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Aspects of the Cultural Succession in Canterbury-Marlborough, with Wider Reference to the New Zealand Area

By ROGER DUFF,
Canterbury Museum

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HAAST'S MOA-HUNTERS

It is appropriate that the evolution of human pre-history in New Zealand should be reviewed at a Congress which commemorates the founding of the Canterbury Philosophical Institute 100 years ago, its first President being Julius von Haast, who later founded the Canterbury Museum in which, no less appropriately this first contribution to the symposia on New Zealand's prehistoric cultural succession is being made. New Zealand was the first area in Polynesia in which an earlier phase of the local culture was distinguished from a later, and for this we owe the initiative to Julius von Haast. From the Rakaia River mouth in 1869 von Haast first realised the significance of the association of artifacts with the remains of an archaic bird fauna, notably the *moa* (*Dinornithiidae*). In retrospect it is fortunate that von Haast believed that the *moa* was exterminated in the early millennia of the Holocene, an error which justified his postulation that its exterminators, the moa-hunters, were remote in culture and time from the Maoris of the pre-European period. In spite of earlier discoveries of *moa* and human remains in presumed primary association, at Waingongoro by Richard Taylor (1843) and William Mantell (1847), at Opito Coromandel by W. E. Cormack (1850), at Awamoa, North Otago (Mantell, 1847), and at Kaikoura (1859), it is probable that the identity of the people who killed and ate the *moa* would have been considered of little importance had not von Haast first raised the question in 1869. We might be grateful also for his second error, the belief from Rakaia, that the moa-hunters were Palaeolithic and autochthonous. In the Victorian climate of vigorous scientific debate, this view raised a storm of controversy which promoted the first age of archaeological investigation in New Zealand. May I