

New Zealand Natural History.

During the past year several interesting specimens of the ribbon-fish have been received and casts made of the most important. A very fine individual skeleton of *Dinornis torosus* has been purchased from the finder, who obtained it from a cave near Takaka. The skeletons of the larger Moas are seldom found under circumstances which show that the bones are those of an adult, and that they are really of one individual. A number of native-bird skins have been added to the general collection, which urgently requires attention and examination. I regret to say in this connection that notwithstanding the efforts made to obtain live huia no specimens have been acquired, and what is still more discouraging is that no recent occurrence of the bird has been reported.

In New Zealand entomology the season for adding to the collection has been an unfavourable one, and, although an experienced collector was placed in the field for a month, the collections for this year has been very disappointing. However, the whole collection has increased to a large extent and has been added to from private sources. The specimens have all been individually catalogued by the Entomological Assistant. The main collection of *Heterocera* numbers at present about seven thousand. The foreign collection of *Lepidoptera* has been rearranged and added to during the year, and a section illustrating the Palaearctic region set out and duly named. A partial card catalogue of the species has been made. The collection at present comprises over twenty thousand specimens, and the New Zealand section accounts for another eight thousand. They require a great deal of attention in consequence of the difficulty of preventing mould, owing to the dampness of the building. Of the other orders of insects, the Museum possesses about ten thousand specimens of foreign *Coleoptera*, which will have to be worked out when an opportunity offers. There are also a few representatives of other orders. A valuable type collection of *Libellulidae*, mainly from the Australian region, named by the highest authority on these insects in Australia, has been acquired. The New Zealand collection of *Coleoptera* requires rearranging in fresh cabinets, but at present we have not been able to move in the matter.

ETHNOLOGY OF THE MAORI RACE.

Mr. Best has collected a large amount of information from Native sources and from manuscript written by the older Maoris in the "forties" and "fifties," from the earlier European writers, and from Mr. John White's manuscript notes of Maori matter. He has written out under suitable heads a most valuable collection of material for a future publication. Recognizing that this work must be done without any further loss of time, no attention has been given to the history of the wars and genealogies of the Natives, but a strong effort is being made to ascertain correctly as far as possible the information required to give a connected account of the ethnology of the Maori race. Close modern investigation shows that customs differ largely amongst the tribes of the New Zealand islands, and much work is required to be done before we get a general survey of Maori ethnology up to present-day standard. The subject has been divided into heads, and in some divisions a very large number of notes have been accumulated. These are classed under various heads and will be published in Museum Bulletins when duly arranged and as occasion offers. Three of these bulletins have been issued, and Part IV is now nearly ready for issue.

GENERAL.

The busts of Maoris made by Mr. Illingworth have been suitably bronzed, and very necessary repairs have been made to the large oil paintings in the Museum, notably that of Dr. Featherston and the Natives who assisted in the foundation of early Wellington.

A portion of the limited space in the present building is still occupied by the remains of the Geological section under the charge of the Mines Department. Steps should be taken to provide accommodation for these specimens if they are to be exhibited, in another building.

The most pressing want in buildings at present, however, is safe storage and suitable workshops, as much museum work has to be done in the preservation of specimens and in setting them up in a suitable manner for exhibition.

Since 1903 the question of a new Museum has been under consideration by Government, and numerous sites have been selected and plans drawn, but none finally decided upon. At the time of the fire which destroyed the Parliamentary Buildings tenders had been called for and received for the commencement of a new building, which unfortunately came to nothing, and many other schemes have been since considered. Since then the old building has been painted, but at present it is neither fitted for the exhibition of specimens to the public nor for workrooms for the preparation and preservation of specimens; and it is badly arranged for the use of the staff, who have to work under conditions which are not creditable or sanitary. Storage room is fairly water-tight, but, being a wooden building much eaten by boring-beetles, it is in many places not safe, and until the fossil and mineral specimens are removed from the Museum and taken care of by the Mines Department a large amount of floor-area and wall-space is not available for museum purposes. The Institute Act of 1903 placed the mineral specimens under their charge. Many of the cases were originally made for fossils and minerals, and are quite unsuitable for ethnological or zoological specimens, and are not at all up to modern requirements, letting in freely dust and moths. Owing to the age of the building and the attendance of schools and numbers of people, dust is one of the greatest of our troubles. The better-made cases are mostly those that have been taken over from bygone Exhibitions, and were not made for museum work nor are they on modern lines. Few have proper fastenings, and some have to be screwed down. No permanent or satisfactory scheme for exhibition of specimens for any educational purpose can be followed.

The whole of the Museum building is infested with the boring-beetle, and, although repairs from time to time have been done, leaks are the result of every heavy storm. The boring-beetle