

1913.

NEW ZEALAND.

DOMINION MUSEUM

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1913.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand, 1st October, 1913.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward herewith a report for the Dominion Museum for the year ended 31st March, 1913.

I have, &c.,

A. HAMILTON, Director.

The Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

OFFICES.

THE only alteration to the staff during the last twelve months has been the transfer of Mr. McDonald from the Agricultural Department. He has been in charge of the photographic and cinematographic work, which is required for the High Commissioner's and other Departments.

The usual correspondence and vouchers have been dealt with during the year so far as relates to the Museum and Hector Observatory. A large amount of work is entailed upon the office in connection with the receipt and despatch of the packages from the Smithsonian International Exchange Bureau for scientific publications, of which the Museum is the New Zealand agent. During the year 936 packages have been received from this source and distributed to various parts of New Zealand.

Publications to the number of 982 have been received for those issued by the Museum and the New Zealand Institute.

The pamphlets and books presented to the libraries, and those subscribed for by the Museum and the Wellington Philosophical Society, amount to 984 numbers. All these have been recorded and placed in various parts of the building. At present they are obliged to be kept in various rooms, and no order or definite arrangement is practicable. A scientific library is urgently required, properly organized and easily available.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS.

New Zealand History and General Ethnology.

A register of the specimens received during the year, and a card catalogue of several sections of it, have been brought up to date. Two or three important collections have been received in the year, but have had to be packed away pending the erection of a new building.

The condition of those specimens exhibited in the Museum is a source of anxiety, as they are badly attacked by the wood-boring beetle, and are otherwise damaged by damp and dust. I would point out that it is important for large collections of objects of any kind whatever to have a fairly even temperature, as extremes of heat and cold are very undesirable. There are at present no means of heating the Museum except in the offices.

Among the principal collections acquired is the Lord St. Oswald collection. It is an extremely valuable and interesting exhibit, with historical associations from New Zealand and Hawaii. The Museum has also received a gold cup presented to the New Zealand Government by Japan in recognition of the assistance received by Japan from New Zealand on the occasion of the great famine in 1905.

Further additions have been made by purchase of many small collections, and two rather important collections are under offer.

New Zealand Natural History.

During the past year several interesting specimens of the ribbon-fish have been received and casts made of the most important. A very fine individual skeleton of *Dinornis torosus* has been purchased from the finder, who obtained it from a cave near Takaka. The skeletons of the larger Moas are seldom found under circumstances which show that the bones are those of an adult, and that they are really of one individual. A number of native-bird skins have been added to the general collection, which urgently requires attention and examination. I regret to say in this connection that notwithstanding the efforts made to obtain live huia no specimens have been acquired, and what is still more discouraging is that no recent occurrence of the bird has been reported.

In New Zealand entomology the season for adding to the collection has been an unfavourable one, and, although an experienced collector was placed in the field for a month, the collections for this year has been very disappointing. However, the whole collection has increased to a large extent and has been added to from private sources. The specimens have all been individually catalogued by the Entomological Assistant. The main collection of *Heterocera* numbers at present about seven thousand. The foreign collection of *Lepidoptera* has been rearranged and added to during the year, and a section illustrating the Palaearctic region set out and duly named. A partial card catalogue of the species has been made. The collection at present comprises over twenty thousand specimens, and the New Zealand section accounts for another eight thousand. They require a great deal of attention in consequence of the difficulty of preventing mould, owing to the dampness of the building. Of the other orders of insects, the Museum possesses about ten thousand specimens of foreign *Coleoptera*, which will have to be worked out when an opportunity offers. There are also a few representatives of other orders. A valuable type collection of *Libellulidae*, mainly from the Australian region, named by the highest authority on these insects in Australia, has been acquired. The New Zealand collection of *Coleoptera* requires rearranging in fresh cabinets, but at present we have not been able to move in the matter.

ETHNOLOGY OF THE MAORI RACE.

Mr. Best has collected a large amount of information from Native sources and from manuscript written by the older Maoris in the "forties" and "fifties," from the earlier European writers, and from Mr. John White's manuscript notes of Maori matter. He has written out under suitable heads a most valuable collection of material for a future publication. Recognizing that this work must be done without any further loss of time, no attention has been given to the history of the wars and genealogies of the Natives, but a strong effort is being made to ascertain correctly as far as possible the information required to give a connected account of the ethnology of the Maori race. Close modern investigation shows that customs differ largely amongst the tribes of the New Zealand islands, and much work is required to be done before we get a general survey of Maori ethnology up to present-day standard. The subject has been divided into heads, and in some divisions a very large number of notes have been accumulated. These are classed under various heads and will be published in Museum Bulletins when duly arranged and as occasion offers. Three of these bulletins have been issued, and Part IV is now nearly ready for issue.

GENERAL.

The busts of Maoris made by Mr. Illingworth have been suitably bronzed, and very necessary repairs have been made to the large oil paintings in the Museum, notably that of Dr. Featherston and the Natives who assisted in the foundation of early Wellington.

A portion of the limited space in the present building is still occupied by the remains of the Geological section under the charge of the Mines Department. Steps should be taken to provide accommodation for these specimens if they are to be exhibited, in another building.

The most pressing want in buildings at present, however, is safe storage and suitable workshops, as much museum work has to be done in the preservation of specimens and in setting them up in a suitable manner for exhibition.

Since 1903 the question of a new Museum has been under consideration by Government, and numerous sites have been selected and plans drawn, but none finally decided upon. At the time of the fire which destroyed the Parliamentary Buildings tenders had been called for and received for the commencement of a new building, which unfortunately came to nothing, and many other schemes have been since considered. Since then the old building has been painted, but at present it is neither fitted for the exhibition of specimens to the public nor for workrooms for the preparation and preservation of specimens; and it is badly arranged for the use of the staff, who have to work under conditions which are not creditable or sanitary. Storage room is fairly water-tight, but, being a wooden building much eaten by boring-beetles, it is in many places not safe, and until the fossil and mineral specimens are removed from the Museum and taken care of by the Mines Department a large amount of floor-area and wall-space is not available for museum purposes. The Institute Act of 1903 placed the mineral specimens under their charge. Many of the cases were originally made for fossils and minerals, and are quite unsuitable for ethnological or zoological specimens, and are not at all up to modern requirements, letting in freely dust and moths. Owing to the age of the building and the attendance of schools and numbers of people, dust is one of the greatest of our troubles. The better-made cases are mostly those that have been taken over from bygone Exhibitions, and were not made for museum work nor are they on modern lines. Few have proper fastenings, and some have to be screwed down. No permanent or satisfactory scheme for exhibition of specimens for any educational purpose can be followed.

The whole of the Museum building is infested with the boring-beetle, and, although repairs from time to time have been done, leaks are the result of every heavy storm. The boring-beetle

also is liable to damage the specimens. It is difficult under the present conditions to do anything that will check these unsatisfactory circumstances.

At present there is no convenient workshop for repairing and constructing cases or making the necessary rough boxes or cases for exchanges. Recently the small room that was used for tools and museum material has been cleaned out and fitted up as a retiring-room for the female members of the staff. This convenience has been much required for some years.

Until recently half the old brick-built power-house in Sydney Street has been used by the Museum for storing a large number of curios, including the Buller and other collections, the other half being used for the Government kinematograph work by Mr. McDonald. Recently, however, the work at the Parliament House necessitated the pulling-down of the part used for the storage of the curios, and a large iron shed has been built at the corner of Sydney and old Museum Streets, in which they are now stored together with the collections which have been recently received. The photographer still occupies the other half of the building, but this is liable to be removed at any moment. A very large number of specimens are now stored in the iron shed.

During the year the under-part of the Museum has been cleared out, enabling the whole area to be inspected and a quantity of useless and decayed woodwork to be removed. It has, however, been found necessary to replace under the building a large number of the boxes containing mineral specimens belonging to the Mines Department. New openings have been cut to allow the air to circulate more freely.

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