

early bird, prefers a worm diet) to the proud argonaut or paper nautilus, whose pearly, embossed shell, primarily a repository for the egg mass, is so fragile that perfect specimens are seldom found on New Zealand's rocky coastline. For an individual collector to have acquired six such specimens, as was Mr. Peat's good fortune, was a distinct achievement.

Nevertheless, as might be expected, the mainstay of the Treasure House was the kauri gum, these remarkable specimens, recovered from swamps that were once the site of mighty forests, being appropriately arranged in mottled-kauri showcases and revealing an incredible depth of colouring. Even a slight change in the angle of the light, for instance, would cause a flush of bronze to pass instantaneously to clear chrome, or a dark yellowish-brown to grey-green or emerald. A prismatic tinge was apparent in certain pieces; in others, the gradations of shading were so subtle as to be almost imperceptible. "With inexpressible delicacy the many tones of yellow mingle together—amber, wine, honey, sulphur, straw, bronze, gold. In a bright light or when the sun's rays are caught and retracted, firelike reflections—copper, crimson, scarlet, orange, garnet, dark hyacinth, or deep ruby red—blend with softer hues. Under favourable conditions there is an intensifying of all colour to a gemlike



[From the Alexander Turnbull Library photographic collection. Kauri gum being prepared for marketing by Maoris in Northland about 40 years ago. It was from the gum diggers that F. O. Peat obtained the specimens for his Treasure Houses.



[J. D. Richardson photo. Shells of the kauri snail, an exhibit in the Whaka Treasure House.

quality. The larger specimens contain wisps of white vapour, imprisoned for many thousands of years. These resemble 'mackerel skies', the most purely beautiful of all the visible shapes which vapour takes in the heavens. Sometimes the texture is thin and delicate; sometimes it gathers into globules or rounded tufts or fleeces, but all are ruled by a definite plan or direction. Other specimens sparkle with prismatic drops or show a fine tracery of branch or spray, or the structure may take the form of variegated marble."

Kauri Gum "Vase"

One unusual sample discovered by a prospector in a cave on the Tangihua Range, between Dargaville and Whangarei, is regarded as being without peer, not only because it is shaped

like an epergne, but because the gum is still in its natural state, although the kauri root to which it clings and the solitary rewarewa leaf adorning one side of the "vase" are petrified.

In 1942, when Mr. Peat wished to retire from custodianship of his collection of treasures, the Rotorua Borough Council took over the entire contents of the Whaka Treasure House and set it up in the municipal buildings, thus acquiring a museum ready-made. The man whom the late Rt. Hon. Gordon Coates declared a "national asset" because his diligence as a collector preserved for his country so many valuable articles which would otherwise have been lost or sold overseas died in 1945, but the treasures he spent a lifetime collecting remain to give pleasure and enlightenment to countless generations to come. His widow has gone back to Tiritangi to live, and in the congenial atmosphere of a home containing so many rare and beautiful curios that it is really a museum in miniature his son Huia practices a craft which is fast dying out in New Zealand, the polishing of greenstone.

Timaru Museum

There are many exquisite examples of the potter's craft to be found in the museums of this country, but few possess the power to charm the eternal feminine, whether little girl or grandmother, like the dolls' china donated to the art gallery and museum in Timaru (the town whose melodious Maori name is interpreted, "In the shelter of the cabbage trees") by Mrs. Arthur Hope, a descendant of a well-known pioneer family of South Canterbury.

Without doubt, the loveliest of these Lilliputian treasures is the Staffordshire dinner service, every piece from the 3in.-diameter soup and dinner plates to the oval vegetable dishes and tureen being rimmed with green and bordered by a strawberry-leaf design

in a deeper shade on a cream ground. The largest of the 4 ashets (flat dishes) is only 6in. long and each wee gravy boat has a platter of its own.

Tiny Japanese Tea-set

The tea-set, of bluish-white porcelain patterned in a dark, rich blue and bearing the former owner's monogram, "H", is of Japanese origin. The tiny teapot is just 2½in. high and the bowl-like cups are devoid of handles in the traditional Japanese fashion, though the large, deep saucers are reminiscent of Western-style tea-services.

Another fascinating item from the Land of the Rising Sun is a combination plate and saucer 1½in. long, the cup being proportioned accordingly



[From the Alexander Turnbull Library photographic collection. Washing kauri gum chips in swamp-land in Northland. On the right of the spade is a gum spear, by which the gum is found.