

THE MUSEUMS OF NEW ZEALAND

THE first two articles in this series by Enid B. V. Phillips described the Dominion Museum, Wellington, and the Otago and Canterbury Museums. This month she deals with the founding and growth of the

Auckland War Memorial Museum

THE industry of a young Scottish naval surgeon in employing his leisure hours to study the vegetation of the Cape of Good Hope, where he was stationed, instead of indulging in more frivolous pastimes started the chain of events which culminated in the formation of a museum in one of the fairest cities of the Dominion—Auckland. Dr. Andrew Sinclair's professional skill, combined with his prowess at botany, gave him the ideal qualifications for his appointment to the Sulphur party to accompany the Beechey expedition to South America in 1835. Indeed, his botanical contributions from Brazil, Mexico, Central America, and California so added to the success of the trip that the eminent scientist Joseph Hooker named a species in his honour.

He came to New Zealand in 1841, finding it an absolute paradise of plant life. Here he could botanise to his heart's content and the British Museum often benefited from his discoveries. He made one voyage to Tasmania, but he no longer desired to travel to foreign parts, preferring to settle in New Zealand, where he accepted the post of Colonial Secretary. By 1852 his collecting had reached such proportions as to warrant the beginning of a museum locally. With the help of several other kindred spirits a small 4-roomed cottage in Grafton Road was secured for this purpose, and on October 25, 1852, Auckland held its first museum display.

Tragic Ending

Sad to relate, Dr. Sinclair's story had a tragic ending. During the early part of 1861 he joined forces with Julius von Haast to explore the Southern Alps. They had covered quite a lot of territory when Sinclair decided to return to their headquarters at Samuel Butler's station, Mesopotamia, with his specimens before proceeding further into the mountains. While crossing a creek in company with another member of the party he suddenly stumbled and, failing to regain his footing, was whirled downstream by the swift-running waters. His burial took place at Mesopotamia and Haast commemorated his name by calling the 7000ft. peak at the head of Forest Creek after him. Dr. Sinclair's nieces undertook the mounting of his specimens, which were displayed by Sir George Grey at the Dunedin Exhibition of 1865.

With Sinclair's death interest in the Auckland Museum languished, and though Dr. Hochstetter had renovated the collection during his brief stay in 1859, it again fell into neglect until Captain F. W. Hutton's ministrations revived it. In 1867 he supervised the museum's removal to the Provincial Government offices in Princes Street, where the Northern Club now stands. The Auckland Institute (at first called the Auckland Philosophical Society) was founded in November of that year by the Superintendent of the province, Mr. Justice Gillies, and in 1869 the Auckland Provincial Council transferred the museum to the institute and the museum was then moved to the old post office on the corner of Princes Street and Eden Crescent, where it was housed for the next 7 years.

The botanist Thomas Kirk acted as secretary and curator until 1874, the museum being open thrice weekly. His successor, Thomas Frederick Cheeseman, was also a botanist and it is indicative of the happy relationship between the two men that in years to come Cheeseman completed the major work "Flora of the Outlying Islands," which Kirk, who had been chief conservator of State Forests since 1885, was engaged upon before his death. (The beautifully fitted, bronze-handled writing-case with its ingenious locking device and pin to hold the drawer in position, a wedding gift to Thomas Kirk from his workmates in England; the cleverly partitioned mahogany chest, marked Cabin 10 and monogrammed with the initials T.K., which Mrs.



[Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd. photo.
The imposing facade of the Auckland War Memorial Museum, which is situated in the Auckland Domain.

Kirk had made to hold the baby's clothes on the 5-months voyage to New Zealand aboard the Gertrude in 1863, and which was later used by her husband on his travels through the colony and the outlying islands; and his large armchair with its comfortably upholstered curves, slender, scroll-shaped legs and acanthus-carved headpiece are greatly treasured by his descendants who reside at Wadestown, Wellington.)

Bent for Botany

Thomas Cheeseman, son of a Yorkshire minister, was born at Hull, England, but came to New Zealand with his parents at the age of 7. He had always shown a bent for botany and even the ship which brought him to New Zealand bore a botanical name, *Artemesia*, a genus of the daisy family. The first thing he did on being rowed ashore after the *Artemesia* dropped anchor in Waitemata Harbour was to climb up a huge tree fern, to the detriment of his Eton suit, and cut off one of the large curling fronds, carrying off his first specimen of New Zealand flora in triumph to his new home.

Auckland acclaims him as her own son, for he was educated there, and during his holiday rambles through the countryside he became so familiar with the vegetation of the locality that soon after his college days he published an account of the plant life of the Waitakere hills, a most important paper, as it is the sole record of a vegetation "now profoundly modified."

In those early days the institute had only 90 members and its total income was just over £90 a year, which had to cover the curator's salary as well as museum expenses and purchases, so the magnitude of the task confronting Cheeseman can be appreciated. Fortunately, his entire family shared his enthusiasm for the museum and did all they could to help him. When he was engaged in duties for the Acclimatisation Society on Sundays his father substituted for him at the museum. His brother Willie betook himself on shooting expeditions to secure additional specimens of birds, and his eldest sister Emma tried her hand at taxidermy with commendable results. Another sister, Nellie, had a talent for sketching which she turned to good account on behalf of the museum, as witness her lovely little drawings of shells, while Clara, the youngest of the family, acted as his secretary for many years—"My amanuensis," as he affectionately called her.