). In 1856, Haast became a general partner and signatory of Heinrich Hochstätter’s matchstick factory in Darmstadt. Two years later, Haast emptied the company’s cash register and issued false bills of exchange. He even tricked family members and friends by selling them fake bills of exchange. On the night of 11 April 1858, Johann Franz Haast fled to England.

Subsequently, the matchstick company became insolvent, and Haast’s wife was liable for her husband’s debts, which amounted to over 33,000 Gulden. Many other Frankfurt businesses sued Haast for unpaid bills, including, for example, 308 Gulden for the latest men’s fashion items, and 484 Gulden for cigars. As a result, Johann Franz Haast was convicted in absentia by the Court of Frankfurt on 11 November 1858 (IHF, Sig. 152).

Employed by Willis, Gann & Co

After arriving in London, Johann Franz Haast wrote a “Treatise Upon the Emigration from Germany and the Best Means to Conduct it to New Zealand” for the shipping company Willis, Gann & Co (Haast, JF. 1858). This shipping company, whose director Arthur Willis was also a founding director and shareholder of the New Zealand Company, managed the New Zealand Colonial and Emigration Offices in London (Willis et al. 1859: IV). In his treatise, Haast provided an overview about reasons and routes of German emigration and he laid out a plan to promote New Zealand among potential German emigrants. A crucial part of Haast’s advertising strategy was to engage a German scholar, who would travel throughout New Zealand and write reports about his journey and discoveries for German newspapers and scientific publications. Haast further suggested that the New Zealand Government should appoint a German speaker based in New Zealand who acted as “Commissioner of Emigration”, assisting German immigrants to settle in a country where their language is not understood. Such assistance would be made known through letters home and, again, would attract more emigrants (Haast, JF. 1858: 16-17). The shipping company Willis, Gann & Co seemed convinced of Haast’s plan; they employed his services as German immigrant advisor and sent him to New Zealand on board the company’s ship *Evening Star*.

Haast arrived in Auckland on 21 December 1858. One day later, the Austrian naval frigate *Novara*, a man-of-war circumnavigating the world on a scientific excursion, laid anchor at Waitematā Harbour (*Daily Southern Cross*, 24 December 1858: 3. *New Zealander*, 25 December 1858:3). The scientists of the *Novara* and Haast were invited to dine at the home of Dr Karl Fischer, a German immigrant practising homeopathy in Auckland. At this reception, Haast met the geologist of the *Novara* team, Dr Ferdinand Hochstetter.⁶ Haast offered to accompany the group of scientists on their approximately two-week expedition to explore the land between Auckland and the Waikato River, especially the Drury coalfield. Under

the pseudonym ‘Julius Hanf’, Haast wrote accounts of this expedition, supplemented with eulogistic comments about New Zealand as a perfect destination for German emigrants. These reports were published in the Austrian daily newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* from 13 to 21 April 1859.

The New Zealand Government engaged Dr Hochstetter to carry out geological research in New Zealand for a further 6 months, and Haast took on the role as Hochstetter’s interpreter and assistant. Thus, just as Haast had suggested in his treatise about promoting New Zealand as a destination for German emigrants, Dr Hochstetter became the scholar providing scientific observations of the New Zealand interior, which would find publication in the German language. What an irony of fate that Haast’s partner in his new venture in New Zealand bears the same family name [apart from one tiny spelling difference] as his duped business partner in Darmstadt. Haast certainly hoped that the geologist Dr Hochstetter never found out about the manufacturer Hochstätter, whom he had betrayed and left to pick up the pieces of the matchstick factory that Haast had driven into ruin. In fact, Haast and Dr Hochstetter were to become life-long friends who helped each other in building their careers as geologists and museum directors.

Antonie Haast’s Death

While Haast and Hochstetter explored Aotearoa New Zealand, Antonie Haast was dealing with the debts and embarrassments her husband had left behind. It was obvious that their marriage had broken down; but her husband’s next move came as a surprise: on 8 September 1859, J. F. (Julius) Haast made a formal application to the Court of Frankfurt that his wife and son should follow him to New Zealand. With such an application, Haast attempted to create a cause against his wife for “Ehescheidung ob malitiosam desertionem” (divorce on the grounds of malicious desertion) (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152: 5). Haast, who had betrayed and abandoned his business partner and his family, was now asserting patriarchal and paternal rights and, to top it all, accused his wife of abandoning him.

Not willing to submit and follow her husband, Antonie Haast instructed a lawyer to file a counterclaim. A day after Haast’s lawyer responded to the counterclaim, the lawsuit ended with Antonie’s death on 14 October 1859 (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152). According to her family, a long illness was the cause of her tragic death at age 33. However, her husband’s debts and demand to either join him in New Zealand or face a divorce, which meant losing her honour, her property and the custody of her son, would have contributed to her deteriorating health.

At the time of Haast’s application to the Court of Frankfurt that his wife and son should follow him to New Zealand, Haast and Hochstetter had arrived in the Province of Nelson. They were to carry out a geological survey of the region and report on the progress of the German settlers who came here in 1843 (Johnston & Nolden 2011. *Wiener Zeitung*, 6 and 8 March 1860). During a welcome dinner held at the Masonic Hall in

Nelson, Haast proposed a toast to the ladies: "Woman! What a sublime word. Everything high, beautiful, and noble that lived and existed in the world was with it in the most intimate connection" (*Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 7 September 1859). Haast continued to praise New Zealand as the new paradise where women would find their true happiness:

They must come to New Zealand ... Here their husbands really were their own; here there were no theatres or clubs, where the husband in Europe was more at home than in his own house. Here he stopped, and lived, and cared for his wife ...
(*Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 7 September 1859).

Was he thinking of his own wife and marriage when toasting to the women of Nelson? Perhaps, his desire to reunite and start afresh with his wife and son was genuine? Even if it was, it came too late; because of Haast's spendthrift lifestyle and deceitful behaviour in the past, his wife Antonie no longer trusted him. She refused to follow him to New Zealand, suspecting that he was only interested in her property.

Custody of Mathias Robert Haast

After the death of his mother, and his father being away in New Zealand, the 11-year-old Mathias Robert Haast was placed into the care of his maternal grandparents. From 1860 onwards, he lived in the home of the headmaster of the Frankfurt High School, Dr Classen. The maternal grandfather, Dr Aloys Schmitt, and the Frankfurt lawyer, Dr Maximilian Reinganum, became provisional legal custodians of the child. Johann F Haast's debts were paid off by the Schmitt family, using the funds of Antonie Haast's estate (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152).

On 17 January 1860, during his exploration of the western district of the Province of Nelson, Haast climbed a flat-topped mountain on the south-western side of Lake Rotoiti and named it 'Mount Robert' after his son (von Haast, HF. 1948).⁷ Whether Haast had already received the news of his wife's death and the court's decision about the legal custodianship for his son, is not known. He certainly must have missed his son immensely.

Six years later, on 6 January 1866, Haast applied to the Court of Frankfurt for the revocation of the provisional custodianship and the restoration of his paternal rights.⁸ In his application, he claimed that "nur die Macht unseliger Verhältnisse die Vergangenheit trüben und den Gatten und Vater aus den Armen seiner Familie reißen konnte" (only unfortunate circumstances darkened the past, and he – husband and father – was torn from the arms of his family) (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152: 6). He wrote that he went to New Zealand to take up an honourable position with the aim of providing a carefree future for his wife and son. Now, he found himself in a situation "die seine kühnsten Hoffnungen übersteigt" (that exceeded even his highest expectations) (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152: 6).

To prove his point, Haast listed in the application all his achievements as geologist and explorer in New Zealand. He claimed to receive an annual income of £1,500 as the Canterbury Provincial Government Geologist, even though his salary was, in fact, £500 (von Haast, HF. 1948:114).⁹ He highlighted that he was conferred an honorary doctorate from the University of Tübingen in recognition of his scientific publications.¹⁰ Haast listed his memberships in at least seven international scholarly associations and his correspondence with well-known scientists in Great Britain, France, Germany and Austria.¹¹

Finally, he referred to his recent decoration with the Imperial Austrian Order of Franz Joseph, Knight's Cross. Haast enclosed a copy of his doctoral certificate, a copy of the *New Zealand Gazette* from 21 March 1861 announcing his naturalisation and profession as geologist, and a character reference signed by Samuel Bealey, Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury, as annex to his application (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152).

By outlining his achievements in New Zealand and the honours bestowed on him, Haast hoped to convince the Court of Frankfurt that he could be entrusted with the care of his son. However, Haast did not intend to uproot his son from his current surroundings. He proposed that Mathias Robert, now 18 years old, should stay in Frankfurt to complete his education. Until his return to Frankfurt, Haast would appoint trusted persons to act as custodians for his son. All that Haast requested now was to manage his son's maternal inheritance. He assured that he would use the financial interests generated by the funds to pay for his son's physical care and education.

When the current custodians of Mathias Robert Haast read JF (Julius) von Haast's request, especially the last paragraph about his intention of managing his son's affairs from distant New Zealand, the alarm bells must have gone off. Dr Reinganum replied with a detailed argument that JF von Haast's application should be dismissed. In his reply, Reinganum provided an account of Haast's deceitful actions and debts incurred during the time he was married to Antonie. Reinganum argued that, considering Haast's past, his achievements as geologist were irrelevant in the matter relating to Mathias Robert's custody. Haast's "Prahlsansereien und Sentimentalitäts-Ergüsse" (boasting and outpour of sentimentality) did nothing to prove that he could be trusted to look after his son's wellbeing and assets (IHF, Nachlassakten, 1859, Sig. 152: 34). If Haast was indeed earning £1,500 per annum as he claimed, he should first repay all his debts. Further, the fact that over the past ten years, he had only twice sent 50 Gulden for his son, showed how little he was willing to contribute to his son's care and education.

At the time of his application to regain custody, Haast lived in Christchurch with his second wife, Mary Ann née Dobson, and their two-year-old son, Heinrich Ferdinand. Apparently, it was known to his new wife that Haast liked to gamble in the local hotel. However, Haast had promised her before their marriage that he would no longer play for money (von Haast, HF. 1948:321). While

his second wife trusted Haast's promise, the Court of Frankfurt did not. Dr Reinganum remained Mathias Robert Haast's custodian until he reached the age of 21 in 1869. Mathias Robert Haast's grandfather, Dr Aloys Schmitt, died on 25 July 1866.

Mathias Robert Haast's Will and Testament

After Mathias Robert's twenty-first birthday in 1869, a will was drawn up, appointing his grandmother as the universal heir of his estate. His father, Johann Franz Haast, was only to receive the statutory portion after deduction of debts and interest owed to his son:

Meinen Vater Johann Franz Haast in Australien setze ich auf den gesetzlichen Pflichttheil, und unter Beschränkung auf diesen, als Erben ein. Jedoch wird er sich in diesen Pflichttheil diejenigen Kapitalien und Zinsvergütungen einrechnen lassen müssen, welche er mir aus dem Rechte und als dem Erben meiner seligen Mutter Frau Antonie Johanna Carolina Haast geborene Schmitt schuldet.

Als meine Universalerbin, nach Abzug des väterlichen Erbtheils, setze ich ein meine Großmutter Frau Caroline Auguste geborene Wohl, Witwe des Kapellmeisters Dr. Aloys Schmitt, Frankfurter Bürgerin.

(I bequeath to my father, Johann Franz Haast, in Australia [sic], his statutory portion only. However, the capital and interest that he owes me by right and as the heir of my late mother, Mrs. Antonie Johanna Carolina Haast, née Schmitt, must be offset against this statutory portion. As my universal heir, after deducting my father's share of the estate, I appoint my grandmother, Mrs. Caroline Auguste née Wohl, widow of the music director Dr Aloys Schmitt, citizen of Frankfurt.)
(HCSA, HHStAW Bestand 469/6 Nr. 3695, H20/1895)

Everything has been put in place to ensure Haast could not easily get hold of his first wife's and son's estate. The fact that Australia was stated as the place of residence for Johann Franz Haast indicates that Mathias Robert had no contact with his father, and he did not know exactly where his father was living.

After completing his secondary education, Mathias Robert studied chemistry. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 – 1871, he was conscripted as non-commissioned officer into the Prussian Army, later Imperial German Army (*Militär-Wochenblatt: Unabhängige Zeitschrift für die Deutsche Wehrmacht*, 25 December 1872). He rose to the rank of first lieutenant and was stationed at the German French border, when he saw his father again in 1886.

Reunion with his Oldest Son

In January 1886, Sir Julius von Haast travelled to England, acting as the commissioner of the New Zealand Court at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. In London,

he received an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Science from the Cambridge University, and he was knighted by the British Crown. Haast must have felt proud and fulfilled, heaving reached the zenith of his career. His second wife Mary and two of their children, Eva and George, accompanied him overseas. Together, they also travelled to Germany to visit his birthplace Bonn. This was the first time that Haast returned to his homeland since migrating to New Zealand in 1858. A photo taken in Germany depicts Haast wearing his medals and the uniform of a German consul, a position to which he was appointed in 1881. Dressed like that, he was showing his old country that he had done well in the world.

While visiting Germany, Sir Julius von Haast also briefly saw his son from his first marriage, Mathias Robert. Mary von Haast mentioned this reunion in a letter sent from Germany to her son Heinrich in Christchurch:

The Thursday before, Eva and I went to see George at Düsseldorf and spent a pleasant day. Papa could not come with us as he had gone to Colmar to see his son Robert and only returned late Thursday night after being away two days. He had a very happy meeting with Robert and was only sorry he had not more time to be with him. But I hope he will be able to come to London while we are here and then I shall learn to know him too. He would have come to Bonn but had only just returned from Berlin after six weeks leave of absence so that he could not get away again. His regiment is now garrisoned at Neu Breisach [Neuf Brisach], a miserable place which has not even an hotel so that he met Papa at Colmar which is only 20 minutes by train and had a room ready for him there. Papa says he is a thorough soldier and his whole heart and soul is in his profession.

(Mary von Haast to Heinrich von Haast, 13 March 1886, ATL, MS Papers 0037 Folder 69 A).

Heinrich von Haast later included a short paragraph about this meeting in *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast*:

While in Germany, Haast met at Colmar his son Robert, a Lieutenant in the German army. Both father and son were naturally much affected and sat up until after midnight over a blazing fire. Haast described Robert to Heinrich as 'a fine manly fellow, not much taller than you, but having the same build and chest – and such splendid manners'. Robert had twice thought of asking for long leave to visit New Zealand, but knew little English, although he spoke French fluently. Robert went back with him as far as Strasbourg.

(von Haast, HF. 1948:917-18).

We will never know what Sir Julius von Haast and his son talked about during that night by the fire. Was Robert impressed by his father's achievements overseas, or were the memories of his father's sudden departure 28 years ago too painful to have a cheerful conversation with him? Haast saw his son once more while visiting Berlin in April 1887. In a letter to his son Heinrich, Haast wrote



Figure 4. Gravesite of the Schmitt family in Frankfurt am Main. A, Tomb. B, Inscription. Hauptfriedhof, Grab adM 433. Karsten Ratzke, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

on 15 April 1887: “Robert, who is now at the Kriegs [War] Academy, is delighted that we shall be some time in Berlin together” (Julius von Haast to Heinrich von Haast, 15 April 1887, ATL, MS Papers 0037, Folder 69). There are no further records referring to the reunion of Julius von Haast and his oldest son.

The Haast Estates

Shortly after returning to Christchurch from his trip to Europe, Sir Julius von Haast died suddenly of a heart attack on 16 August 1887. Hearing about his father’s death, Mathias Robert Haast re-wrote his last will on 31 December 1887. Because he was not married and had no children, he appointed his uncle, Dr Ernst Adolf Schmitt von Panhuys, his mother’s youngest brother, as the universal heir of his estate. But he also allocated a considerable sum of 10,000 Mark [equivalent to \$NZ 170,000 in today’s money]¹² to his half-brother George von Haast, who had stayed behind in Germany to study fine arts at the Düsseldorf Art School. The fact that Mathias Robert Haast included George von Haast in his will with a substantial bequest demonstrates his generosity and acceptance of responsibility for one of his much younger half-siblings. At the same time, however, he disinherited his father’s other four children and second wife (HCSA, HHStAW Bestand 469/6 Nr. 3695, H20/1895).

Mathias Robert Haast died on 23 May 1895 at the age of 47, as a retired army captain. He is buried next to his mother and other members of the Schmitt family in Frankfurt am Main (Fig. 4). Whether he still had been in contact with his half-brother, George von Haast, who since had

moved to London, and whether George received his part of Mathias Robert’s bequest, is not known.

The widow Mary von Haast was left with very little money after her husband’s death, partly due to Julius von Haast’s failed business investments (Nathan 2022). Nevertheless, Mary von Haast travelled to Europe in 1895 and stayed there until the end of her life (Bradshaw 2022; 2025). On 6 May 1900, she sent a postcard depicting Frankfurt to her daughter Eva in New Zealand, and she mentioned that she visited Consul Schmitt (Mary von Haast to Eva von Haast, 6 May 1900, ATL, MS-Papers-0037-292). He was none other than Antonie Haast’s youngest brother, Ernst Adolf Schmitt von Panhuys. As a factory owner and consul of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, he possessed substantial assets and was in no need of the estate of his nephew. Hence, he might have passed on to Mary von Haast the statutory portion of Mathias Robert Haast’s estate that his half-siblings were entitled to. While some sources suggest that an inheritance from Haast’s sister, Veronica Rossum (1820–1887), enabled Mary von Haast to live comfortably in Europe until her death in Rome in 1913, it is also possible that the funds actually came from her husband’s first wife and son (Bradshaw 2025).

Concluding Remarks

The rediscovered archival records relating to Antonie and Mathias Robert Haast reveal Sir Johann Franz Julius von Haast’s deceitful actions and behaviour that caused great loss and pain for his first wife, oldest son, family-in-law, and former business partners. There exists a puzzling letter from 1853, in which Dr Aloys Schmitt introduced

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Herrn Marstaller!

Ich bin in die Galyenzeit versetzt, und Ihnen durch den Brief zu
 kommen, bin ich so frei, Ihnen den Habströcker Brief, meinen
 Vorgesetzten ~~Alte Haast~~, der eine Gasse nach Italien und
 Ihre Stadt muss, vorzulegen und zu besprechen. Sollten Sie
 demselben einige Rücksichtsam sein wollen, so würde ich es
 annehmen, und für mich selber danken, und wäre Ihnen dankbar dafür.
 Das Ihnen behagliche Schreiben ist so gut oft an Sie, und
 für mich immer recht herzlich Ihre so sehr gebrauchte Gesandtschaft.
 Mein Vorgesetzter wird Ihnen - wenn es Sie interessiert -
 viel noch mehr und viel erzählen, was sehr - da er Ihnen alles mündlich
 mitteilen kann - meiner Lieder Inhalt ist.
 Ihre von Ihnen ein gültiges Zeugnis einsehend, grüßte
 Sie in besten Glauben
 Dr. Aloys Schmitt.

Frankfurt am 2ten Januar
 1853.

B

zu kommen, bin ich so frei, Ihnen den Habströcker
 Vorgesetzten ~~Alte Haast~~, der eine Gasse nach
 Ihre Stadt muss, vorzulegen und zu besprechen

Figure 5. Letter by Aloys Schmitt to Mr Marstaller in Naples, 2 January 1853. A, Full page. B, Detail showing Haast's name scribbled over. From the Künzel Collection of Autographs. Eddy private collection, Auckland

his son-in-law, Johann Franz Haast, who travelled on business in Italy, to a friend in Naples (Aloys Schmitt to Mr Marsteller, 2 January 1853, Eddy private collection). What makes this letter so remarkable, is that the name 'Johann Franz Haast' was later scribbled over with a different pen. Only on closer inspection one can still see the capital 'J' for Johann and the surname 'Haast' (Fig.5). When and by whom Haast's name was deleted from the letter, is not clear. Yet, it illustrates the intention to erase any reference between Schmitt and his former son-in-law, who ruined his daughter Antonie's life.

Haast, on the other hand, made a desperate effort to demonstrate his value as an internationally recognised geologist to the Schmitt family and the Court of Frankfurt, aiming to regain their trust and, consequently, custody of his son, Mathias Robert. This intent seems to explain Haast's unusually strong desire to obtain formal acknowledgment of his discoveries in Aotearoa New Zealand, not only from learned societies and scientific associations, but also from various royal courts in Europe. However, all his professional achievements and received honours could not convince his in-laws and the Court of Frankfurt: In the matter relating to his son's custody, Haast was deemed a deceitful speculator and merchant

who abandoned his family and never repaid his debts.

Sir Julius von Haast, the geologist, explorer and museum founder who is celebrated and remembered as a seeker of truth, managed to keep his unflattering past hidden until his death and beyond. With falsified documents and a manipulated academic resume, he forged himself a new identity and career after arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand. His subsequent achievements in the natural sciences along with his founding and management of Canterbury Museum show that Haast fully embraced this second chance in his life.

However, after uncovering his intentional acts of deceit as a business associate of Hochstätter's matchstick factory, how can one be sure he was truthful in his scientific and museum activities? It might be time to take a critical view on existing accounts of Haast's life; and in addition to the documents preserved in the Sir Julius von Haast Collection at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, the previously overlooked records held in archives in Germany and other sources such as the diary of Haast's fellow passenger on board the *Evening Star*, need to be consulted for a more comprehensive and accurate biographical portrait of Haast's multifaceted personality.

Endnotes

1. Julius Hanf (Haast) published a series of articles about Hochstetter's travels in New Zealand in the daily newspapers *Wiener Zeitung* and *Allgemeine Zeitung* between 13 April 1859 and 14 March 1860. One can only speculate why he chose the pseudonym "Hanf", which is the German name for the cannabis plant.
2. While the old Anglican church collapsed during the earthquake in 2011, Haast's memorial stone withstood the shaking. The words of the inscribed epitaph "vitam impendere vero" also feature in Haast's coat of arms, issued by the Austrian Emperor in 1875 in gratitude for naming the South Island Franz Joseph Glacier after him and gifting specimens, artefacts and Māori skulls to the Crown Prince and the imperial collections in Vienna, see: Ferdinand Hochstetter to Julius Haast, 10 November 1874; Ferdinand Hochstetter to Julius Haast, 25 July 1875; in: Nolden 2013: 167-172; von Haast, HF. 1948: 346, 971.
3. On 4 Dec 1860, Hannah Richardson married The Hon J D Ormond in Hawke's Bay, see: Mary Boyd, 'Ormond, John Davies', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/105/ormond-john-davies>
4. Reinganum, Maximilian, Erklärung von Seite der provisorischen Vormünder des minderjährigen Mathias Robert Haast wider den Frankfurter Bürger und Handelsmann Johann Franz Haast, dermalen in Neu-Seeland die verlangte Aufhebung der provisorischen Vormundschaft betreffend. 17 Januar 1866). IHF, Sig. 152. (Statement by the provisional guardians of the minor Mathias Robert Haast against the Frankfurt citizen and merchant Johann Franz Haast, at present in Neu-Seeland, concerning the requested termination of the provisional guardianship. 17 January 1866). Dr Maximilian Reinganum (1798-1878) was a highly-regarded lawyer, local politician and publicist based in Frankfurt am Main, see: 'Reinganum, Maximilian', *Frankfurter Personenlexikon*: <https://frankfurter-personenlexikon.de/node/869>
5. At that time, the purchasing power of 1 Gulden was equivalent to approximately \$NZ 40, see: Kaufkraftäquivalente historischer Beträge in deutschen Währungen, Deutsche Bundesbank, 2024: www.bundesbank.de/resource/blob/615162/94b87ff6d25eceb84c9cfb801162b334/mL/kaufkraftaequivalente-historischer-betraege-in-deutschen-waehrungen-data.pdf
6. In 1858 Dr Ferdinand Hochstetter's name did not contain the preposition 'von'; it was added to his name after he received a hereditary knighthood for his scientific work in 1860, see Nolden 2013: 30.
7. In 2014 the name of Mount Robert was changed to the original Māori name Pourangahou, see: 'NZGB decisions - August 2014', Land Information New Zealand Toitū te Whenua: <https://web.archive.org/web/20151121203027/http://www.linz.govt.nz/regulatory/place-names/recent-place-name-decisions-and-place-names-interest/nzgb-decisions-august>
8. Vortrag und Bitte, Anwalt des hiesigen Bürgers Johann Franz Julius Haast, dermalen in Neuseeland, zur Sache Haast, Antonie Johanna Caroline, geb. Schmitt, Nachlass 1859. 6 January 1866. IHF, Sig. 152 (Application by the lawyer of the local citizen Johann Franz Julius Haast, at present residing in New Zealand, in the matter Haast, Antonie Johanna Caroline née Schmitt, estate 1859. 6 January 1866)
9. The Provincial Government of Canterbury paid the amount of £1,500 to the survey department and covered all the costs for completing the geological survey of the province; Haast's salary was £500, see: von Haast, HF 1848: 114.

10. Arranged by Dr von Hochstetter, after Haast sent him a fabricated CV and 100 Gulden, see: Ferdinand Hochstetter to Julius Haast, 16 October 1862; in: Nolden 2013: 84.
11. Haast sent moa bones and bird skins to scholarly societies, academies of science, and in return, he received certificates as corresponding member; see, for example: Carl von Martius (Royal Bavarian Academy of Science) to Julius Haast, 24 July 1868, MS-Papers 7500, ATL, Wellington.
12. In 1887 the purchasing power of 1 Mark was equivalent to approximately \$NZ 17, see: Kaufkraftäquivalente historischer Beträge in deutschen Währungen.

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