MORE EXTRACTS FROM THE MATTHEWS CORRESPONDENCE

E.D. Hatch

In the 1906 Manual p iv, Cheeseman says - ' ... in April 1900 the Government was pleased to intrust me with the preparation (of the Manual)'. But they had in fact approached him shortly after Kirk's death.

RHM - 5.12.1898 - 'I am glad to hear that the Government are negotiating with you to complete the new edition of Hooker's Flora. I am quite sure it could not be entrusted to more competent hands'.

Matthews, on foot or on horseback, would 'keep his weather eye open', and as time went on, the weather eyes of his 5 sons, and his 'rascally grandsons', who dug up the Gastrodia sesamoides to plant in their garden, thus effectively killing it! 'Collecting for Cheeseman' became a family occupation, though 'the boys' were never mentioned by name. Matthews used the plant names from Hooker's Handbook, later changing them as Cheeseman wrote his way through the Manual. Some have since changed again. The Matthews kept a punt on Lake Tongonge, which enabled them to go directly across the lake to the west coast, rather than endure the 'awful tramp' round the shoreline; and which later enabled them to explore the otherwise inaccessible swampy margins. R.H. Matthews' epistolary style tends to meander. For the sake of conciseness I have added the odd word and sometimes brought disjointed sentences together. RHM 7.7.1900 - 'ps Is fairly good whisky too strong for (preserving) delicate flowers?' (Seems a waste of good whisky!)

CORDYLINE TERMINALIS (Linn.) Kunth. Enum. Pl. 5:25 (1850)

In 1895 (TNZI 29:347 (1896)) Cheeseman saw 2 young plants of Cordyline terminalis in a garden at Ahipara, which had been brought in from an old Maori cultivation on a neighbouring hillside, but in the absence of flowers and fruit the identification could not be certain.

RHM 24.10.1898 - 'When at Ahipara I ... was sorry to see the Cordyline ... looking very bad and knocked about, and no care taken of it. No more plants have been found'.

RHM - 17.10.1899 - 'I thought you would like to see a specimen of the Ahipara Cordyline terminalis growing in Mr Reid's garden. It commenced flowering last week ... 2 large bunches of flowers, digits densely crowded, stem about 16" long'.

ENTODA SCANDENS Benth. (Mimosaceae) - Sea bean

The Maoris told Matthews that the large bean which occasionally washed ashore on Ahipara beach was the fruit of the 'wana', a tree which grew on the sea bed 16 fathoms down, and an old settler confirmed this? saying he had found the bean attached to seaweed!

RHM - 10.6.1902 - 'Is it possible for a tree growing from 10-15 fathoms under water to produce a hard-shelled bean? Possibly I am a bit mixed up with these beans. I planted one I picked up on Aurere beach. It grew 3' high before it was accidentally destroyed. Now this particular bean could not possibly have grown on a seaweed, or submarine tree'. (Cheeseman identified it as above).

FUCHSIA PROCUMBENS R. Cunn. ex A. Cunn. Ann. Nat. Hist. 3:31 (1839)

F. kirkii J. D. Hook. Icones Plantarum t 1083 (1871)

RHM - 31.1.1899 - 'Not having found Fuchsia kirkii at Merita I (decided) to ride over to Waihi. I started, accompanied by one of my sons; via Awanui, Waipapakauri, passed by the fine Lake Ngatu and soon found ourselves on the beach. We looked for Spiranthes in the dry swamps, but did not find any. (On 13.2.1899 Matthews did find Spiranthes, on the Kaitaia-Awanui road, about 2½ miles from home). (Arrived at) Waihi we spent 2 hours looking for the Fuchsia ... all along the face of the cliff and away back on the upper plateau, (plenty of interesting plants but no Fuchsia). After lunch I lit my pipe and started off again, determined to find (it). I had not walked 20 yards from where we had unsaddled when I saw several plants creeping amongst and through the wiwi ... plenty of flowers - anthers bluish-purple, and some surprisingly large ripe fruit. We saddled up and left at 5pm ... a ride of 40 miles, besides all the walking about. Not so bad for an old man'.

HYDATELLA INCONSPICUA (Cheesem.) Cheesem. TNZI 39:434 (1907)
Trithuria inconspicua Cheesem. Man. NZ Flora 757 (1906)

RHM - 18.2.1902 - 'On the 10th Inst. we (Carse and RHM) rode to Ngatu Lake to look up Mr Carse's new plant. it is a very singular little plant and very plentiful along the eastern shore of the lake ... however I must not infringe on Mr Carse's rights'.

RHM - 27.1.1904 - 'I am posting to you ... specimens of Trithuria in flower and fruit. The bottle contains flowering plants in various stages of development and several good fruiting specimens ... I don't understand this plant. It appears to grow, flower and fruit within a month'.

LYCOPODIUM SERPENTINUM Kunze in Lehm. Pl. Preiss. 2:108 (1846)
L. drummondii Spring Mon. Lycop. 2:35 (1848)
L. carolinianum J.D.Hook. Flora NZ 2:54 (1855) non Linn.
Lycopodium serpentinum had been collected by Colenso from the outlet of Lake Tongonge on 25.3.1839, but all Cheeseman could tell Matthews was that the locality was 'somewhere between Ahipara and the North Cape, some time after 1838'.

RHM - 24.10.1898 - 'I have been keeping a lookout for Lycopodium carolinianum ... Ahipara flat in the year 1838, and for many years after, was covered with native grass. There was no kahikatoa (kanuka?), therefore a botanist could walk the length and breadth of it without difficulty. It is now impossible to do so ...'

RHM - 10.2.1906 - 'I have just posted a small packet containing specimens for identification, of a lycopod quite new to me. I have a very strong suspicion that it is Colenso's long lost Lycopodium drummondii'.

RHM - 28.2.1906 - 'I am delighted to hear that the lycopod is Colenso's drummondii ... when Colenso went to Parengarenga he would have had a native guide, no horses in those days, who would go by a short cut to the west beach ... I have been to the coast by this track myself many years ago, and as near as I can remember it crossed the present lycopod patch ... but it's an awful tramp ... it took me 2 hours to walk there'. (Matthews gives Cheeseman 2 pages of ecological detail, including Lycopodium laterale, Drosera spathulata and pygmaea, Hypolaena (Empodisma), and Sporodanthus traversii. Later on both Corybas carsei and Spiranthes were found here.)

RHM - 12.4.1906 - 'I believe this locality presents practically the same appearance as when Mr Colenso saw it in 1838. it has not been disturbed by the hand of man ... It had much the same desolate appearance when I passed through it 40 years ago, that it does now'.

RHM - 31.1.1910 -'We found that the big fire last summer had swept the peat flat clean, as far as the eye could reach. Lepyrodia is apparently killed ... no sign of (re)growth ... but large patches of Lycopodium drummondii are plainly to be seen ... I am very pleased to find that it was not destroyed'.

PITTOSPORUM OBCORDATUM Raoul Ann. Sci. Nat. Sér. 3,2:121 (1844)

RHM - 29.10.1900 - 'I am sending a specimen of Pittosporum ... from a very old tree, the largest I have seen ... near the outlet of Lake Tongonge ... branches from near the ground and covered with moss'.

RHM - 26.2.1901 - 'I am glad you think (the specimen) is Pittosporum obcordatum, a plant that I have kept my weather eye open for since I read Kirk's note in the Student's flora. (p 48 This singular plant has not been collected by any living botanist).

RHM - 5.3.1901 - 'It took me 3 hours to find the tree, though I had marked it down. Whilst looking round for it I found quite a lot of small trees with obcordate leaves, although these are here and there also on the old tree. The dry capsules appear to be shorter than the green ones ... branches very densely divaricating . unusually so'.

RHM - 27.10.1901 - 'I sent one of the boys a fortnight ago to look it up ... he had no difficulty finding it. Reported plenty of buds but no flowers out. This morning I walked down myself and was delighted to find plenty of pretty little pink flowers and more to come. I have a good supply of flowers in spirits (the divaricating branches being very difficult to press) which I will post by the Paeroa tomorrow. The bark is brownish-grey and very rough, being thickly covered with minute tubercles'.

SPORODANTHUS TRAVERSII (F. Muell.) F. Muell. ex T. Kirk in TNZI 10:xli (1878)
Lepyrodia traversii F. Muell. Frament. Phyt. Austr. 8:79 (1873)

RHM - 28.2.1906 - 'A curious bamboo-like plant, growing in small isolated clumps, about a foot in diameter and from 3' to 4' high, not plentiful'. (See also under Lycopodium serpentinum).

RHM - 12.4.1906 - 'This locality has been frequently swept by fire ... evidenced by holes burnt through the peaty covering, being probably where clumps of Lepyrodia once grew, their strong matted roots carrying the fire. I find that Lepyrodia is more plentiful than at first reported'.

RHM - 21.9.1909 - 'Re Lepyrodia - I am afraid it is a thing of the past now, a tremendous fire swept through the whole of that countryside last summer'. (In fact it persisted in decreasing quantities until 1912, when the lake was drained).

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