

REPORT.

SCOPE OF REPORT.

OWING to the illness and death of the late Director, Mr. A. Hamilton, in October, 1913, the work of the Museum was much disorganized during that year. The directorship was not filled until the 12th January, 1914, Mr. J. McDonald serving as Acting-Director in the interim. In consequence of the broken year, no report was presented to Parliament for the year ended the 31st March, 1914.

The year ended the 31st March, 1915, has also seen a disturbance of the Museum routine owing to the economy called for by the war. In consequence there is less to chronicle than usual in the way of accessions, but an opportunity has been afforded to rearrange and overhaul the collections, a work that is still going on. By the Science and Art Act, 1913, the Dominion Museum was placed under the Board of Science and Art, but this Board has not yet met, owing to the war and other causes. In order that the position of the Museum may be clearly placed before the Board, I have made this report not so much a record of the work of the last year as a review of the present conditions of the Museum collections and activities.

STAFF.

Since March, 1913, the Museum has lost the services of Mr. A. Hamilton, Director, and Mr. H. Jones, attendant and printer, through death, and of Miss J. A. Wilson, typist, through resignation. These positions have been filled by the appointment of Dr. J. Allan Thomson, Director; Mr. G. Jackson, messenger and printer; and Miss R. Rees, shorthand-writer and typist. During part of the year 1914-15 Mr. H. Hamilton has been employed as a temporary assistant, and has now been placed on the permanent staff.

The staff at the 31st March, 1915, stands as follows: Director, J. Allan Thomson; art assistant, J. McDonald; Museum assistants, Miss A. Castle, H. Hamilton; shorthand-writer and typist, Miss R. Rees; temporary clerk, E. Best.

The custodian, night-watchman, messenger and printer, and charwoman are now classified directly under the Internal Affairs Department. Including them, the total number of employees at the Museum is eleven.

The classification of Mr. E. Best—who carries out the duties of ethnologist—as a temporary clerk illustrates a defect in the Public Service Act. Mr. Best cannot receive a permanent position and enjoy the privileges of the Public Service Act, because he is over age. It is admitted by all Maori scholars that there is no living man with a more profound knowledge of old Maori customs and modes of thought, and none more suitable to carry out the work in which he is engaged. A younger man, who might be appointed to a permanent position in the Professional Division of the Public Service, could not, because of his youth, have acquired the knowledge that Mr. Best obtained through personal contact with the old-time Maori. The matter can only be remedied by the Legislature.

BUILDING.

The working-rooms on the ground floor on one side of the Museum entrance had been abandoned during 1913 owing to a defect in drainage, which was not remedied until the autumn of 1914. These rooms were then repapered and again brought into use. In order to make room for Mr. Hamilton, the printer was transferred to a room at the back of the Museum. The available rooms of the Museum are now taxed to their utmost extent, and a new building is as much necessary for the efficiency of the Museum staff as for the housing of the collections. The Museum library has to be spread throughout all the working-rooms.

OFFICE.

The record system recommended by the Public Service Commissioner has been installed, and has proved a great improvement over the previous system, which was a nominal one. The current Museum files are now in such a condition that a change of officers would not greatly hamper the work of the Museum.

There is a great accumulation of unclassified files from the commencement of the Museum, which must some day be worked through and made accessible for those who are interested in the development of the Museum, the Geological Survey, Dominion Laboratory, and the New Zealand Institute.

The system of registration of the accessions is capable of improvement, and I have designed a new system, which will be more comprehensive, more flexible, and not more laborious. The system left by my predecessor consists of separate manuscript registers for various classes of specimens, but