

THE MUSEUMS OF NEW ZEALAND

IN the first article in this series, which appeared in the October issue of the "Journal," Enid B. V. Phillips traced the growth of museums generally and described the Dominion Museum, Wellington. This month she deals with the formation and development of the Otago and Canterbury Museums.

The Otago Museum

THE Otago Museum was established primarily as a natural history museum and its nucleus consisted of the rocks and natural history specimens collected by Dr. (later Sir) James Hector for the extremely successful New Zealand Exhibition held in Dunedin in 1865. The first meeting of the museum committee took place on July 1, 1868; the Provincial Government made its initial appropriation for museum purposes in 1873 and the Old Block in King Street was built in 1876-77, being opened as a public museum on August 11, 1877, with Captain Frederick Woolaston Hutton as curator. Hutton's catalogues of New Zealand birds, fishes, and mollusca had been compiled several years previously.

In addition to the notornis (a most beautifully preserved specimen 19½ in. high, with vivid plumage of peacock blue, olive green, and indigo), the museum has mounted examples of native birds only recently extinct: The New Zealand quail, the screech-owl, the huia, the Stephen Island wren, the Chatham Island rail and fern-bird, the MacQuarrie Island rail, the Auckland Island merganser (the only sea-duck in New Zealand), and the New Zealand thrush. The sole spirit-preserved specimens of the two last-named species are also in the museum. Thanks to Professor Brian Marples's flair for field work the museum possesses more penguin fossils than those of all the rest of the world's museums put together, and rare birds are represented by the stitch-bird, the saddleback, and two varieties of wattled crow.

Ferocious Rhinoceros

In the mammal section a two-horned Sumatran rhinoceros of gargantuan girth and ferocious mien has a claim to world fame, there being only six mounted specimens in existence, and this one is probably unique in that its skeleton has been preserved also. Its local prestige is due to its position as guardian of the door, and it is a well-known fact that the parental threat "Be good or the rhino will get you" has the power to intimidate the most boisterous youngster into near-perfect behaviour on his first visit to the museum. Dr. H. D. Skinner, who succeeded Sir William Benham as Director, reports a perpetual influx of elderly visitors whose principal purpose in making a pilgrimage to the museum is to see once again the monster which frightened them in their youth.

The new wing added to the north side of the museum in 1909 was named after the first lecturer in surgery at the University of Otago, Dr. Thomas Morland Hocken, who published that standard reference work "Bibliography of the Literature Relating to New Zealand" that same year, having donated earlier his extensive library of New Zealand books, prints, maps, and MSS. to the museum.

Twenty years later a similar extension was made to the south side, this modern structure being skilfully designed to harmonise with the Victorian architecture exemplified by the original building. It was called the Fels Wing in honour of Willi Fels, the museum's chief benefactor, who not only gave generously of his wealth and knowledge (and as a connoisseur of arts and crafts he had no superior in this country), but created the Department of Anthropology and endowed it with his own magnificent collections, every item of his gift being "meticulously catalogued in his neat handwriting."

Boyhood Collections

He began collecting during his boyhood in Germany, coins and stamps being his first loves. Soon after he arrived in New Zealand in 1838 to enter the head office of the New Zealand Clothing Factory (better known as Hallenstein Bros.) he turned his attention to Maori and Oceanic material and during the next decade he commenced the collecting of oriental arms, Ceramics and choice glass, too, appealed to him, as did objets d'art from India, Persia, Burma, and Japan, and Sir Francis Younghusband,



The Otago Museum's head of a woman in marble, which is believed to be from one of the metopes of the Parthenon and which is very similar to the work of the great Greek sculptor Phidias.

the famous explorer, contributed a number of pieces to his Tibetan collection. But always his chief pleasure lay in his Greek and Roman coins, of which he had over 5000. Classifying and arranging these proved an absorbing occupation throughout the last years of his life.

Classical Tastes Reflected in Garden

The garden at his home, "Manono" (the Samoan equivalent of his surname, which means "rock," both words signifying durability), also reflected his classical tastes, and gentians from the Italian hills grew there as happily as the hardiest of native shrubs, and cyclamens that once flowered amid some ancient Grecian ruins flourished among the ferns he brought back in such plenitude from his frequent travels in New Zealand. And at all times it was his joy to share his garden's bounty with others. Of this sterling citizen, upon whom the King conferred the C.M.G. for his outstanding contribution to the culture of the community, there is surely no more endearing word-portrait than that penned by the Director of the Otago Museum: "One likes best to remember him in the happy setting of his own home, presiding at his table with courtly hospitality, entertaining some small boy—he was always at his best