

harmonious building, so different from the Division's old home in Wellington, irreverently termed "the rabbit warren".

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay at the Division and it was indeed good to meet old friends - Miss Lucy Moore (my hostess) a foundation member of our Society, Dr. Godley, the Division's genial Head, a past President of our Society, Ruth Mason, another Aucklander hard at work on our water plants, on which, incidentally, she is New Zealand's leading expert, and Margaret Simpson, another Aucklander doing interesting work on Nelson's National Parks. Most of my visit was spent in the herbarium which now contains over 120,000 specimens, increasing at the rate of 5,000 a year. The curator, Mr. Rapson, has indeed a busy time there not only looking after this extensive and continually growing collection but also with the 3,000 odd specimens that are usually sent in each year for identification. The gardens and glass houses of the Division contained many things of interest over which one would have liked to linger - to give one example - Dr. Atkinson's experimental collection of that provoking New Zealand family the Ranunculaceae.

I was much impressed by the kindness and goodness of everyone to me. All were more than ready to seek out anything of possible interest to me in the fern line - I remember particularly, Ruth Mason who wandered in to Miss Moore's home at half past ten at night after a hard day's collecting, absolutely festooned with specimens of an unusual *Blechnum* that she 'thought I might like to take away with me in the morning.' It was delightful to be made so welcome at the Division and I was much impressed by the amount of quiet unobtrusive but extremely valuable work that is being done there. I left with the pleasantest of memories and the hope that it will not be my last visit.

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On Wednesday April 5th we all enjoyed an illustrated talk by Mr. R.S. Lediard on the Tongariro National Park. With the assistance of our President's beautiful photos we were able to follow the routes taken by the members during the Society's summer excursion to Ruapehu and also admire special studies of flowers and berries and vegetation that were more particularly studied by members.

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Though at first unpromising, the weather for our Cascades excursion (April 15th) soon cleared and we had a really delightful day in one of the most beautiful of Auckland's kauri reserves. The bush consists of kauri and mixed forest characteristic of our Waitakeres, but one or two special plants might be mentioned.

One of particular interest was the Gully Fern (Cyathea cunninghamii). This beautiful tree fern is not common on the Ranges though some members will remember in the past inspecting the fine clump that once grew along the Exhibition Drive near the Filters.

Although he knows the Cascades very well, our leader, Mr. Farnell, mentioned that it was only on his previous visit that he noted this very fine specimen. No doubt the fact that one's eyes are so often searching the ground for specimens or watching one's steps on a slippery path explains why it has not been noticed before. Looking round we soon discovered another Gully Fern and doubtless further searching will reveal others. Mr. Farnell's find had the kindness to be growing beside a mamakau (Cyathea medullaris) so it was easy to notice the difference between the two, particularly the lacy effect of the crown of Gully Fern when seen from below. When dealing with dried specimens of pinnae sent for identification, one can easily confuse it with Smith's Cyathea (Cyathea smithii). But if the undersurfaces and midribs of the pinnae and pinnules are studied it will be seen that smithii has small branched red or red-brown spiny hairs, while those of cunninghamii are star-shaped, transparent or fawn. Both types of hair are small, but they may be distinguished by an ordinary hand lens of about X10 magnification.

Two other ferns of interest were noted, neither really rare, but both distinctly local. Mr. Farnell pointed out Fan Fern (Schizaea dichotoma) growing on the high ridge among the kauri. It is always liable to be encountered in such places on the Ranges but is often aggravatingly absent. It also favours gumlands north of Auckland and is very much at home on the steamy banks of hot springs - a somewhat odd collection of preferences. We found Endlicher's Bristle Fern (Crepidopteris endlicheriana) in shady rocky places near the stream. This fern is one of the more uncommon of our local ferns, as it has a penchant for dark places.

Our leader was able to show us one or two specimens of toa toa (Phyllocladus glaucus). We had noted several of these beautiful trees in one small area at our Waitakere Filters excursion last year, and it was of interest to find them turning up again on the other side of the ranges. Matai, another of the less common of our Waitakere conifers was also noted.

In places the bush was sweet with the scent of the lovely little perching orchid, Earina autumnalis, and Mrs. Hynes noted one flower of Pterostylis trullifolia not usually available at this time. The odd little Bulbophyllum pygmaeum was also found in flower. Interest was added to our lunch time break by a short talk by Mr. A. Mead on the history of the Cascades. The excursion was efficiently lead by Mr. Farnell, to whom we extend our thanks.