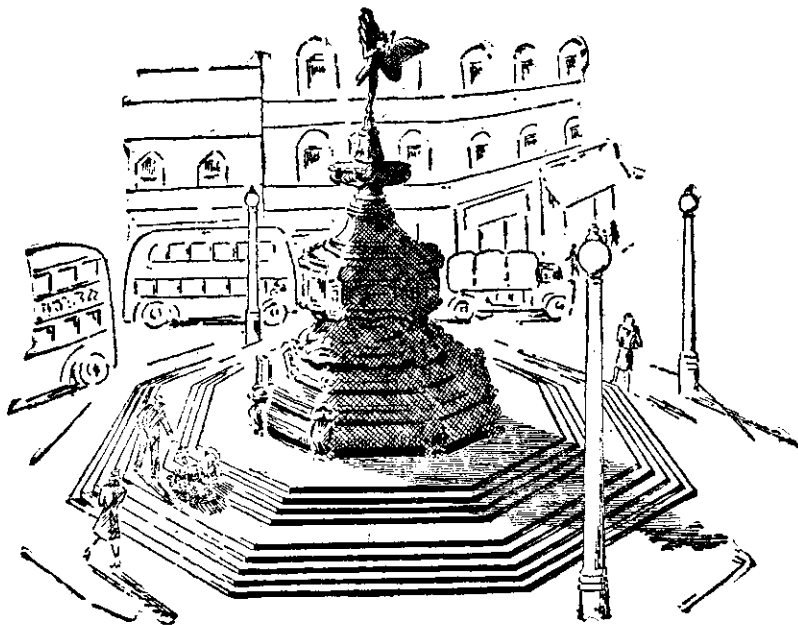


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Otago Centennial

ART AND INDUSTRY

(continued from previous page)

short of modern books, as long as he was able to attend to the matter, he sent a duplicate to Selwyn of every book he sent to Knox.

A short sketch like this must omit much. But I must say a few words about the man who was my nearest neighbour for many years. I refer to the late Dean Fitchett, whom I rank with Bishops Selwyn and Sprott as the greatest ecclesiastical figures in the Church of the Province of New Zealand, commonly called the Church of England. I never knew any other man intimately with such a powerful personality and so keen an intellect as the Dean. When he and Dr. Dickie were together the audience, to their conversation had a most entertaining time. It was Dean Fitchett who persuaded Sir James Allen to start a fund in 1928 to rebuild Selwyn. Sir James did this with his characteristic generosity and energy, and we owe the continued existence of the College to him.

Lastly let me say a word about the climate of Dunedin. No other city in New Zealand has a climate to surpass it. It is bracing and healthy, a place for hard workers. Our skies are duller, because we are further south, but we do not have more rain than, let us say, Auckland.

THE ARTS IN OTAGO

By
H. V. MILLER

★



"NEITHER do men light a candle and put it under a bushel." But for 100 years Otago seems to have done something of the kind (following the custom of the Briton to decry his own product and praise the works of foreigners) and the light that was lit by so many in early days has certainly been left to the Centenary year to at last uncover. And if some of us to-day are uncovering for the rest of New Zealand the bushel-bowl that has so effectively hid the light that should have shone so bright, then it is for the general good rather than for provincial pride.

In the cultural parts of Otago's history there are indeed bright spots until now recognised inadequately even in the province itself. There are even some "famous firsts" to be claimed. Dunedin's Art School was, by virtue of its being founded in 1870, the first in New Zealand. The first Provincial Drawing Master, David Con Hutton, was imported from Scotland for the purpose. Dunedin's own Frances Hodgkins, acclaimed by English critics to have been England's foremost woman painter, is placed also, by general opinion, first in the list of great New Zealand painters. Dunedin's Technical College Orchestra, from which has developed the Symphony Orchestra, was an experiment, proved undoubtedly a success, that pointed the way of musical education both for our

province and for New Zealand. Dunedin's Warwick Braithwaite, accepted and acclaimed Dominion wide (no mean honour for a prophet returned to his own) and Fred K. G. Moore, who became a professor at the Royal Academy Schools in London, are only two of the brighter lights from a procession of musicians who have gone overseas and found success of one measure or another.

Then there was the surveyor-artist John Buchanan. His "Milford Sound" (1863), a proud possession of the Hocken Library in Dunedin, is among the finest landscapes in watercolour in the country. From there we may step back to Le Breton's "Port Otago," first landscape painted in the province (1840), or forward to the works of Hutton, Hodgkins, O'Brien, or Hoyte, in whose pictures the draughtsmanship may be favourably compared with much contemporary work to-day. These were the men we associate, along with others whose contribution to art was equally consistent and sincere, with the founding of the Otago Art Society. The first actual meeting, "of six gentlemen favourably disposed towards the formation of a Society of Artists," was held in December, 1875; but the first recorded meeting of the Society was in February, 1876. This may not be claimed as a "first," but it is no less praiseworthy when we consider that the Otago settlement was but 28 years old and conditions were still crude and of little comfort. We owe much to those "gentlemen" whose minds were lifted above the material wants of food and shelter.

The ideals of these men were carried further. J. H. Scott, secretary of the society for 30 years, and W. M. Hodgkins, president for 17 years, worked valiantly. Artists of the calibre of A. H. O'Keefe, Grace Joel, James F. Scott, Geo. Butler, Nerli—to mention only a few—maintained and advanced the cultural standards by precept and practice.

BUT there is other evidence to show that the people of Otago have sought the finer things of life throughout this century. The musical societies, of which there has always been an amazing variety, with Choral Groups dating from 1856, Brass Bands from 1860, and Orchestral Societies from 1886, have had careers of varying success. Among those that have maintained consistent activity for many years, three are outstanding. The first of these, the Choral Society, founded in 1870 under that name had previously existed in a form that was, even in 1864, claimed to be the strongest musical society in New Zealand. The Royal Dunedin Male Choir (1886) and the Dunedin Operatic Society (1887) are the other two equally mature organisations.

The sterling work of all such societies, and the Orchestral Societies and Bands, not forgetting the Dunedin Competitions Society (first again in New Zealand!) is reflected in the interest in music shown by the city's population. The consistent support of the regular Municipal Organ Recitals (which I understand are unique in the Southern World), and the enthusiastic patronage of the Technical