

# Etienne Fiacre Louis Raoul (1815 – 1852)

**E**tienne Raoul, born in Brest on 23 July 1815, was the third child and only son of French naval captain, Joseph-François Raoul and his wife Vincente Josèphe, née Lee Manach. His paternal grandparents had lived in Tréguier in Brittany, north of Brest, and his two uncles, who also had associations with the sea, may have helped with Etienne's upbringing and career after his father's death in 1816. Etienne studied medicine and qualified as a surgeon in 1836, and the following year was appointed to the commission of African exploration. He saved many lives when the crew of *La Malouine* was struck by an epidemic in French West Africa (Senegal), and in 1838 was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur.

When Dumont d'Urville left New Zealand in 1840 on his last voyage, Etienne Raoul was surgeon on the French corvette *l'Aube*, which was sent to Akaroa to support the early French settlement there. It was replaced by *l'Allier* in March 1842, and Raoul was transferred as well. His medical skills were in demand soon after his arrival at Akaroa, when several of *l'Aube's* crew ate poisonous tutu berries while out walking. One sailor died almost immediately, but the others responded to treatment. Raoul was also a keen naturalist, and while in New Zealand made extensive collections of plants, mainly on Banks Peninsula, but also during a visit to Bay of Islands.

On his return to France in the autumn of 1843 he was asked to classify the botanical specimens he had sent from New Zealand, and in 1846 his *Choix de Plantes de la Nouvelle-Zélande* was published. As he was the first to investigate in any detail the flora of the eastern side of the South Island, the book included descriptions of 44 new species, thirteen of them beautifully illustrated by Alfred Riocreux (1820–1912), artist at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. It also listed all then-known species of the New Zealand flora.

Etienne Raoul continued his medical work and writing, and died in Brest in 1852, aged 37, while still in service with the Department of Marine and the Colonies. The cause of his death is unknown. His services to New Zealand botany are commemorated in the genus *Raoulia*, which Joseph Dalton Hooker described from specimens Raoul had collected, and the species *Plantago raoulii*, *Hebe raoulii* and *Carex raoulii*. A hebe discovered by Raoul at Akaroa in 1840 was named *Hebe lavaudiana* after his captain on *l'Aube*, Charles-François Lavaud. Raoul Island in the Kermadec group to the north of New Zealand was named after Etienne's uncle, Joseph Raoul, who was pilot-master on the *Recherche* when the island was discovered in 1793. Another Raoul, Etienne's nephew Edouard, arranged publication of a French edition of botanical artist Georgina Hetley's *Native Flora of New Zealand* in 1889.

## ***Raoulia mammillaris***

*Raoulia* is a mainly New Zealand genus of mat and cushion plants. Most of our 20 species reach the alpine zone. *Raoulia mammillaris* (Latin *mamma* 'breast', referring to the humpy shape of the cushion) is one of the smaller South Island "vegetable sheep", rarely more than 80 cm across. Typically it grows from stable rock crevices into which the main tap-root penetrates, the stems and leaves crowded into dense, hard, greyish cushions, the short hairs at the leaf tips making it harsh to the touch. Flower heads (4–6 mm wide) are surrounded by distinctive inner bract scales with prominent blunt, white tips. High alpine, it is confined to the drier greywacke mountains east of the Main Divide in mid- and North Canterbury.

