

"The Cheeseman"

In the last issue of the News Letter, we described the general plan of the Cheeseman Flower Show. It may now be said that the Show was a splendid success, and those organising the special exhibits and taking part in decorations did all and more than all that was expected of them. We are always glad to meet old friends at these times and we particularly appreciate the presence of Miss Lucy Moore, who not only made a special visit from Wellington to attend the Show but arrived bearing fascinating specimens which provided us with a very intriguing little special table. The Show was opened by Sir Alexander Johnston, whose well-informed and carefully thought out speech was followed with keen interest by his hearers.

But in spite of the quality and success of this only native flower show held during the year, the Cheeseman Flower Show Committee has found it necessary to follow it by a little stocktaking at a meeting during which several important points were considered.

Publicity.

We are convinced that this was not adequate. The total attendance in 1954 was 4475 as against 5437 in 1953 and 6217 in 1952. We are convinced the Show should be better advertised. So often people will say after the exhibits have been all tidied away, "Oh, I should have loved to have seen it, but didn't know it was on." We consider that next year more should be done through newspaper advertisement. If any of our members have any suggestions in regard to any economical forms of publicity, we should be glad to know of them.

School Exhibits.

It must be admitted that the number of exhibits from school and from individual children is and always has been disappointing. It is true that this year the entries were considerably more than last year. This year the total number of entries of school exhibits and individual exhibits was 292 as against 225 last year—a substantial increase. Nevertheless, the total number of entries is disappointingly few. On this subject, Dr. Cooper informs me, "874 schools were sent copies of the schedule (larger schools were sent extra copies). 160 reminders were sent on 7th September to schools which receive Museum Travelling cases. Very few schools took part however." (Only eighteen entered this year in the School Exhibit Section, sixteen last year). Actually the small number of schools taking part has always been a disappointment and a headache to those organising the educational side of the Show.

What is the cause of this poorness of response on the part of schools? In some cases it may be due to the fact that the Show is poorly advertised in the school, but in the long run it goes back to the fact that only those schools compete where there is some teacher or adult in the neighbourhood who is able to give the children the help, encouragement and inspiration that will enable them to go to the trouble of getting together a really worthwhile exhibit. This brings us to the question of adult help. The criticism has been made that some schools have an unfair advantage in that their teachers have assisted or directed in the setting up of the exhibits. It has been suggested that all adults should be barred from the hall where the school exhibits are being arranged during the Saturday morning before the Show. Saturday morning Flower Show day is scarcely a

restful morning at the best of times. One feels that to isolate 200 (frequently bewildered) children from the age of eight upwards, in a room without any adult direction or advice would not be in the best interests of a young people's show, indeed one feels that undue strictness in this direction would have a discouraging effect more particularly on some of the small country schools. The committee has therefore modified rule (a) of the competitions in order to make help with and advice about the setting up of exhibits permissive.

It is inevitable in these competitions, as in so many other situations in life, that certain people start with considerable initial advantage. If a child goes to a school having one (or maybe several) keen students of nature on its staff, and further, comes from a district where there are well-informed adults outside the school who are keen to interest young people in their native flora or are keen cultivators of native plants, naturally such a child has an advantage over one situated where there is little knowledge of or enthusiasm for native plants. The point is that help should be given in such a way as to stimulate the child's interest and provide it with dependable knowledge. In order that the position of the Committee may be made quite clear the rules for the competitions for the 1955 Show are published below.

Competitions for Pupils of Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools.

In all sections of this competition, plants MUST BE NATIVE TO NEW ZEALAND. Only two prizes will be awarded in any section where there are less than six entries. Entry forms must arrive at the Museum by Friday, --September.

The competition will consist of two sections: (A) School Exhibits (B) Individual Exhibits. The exhibits must be the work of the children, as far as possible, though they may have advice from adults in setting up the specimens. It must be remembered that the purpose of the competitions is not to encourage a competitive spirit but to stimulate an interest in native plants among school-children by the interchange of information about them.

Schools and children may send in more than one entry in each division if desired. Tables and vases will be supplied. Exhibits must arrive at the Museum by 10 a.m. on Saturday, 12th September, and be arranged by 12.30 p.m.

In the displays, the main point to be considered will be: botanical interest. Presentation of the displays will be considered by the judges where two entrants are equal in all other respects. Each specimen must be correctly labelled, giving scientific name, and, wherever possible, as a main heading, the Maori or common name. Labels should be printed in pencil or some medium WHICH WILL NOT RUN WHEN WET. A label with the name of the school, or the child, for display on the table, must be included.

Where possible, choose specimens showing both flower and fruit. Some plants have variable foliage and extra points will be given for exhibits showing this. More than one piece of each species can be placed in a vase if desired.

Country schools, or children, unable to set up displays should send diagrams showing desired arrangement. Plants packed in damp moss will