

AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM . . .

His own diligence and enthusiasm so kindled public interest in the museum that within a year he had persuaded his fellow-citizens to subscribe over £2000 toward the cost of a new brick building on the Princes Street site, the second story being used as an art gallery and library, the opening ceremony being performed on June 5, 1876, by the Marquis of Normanby.

Funds from Conversaciones

As finances improved Cheeseman was able to avail himself of the services of the Austrian Andreas Reischek as taxidermist. In an account of an early conversazione held at the museum it is reported that Reischek prepared a group of birds and animals especially for the occasion. He also did much collecting at Kawau. These conversaciones continued to be a regular feature and provided the funds for new showcases and other needs of the museum.

In 1884 the museum purchased the section next door, this land being used for the extension of the building in 1892. An amusing contretemps occurred in connection with the erection of this extension, a special section being set aside to shelter the large Maori war canoe Te Toki-a-tapiri. Unluckily, however, the canoe proved too big to go through the doorway, so that part of the wall had to be pulled down and rebuilt to accommodate the enormous canoe, over 82ft. long and the only one of such size to be preserved intact. According to Archdeacon H. H. Williams, the chief Waaka Peruhaka, who lived near Kaupapa, was at one time owner of this canoe, presenting it to the noted Ngapuhi chief Tamata Waaka Nene. The latter returned the compliment by giving him a piebald stallion called Taika (Tiger), probably the first in the Poverty Bay district, and Peruhaka is also credited with introducing the first parcel of wheat in the district.

The property adjoining the museum at the back belonged to a Mr. Keesing, whose trio of little dark-haired daughters frequently preferred the museum to their own spacious garden as a playground and sometimes had to be gently shooed homewards when their games became too noisy for the prevailing silence of those sacred precincts.

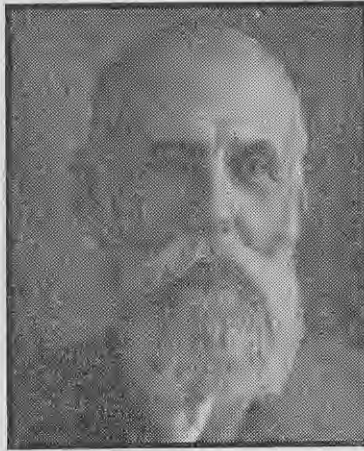
Years later the middle one, Rose, whose face was as lovely as the flower after which she was named, became the curator's bride, and for their wedding trip they went on the steamer Hinemoa, with Captain Fairchild, to the Three Kings on a botanical expedition. In order to land on one of the islands the dainty little bride had the unenviable experience of having to jump from the ship to the shore at a given signal; the slightest mistake in timing and she would have been crushed between the boat and the rocks. Nevertheless, she came through the ordeal safely like the courageous woman she was, and there was no untoward incident to mar the idyllic happiness of their excursion together.

Plant Collecting in Southern Alps

In January of the following year they had a second honeymoon, this time collecting plants in the Southern

Alps region. Rose Cheeseman also accompanied her husband on his trip to Polynesia, his survey of the flora of Rarotonga being published by the Royal Linnean Society, a signal honour.

Thomas Cheeseman invariably made the trip to the museum each day on horseback and he habitually carried a black leather bag slung over his back. So regular was his time of arrival each morning that the wife of a well-known newspaper proprietor who lived along the route used to exclaim to her daughter: "See if the clock's right! Here comes Mr. Cheeseman."



T. F. Cheeseman, curator of the Auckland Institute and Museum for half a century.

He always took this bag on his collecting expeditions, and if he intended to be away overnight, he saw that it contained a supply of absorbent paper suitable for pressing specimens between. On a calm day it was quite a customary sight to see dozens of sheets of specimens spread out to dry on the sunny balcony of the Cheeseman home.

The walls of his study were lined with bookshelves and beautifully grained cupboards of heart kauri specially designed to hold his herbarium. Particular as he was over his specimens and papers, he had no care whatsoever for his clothes, and many a time he came home with his suit ripped to ribbons after climbing cliffs to reach some rare flower or fern or fossicking in caves in search of Maori curios.

Although Cheeseman was pre-eminent as a botanist, he was interested in all the sciences, and out of his 101 papers and books 22 were concerned with zoology and ethnology. Moreover, he was meteorological observer at Auckland for 32 years and as a young man assisted his father in the formation of an astronomical society and was also the mainstay of the Acclimatisation Society. He was an authority, too, on Maori art and history and he built up a unique collection relating to the customs, manners, and mode of life of the Maori race.

When the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (King George V and Queen Mary) visited New Zealand in 1901 they specially requested the Auckland Museum to be included in their itinerary, and Their Royal Highnesses were so keenly interested in all Thomas Cheeseman showed them and the fascinating stories he recounted concerning the various items in the Maori collection that they overstayed their time and even then were reluctant to depart.

Te Rangihiroa, Dr. (Sir) Peter Buck, had a good deal to do with the collection in its infancy and when this distinguished anthropologist, whose researches in the Pacific, at Yale University, and at the Bishop Museum, Honolulu (of which he is Director) have earned him world fame, returned to the land of his birth a few months ago and saw the growth of the Auckland Museum's Maori collection in the last 22 years he declared it to be the finest in existence.

Generous Subscriptions

The citizens of Auckland were quick to realise that "a good curator makes a good museum" and based their generosity accordingly, on numerous occasions subscribing the funds needed for such purchases as the Mair Maori collection, the Spencer collection of Maori carvings, the carved pataka and the celebrated runanga house, "Rangitihiti." The bequest from Edward Costley (who lived frugally and left a fortune) provided the museum with a permanent income. E. A. Mackelvie's bequest built up the museum library, which was further augmented by the gift of 500 scientific volumes each from G. F. Edmonstone and J. T. Mackelvie. The latter's mining ventures at Thames proved so successful that he founded the Mackelvie Trust, under which valuable art collections were presented to the city. Sir John Logan Campbell, "the father of Auckland," was another generous donor, and, indeed, a complete list of benefactions over the years would cover pages and pages even in fine print.

Cheeseman's work on the cross-fertilisation of orchids attracted the attention of that great scientist Charles Darwin, who corresponded with him on the subject, these letters now being in the museum. In 1906 the Government published Cheeseman's monumental work, "The Manual of the New Zealand Flora," but always the botanist's chief concern was the development of his beloved museum. Many of the books sent to him personally by overseas scientists enriched the museum library and he carried on a correspondence with curators of foreign museums, for though he could not speak their language, yet with the aid of a dictionary he was able to compose suitable epistles in their own tongue, and if there was nobody at hand to translate the reply for him, he undertook the task himself, once more turning to a trusty dictionary for assistance.

All manner of valuable exchanges and additions to the collections were effected by this means, but lest it be thought his life was all work and no relaxation, it should be mentioned that he derived great joy from his garden and his stamp collection. He also loved to play and spent many a