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Thousands of volumes, mostly on scientific subjects, were given by Queen's University, Belfast.

The first choice of volumes arriving at the Centre is given to the British Museum, which lost a quarter-of-a-million of its books during the blitz. Already 25,000 volumes and rare manuscripts—many of them never previously obtained—have been eagerly accepted by the Museum authorities. Many rare "finds" are included. For example, from the Forces Book Drive, four volumes of the Gospels were reclaimed. Hand-written and beautifully illuminated, they were inscribed in five languages, Latin, Greek, German, French and English: a work of calligraphic genius and scholarship.

Two volumes of an Arabic manuscript were found, well-preserved and leather bound. British Museum experts discovered that it was part of the Koran, dated about 1185 A.D. A very fine edition of Horace, printed in 1482—one of the earliest printed books after the introduction of movable type in Germany, in 1454—has also been rescued from the pulping machine. Only recently three volumes of the first edition of Jane Austen's *Emma*, published in 1816, the year before she died, were discovered, with other first editions.

The value of the books awaiting dispersal on the Centre's shelves is estimated at about £500,000, at least half of the books being out of print nowadays.

Librarians from Britain's blitzed and war-depleted libraries are patiently sorting these volumes, "staking their claims" to the 100,000 books and periodicals allocated to Britain's public book-shelves. They will be joined by librarians from liberated Europe, who will choose the volumes they most urgently need for their countries' educational reconstruction.

BOOK REVIEWS

FIRST FRUITS

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST CAPITAL. By Ruth M. Ross. (Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington)

(Reviewed by David Hall)

THE publication of this short book is an important event.

Although it is not the first book brought out by the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs (successor to the Centennial Branch, whose historical researches it is carrying on and extending) it is the first bulletin of the Branch as an organisation, and, appropriately enough, it is the study of a limited but fascinating historical problem.

Most students of New Zealand history are aware that the Russell where Hobson planted his first capital in the Bay of Islands was not the same place as the modern Russell. Hobson's Russell was at Okiato, three or four miles distant from the Kororareka of the whalers' taverns, the site of the present town. But few had more than fragmentary knowledge of the story.

Russell might well be dubbed Hobson's Folly. The most puzzling thing is why the purchase was undertaken at all

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Mrs. Active Acto.. off to tennis..

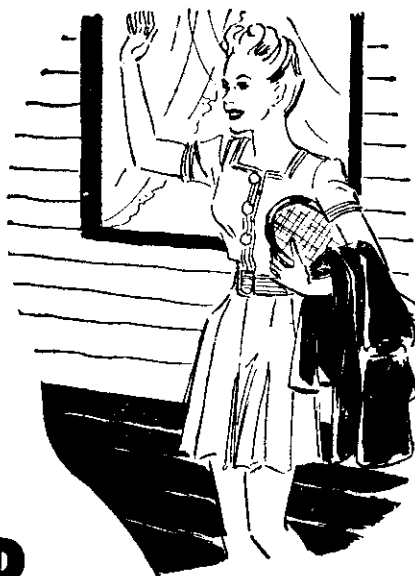
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