

**Sir Frederick Revans Chapman, 1849-1936.**

FREDERICK REVANS CHAPMAN was born at "Homewood," Karori, Wellington, on March 3, 1849, the fifth son of Henry Samuel Chapman, Judge of the Supreme Court, later sometime Colonial Secretary of Van Dieman's Land and Attorney-General of Victoria. He died at Wellington on June 24, 1936. "He was a remarkable man, son of a remarkable father, who, between them, have left in New Zealand judicial circles two records, the one that of father and son both occupying a seat on the judicial bench; the other, that of the father, in occupying a seat in two distinct parts of the Empire." His elder son died in 1917. His younger son, after a distinguished career at Cambridge including full blue for Rugby and half-blue for boxing, joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, and fell in the second battle of Ypres. Sir Frederick is survived by Lady Chapman and three daughters, one of whom, Dr Sylvia Chapman, is the first woman to be elected to a seat on the Senate of the University of New Zealand.

In the course of a survey of his career at Bar and Bench the *New Zealand Law Journal* says:—

"The death of the Hon. Sir Frederick Chapman closes an epoch in the history of the profession of the law in this country. His eighty-seven years of life spanned the whole period of our constitutional government, and his connection with the administration of justice went back to his friendly intimacy in boyhood with our first Chief Justice, Sir William Martin. His father, Mr. Justice H. S. Chapman, was appointed our first puisne Judge when his son was nine months old. Sir Frederick had known all the Judges who have been on the New Zealand Bench with the exception of Mr. Justice Sidney Stephen and Mr. Justice Wakefield. He appeared as junior counsel in a case in which Mr. James Prendergast (afterwards third Chief Justice) appeared on the opposing side. He appeared before all the Judges appointed prior to his own appointment to the Bench, excepting the two already named and Sir William Martin, C.J., and Mr. Justice Buckley, both of whom he knew. And all the Judges appointed since Sir Frederick Chapman's own appointment had appeared as counsel before him when he was on the Bench. . . . In another sense, Sir Frederick's own appointment to the Supreme Court Bench in 1903 was the beginning of a new epoch in the Dominion's legal history. He was the first native-born New Zealander to attain that high office. When he died, our Judges, with one exception, were New Zealand-born."

Those interested in the details of his unique services to New Zealand law will find them recorded elsewhere: here will be noted his services to the natural sciences, particularly to ethnology. In these also Sir Frederick occupies a place which is, in its way, unique. He had been educated in the Melbourne Grammar School, and in France, Germany, and Italy, and he spoke their languages fluently.

More than once he was mistaken by Germans for a German, and when, towards the end of the Great War, he was appointed a Commission to inquire into the treatment of Germans interned on Somes Island, he was able on several occasions to correct the official interpreter. He was for many years a Corresponding Fellow of the Ethnological and Anthropological Society of Italy. He had also a reading knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese.

He was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1871, returning to New Zealand and settling in Dunedin in 1872. On August 13, 1872, he was elected a member of the Otago Institute, retaining membership till 1903, when, on appointment to the Bench, he moved to Wellington. He was a member of the Council of the Institute from 1883 to 1903, inclusive, and was three times president—1887, 1898, 1899. The discussions recorded in the minute books covering the period witness the breadth of his interests and his intellectual keenness. The family connection with the Institute is without parallel, his father, Mr. Justice H. S. Chapman, having been president four times—in the second, third, fourth, and fifth sessions—and the son three times.

He was actively interested in botany, and was the discoverer of several species of *Celmisia* and of the first of the coloured varieties of manuka, *Leptospermum scoparium* var. *Chapmani*. His interest in zoology is indicated by papers on the moas and by his paper, "Considerations Relative to the Age of the Earth's Crust," published in the *Transactions* in 1926. A personal touch may be noted in the fact that though Sir Frederick had lived in Wellington for some twenty-three years, this paper was read before the Otago Institute.

Apart from law, his chief intellectual interests were historical and ethnological, and in the field of European ethnology there was probably no one in Australasia so widely read. He joined the Polynesian Society at its foundation in 1892, and remained a member and an occasional contributor to its *Journal* until his death. His field work in ethnology was confined to collecting on the rich Otago sites, which, up to the present, have probably yielded more material than all the other New Zealand sites put together. The summer holidays spent with his family on these delightful beaches, still unspoiled by weekend shacks, yielded the bulk of the great collection afterwards presented to the Otago Museum. At that time a considerable amount of digging was being done at Murdering Beach and elsewhere, and much of the material found was sold in the open market. Chapman was the reverse of boastful, but he boasted proudly on two points, namely, that nothing in his collection was purchased and that he had collected the rough unpolished tools and pieces that all other collectors had thrown away. He thus became the first investigator in Polynesia of these interesting and important implements. An excursion into archaeology was made in conjunction with Hamilton on the Shag River site in 1890. Plans and records, kept by Hamilton, were never published, but Chapman carefully preserved the three adzes found by him below beds of interlaced moa bones. These were characteristically Polynesian, confirming Alexander Macky's discovery in 1872 of an adze of Polynesian type at the bottom of the moa-hunter deposits at Moa-bone Point, and forecasting the results:

of Teviotdale's exhaustive work thirty years later. Chapman had no leaning towards publication or he would have anticipated a number of students of later years in papers on the wood-working tools of the Maoris. The only paper published by him was a classic, "The Maori Working of Greenstone." As originally submitted to the editor of the *Transactions* it was fully illustrated, but the editor ruthlessly cut the illustrations down to a single one. In spite of mutilation the paper remained in a class of its own in the field of Maori material culture until the appearance, twenty-five years later, of Downes' work on eel-fishing on the Wanganui River and Buck's earlier papers.

The committee of the Otago Museum, to which he gave his ethnographic collection, commemorated his benefaction by naming the gallery which houses the Maori collections the Chapman Gallery. Though he had long lived in Wellington, it was he who was invited to open the Fels Wing of the Otago Museum on its completion in 1929. He presented to the Hocken Library, Dunedin, his great collection of New Zealand pamphlets, a collection which he believed to be complete. Other material and collections were presented to the Dominion Museum and the Turnbull Library. His gift to the Otago Museum was extensive. The large Maori section included unique specimens like the wooden bone-box in the form of a man-headed bird from Centre Island and the painted feather-box from an interment in Southland. There were also notable pieces from Polynesia and Melanesia, and pieces illustrating the Neolithic of Scandinavia and Italy, and the early Pre-dynastic of Egypt.

Chapman's unerring judgment on all matters connected with Maori implements in stone and bone resulted in his being consulted again and again by all who could visit him. To such, his advice was freely given with the clarity which characterised his legal judgments. In this way and through his great gifts to museums and libraries, his influence passed far beyond his published work, making him, in his time, a central figure in New Zealand ethnology.

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