

CENTENARIES

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Buller, Walter Lawry (1838-1906)

SIR WALTER LAWRY BULLER, a New Zealand ornithologist, was born October 9, 1838, at Nowerk, Bay of Islands. He was educated at Wesley College, Auckland, where he came under the influence of William Swainson, a naturalist.

He specialised in Maori language, conducted a Maori paper, was editor-in-chief of the *Maori messenger* and held several posts connected with Maori administration. He saw active service in the Maori war and went to England (1871) as Secretary to the Agent-General for New Zealand. Having been called to the bar, he practised in the Supreme Court of New Zealand till 1886.

Amidst such a varied career, Buller had been, from an early age, a close observer of the birds of his native land, and had been fired with ambition for making himself an authority on the birds of New Zealand. When he was but thirty-four, his illustrated quarto volume *History of the birds of New Zealand* marked him out as the ornithologist *par excellence* of New Zealand. He also brought out a *Manual of the birds of New Zealand* in 1882.

He had been engaged in field observations even from his youth and the results have been recorded in about 91 papers contributed to the *Transactions* of the New Zealand Institute and a few other learned periodicals. The first paper appeared in the *Zoologist* in 1864 under the title *Notice of the remains of the moa and other birds formerly inhabiting New Zealand*. One of the last papers was, *On a species of crusted penguin from the Auckland Islands* (1899).

In recognition of his services to Natural Science, Buller was elected F.R.S. in 1879 and was decorated with an honorary D.Sc. by the Cambridge University in 1903. He was a large donor to many museums and this brought him further honours from many foreign countries.

By his persistent exploration of the recesses of his country and his continued study of its avifauna, he brought out a

second edition of his *History* in 1888 enlarged into two volumes. After a further exploration for seventeen more years, Buller brought out two supplementary volumes. Till a short time before his death, he was dictating from his couch the concluding pages of the supplements "to get them off his mind".

Buller died at his daughter's residence Pontdail Lodge, Fleet, July 19, 1906.

Oliver, Samuel Pasfield (1838-1907)

SAMUEL PASFIELD OLIVER, an English geographer, was born at Bovington, Essex, October 30, 1838. After receiving his education at Eton and Woolwich, he received a commission in the royal artillery, April 1, 1859. After seeing service in China, he spent most of his official life in Madagascar and Mauritius.

This gave him an opportunity to his geographical zeal. He spent many months in exploring Madagascar. The history, ethnology, the flora and the fauna engaged his attention. In 1864 the volcanic eruption on the Island of Reunion gave him the opportunity to record some interesting geological phenomena as well.

In 1867 he joined Captain Pym's exploring expedition to Central America. In 1871-72 he toured in the Near East and this resulted in some first-hand archaeological observations in Asia Minor, Greece and Sardinia.

Oliver's varied and versatile interests prevented him from achieving eminence in any one subject. But his books on Madagascar are authoritative. They are *Madagascar and Mealagasy* (1866), *Les Horas et les autres tribus caracteristique* (1869), *The true story of the French dispute in Madagascar* (1889) and the two volumes *Madagascar* (1886). Some of his contributions appear also in the *Report* of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the *Proceedings* of the Ethnological Society.

Oliver's health was seriously affected by his explorations in malarial countries. He died at Worthing, July 31, 1907.