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The Cawthron Institute,

NELSON, NEW ZEALAND.

CAWTHRON LECTURES

VOLUME II.

No. 4 No. 1. The Geology of Nelson.

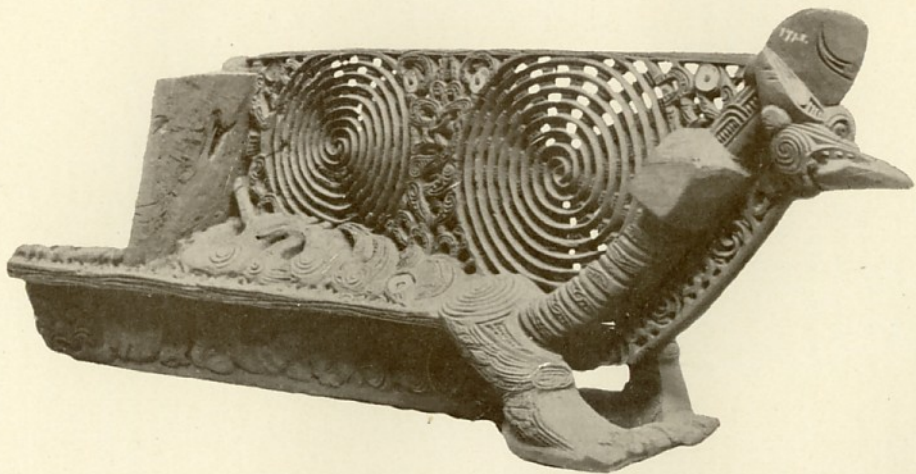
By Dr. P. MARSHALL.

No. 5 No. 2. The Coming of the Maori.

By TE RANGI HIROA.

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W. Revell-Reynolds, Photo.

MAORI CURVILINEAR ART. BOW-PIECE OF WAR CANOE (Auckland Museum).

THE COMING OF THE MAORI.

By TE RANGI HIROA (P. H. BUCK), D.S.O., M.D., CH.B.,
Director of Maori Hygiene.

When I decided to take as my subject for this year's Cawthron lecture, "The Coming of the Maori," I was in a dilemma as to the connection between the subject and the scientific objects of the Institute which the late Mr. Cawthron so nobly endowed. On being shown over the Institute, however, my attention was drawn to a map showing the results of an analytical soil survey of the district, made by members of the staff of the Institute. In the Waimea Plains, an area of soil, known as the Maori gravel, was shown to be very rich in available phosphoric acid and potash. This area is an old Maori pre-European cultivation. Pits had been dug to obtain sand and gravel, which, after having the larger stones removed, were spread over the natural loam top soil to render it more suitable for the cultivation of the kumara, *Ipomœa batatas*. A soil analysis conducted by chemists with no knowledge of Maori agriculture, showed that the Maoris had purposely burnt quantities of scrub and mixed the ash with the soil to improve their crops. Experiments were being conducted with samples of the Maori gravels, which not only proved that crops grew more luxuriantly in it than in ordinary soil, but that the crops compared more than favourably with those from soil that had been artificially manured according to European scientific methods. It has remained therefore for this Institute to put on scientific record this important feature of ancient Maori agriculture. My diffidence in the appropriateness of my subject has therefore been happily removed, and I feel justified in dealing with the coming of the ancestors of the first agriculturists of the Waimea Plain, who were the empirical precursors of the scientific staff of the Cawthron Institute.

The Maori people of New Zealand, according to their own traditional history, are the result of an intermixture of more than one migration to these shores. Of these migrations, some were accidental or drift, whilst others were expeditionary and deliberate. In dealing therefore with the coming of the Maori, we have to discuss the coming of various waves of voyagers and consider the evidence supplied by oral traditions and genealogical tables. We must further seek what ethnological data can be supplied by our present knowledge of race and culture. Traditional history supplies very definite information about the latest migration, but as we go farther back in time, the added centuries invest the past with the distant haze of uncertainty. Let us therefore reverse the order of the white historian and work back from the well-known to the little-known, from the fairly-certain to the uncertain.