

## A VERY UNUSUAL SHOW

I hope most of our members were able to visit the admirable exhibition of Maori medicinal and food plants organised by Dr. Cooper at the Museum during the Medical Conference recently held in Auckland.

The exhibition covered a very wide field. Detailed notes and references accompanied each specimen. Often these notes were realistically reinforced by business-like little jars of various types of powder, which were in many cases, the fruit of labours carried out at the Chemistry Department by Professor Briggs and his former students. Others taking part were Dr. Cain of the Cancer Unit, and the chemists, F. Hunt and S. Brooker.

An unusual feature of the display was the presentation of models showing the molecular structure of some more important chemical products of our flora. These were not only valuable scientifically, but added a pleasing note of colour to the picture.

An agreeable finish to the exhibition was provided by one or two delightful flower arrangements by Mr. Otto.

Several members of the Botanical Society assisted by the provision of specimens of various kinds. As the collections were on show for a fortnight no small effort was required to keep material fresh and attractive for so long a period. Congratulations to Dr. Cooper on organising so instructive and intriguing a display.

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Our thanks to Mrs. Campbell for a long and racy account of the Ruapehu excursion. When it arrived however, another article on the same subject by Ruth Coyle was already "in press". I have, then, taken from Mrs. Campbell's contribution extracts that I felt would add to the information already given by our Secretary.

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Monday Jan. 23rd.

Frequent rain squalls with gusty winds frustrated those eager to be abroad so Dr. Rattenbury sympathetically called impatient minds to attention with a much appreciated discourse on and resumé of the more important plants of this area and the relation of genera and species to altitude and prevailing winds. He indicated the most interesting plants to note at their particular levels. He then spoke of Beech forests in general and their peculiarities.

Mr. Farnell supplemented this information with an account of his own experiences in the propagation of our native beeches. At

first they died, but success became ensured when he transplanted along with them a little of the soil in which they had been growing, so that in its new home the tree would be sure of its mycorrhiza (mycorrhiza is the name given to the association of the root of a plant and a fungus. The fungus is useful to the plant in the matter of nitrogen assimilation while itself benefiting as regards carbohydrates. This association is so intimate that deprived of its mycorrhiza the plant dies - hence the demise of Mr. Farnell's first planted beeches.) An interesting discussion as to how the association came to be formed in the first place eventuated.

During this informative interlude two artists of the community were apparently taking copious notes. However, their intense absorption proved not to be on botanical matters but on stealthily sketching the attitudes of lecturer and audience.

The rain lifted and the assembly dispersed to the nearby waterfall. The well-known alpine growths Pimelea prostrata, Gentiana bellidifolia, Hebe hookeriana, H. catarractae, Celmisia incana, C. gracilentata and Gaultheria antipoda were hailed with delight by the novices but beheld with dignified recognition by the savants.

Thursday 26th Jan.

The morning was shadowed by preliminary packing and thoughts of departure next day. The afternoon was spent revelling in the richness of the bush reserve adjacent to National Park Township and well known to botanisers. Intensive search revealed Gunnera dentata with its translucent carmine berried spikes well concealed amid the rank sward of weeds "vulgaris". Energia parviflora, in flower, trailed its delicate tracery in profusion. In direct contrast to the groves of regal Leptopteris superba (Prince of Wales fern) pigmy Libertia pulchella flourished in patches of humble, exquisite daintiness. Mr. Farnell in Vo.16 No.2 of the News Letter Quarterly has given such a detailed account of this area that further comment is superfluous.

The return from here was broken Tawhai Falls amidst the beech forest below the Chateau. Here cameras came into full play. Close by the Chateau the party was met by Mr. Peters, Chief Ranger of the National Park Reserve, and escorted by him through the Rock Gardens. Here, the ultimate goal is to induce, in this ideal spot beside the mountain stream, a complete and labelled representation of all that grows in the extensive Tongariro National Park Reserve.

Our thanks to our leader Dr. Rattenbury for his faithful instruction and help with our botanical problems and also to Mr. and Mrs. Coyle, Mr. Farnell and Mr. Warren, for their help and their constant attention to the comfort and happiness of all.

Kathleen Campbell.