

QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

Vol. 3, No. 1

December, 1945.

AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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The Christmas season is again approaching and the Editor takes this opportunity of extending best wishes for pleasant holidays. On a previous occasion the Editor has expressed the hope that Members in their botanical excursions might bear the needs of the News Letter in mind. Previously this optimistic sprat has caught no whales, not even a dogfish. The editor reflecting on this melancholy circumstance wondered whether it was any good repeating the suggestion, however, remembering Bruce and the Spider (unidentified) has decided to again suggest that members, when noting matters of botanical interest, will not forget the News Letter.

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LECTURES and EXCURSIONS.

We are indebted to Mr. Gillies for the following very clear and concise account of his lecture delivered in Wednesday, September 5th.

SOIL EROSION and CONSERVATION.

In a recent address to the Botanical Society, Mr. C.L. Gillies B.Ag. Teachers' Training College, took as his theme "Soil Erosion". Though attention had been sharply focussed in recent years on the problem it was by no means a new one. Hochstetter writing in Auckland in the early 1800's on the result of his observations, spoke of the folly of indiscriminate burning of the plant covering and the loss of surface humus to the soil. Later Leonard Cockayne drew attention to the damage caused by fire and overgrazing.

The matter of erosion however received scant attention and the words hardly occurred in official publications or

in traditional courses of agriculture in the University until quite recent days. Now the words are very fashionable. Probably this came from a heightened interest abroad where dramatic and spectacular events like the great dust storms had forced people to take notice and partly because of the increasing speed and extent of erosion in N.Z.

Visitors to this country including Dr. Scotsberg and Major F.S. Markham gave warning of the grave threat to our productive land. Within N.Z. Cumberland and others, after reconnaissance surveys, showed that the peril had not been exaggerated. With the formation of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council in 1941 National recognition was given to the problem and an extensive programme of research and publicity has subsequently been undertaken by the Council.

With the aid of 2 film strips, one "Soil Erosion" prepared by the Soil Conservation Council and another "Save Our Soil" prepared for the N.Z. Education Dept. and the Council, the speaker explained the difference between normal or geologic erosion and man made or accelerated erosion, and pointed out that conditions of topography climate and type of land utilisation in N.Z. led to both serious and extensive erosion which assumed characteristically different forms in the various regions of the country.

The problem of erosion, the speaker maintained, was fundamentally one of maladjustment between the soil and the community. The causes of that maladjustment were many and varied but a right relationship would need a completely changed attitude by New Zealanders to soil.

A hopeful beginning had been made through partial studies to approach erosion in a scientific way and already important results could be recorded. Speaking of the changes at Molesworth Station in North Canterbury, Mr. Gillies stated that these were the result of the application of known principles of erosion control and demonstrated what could be done in a comparatively short period.

The speaker concluded with reference to new developments in conservation overseas in the use of aircraft by dropping "seed" bombs. These were small clay pellets the size of marbles with tree and shrub seeds embedded in them. These were bombed on to areas of slips where ground work was difficult or almost impossible.

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