

NEW ZEALANDERS ABROADM.E. SEXTON

In Great Britain on a recent tour, the number of native New Zealand plants - trees, shrubs and flowers - was remarkable. Presumably they were taken back to England by returning early settlers and men of the sea. Not only are they in Botanical Gardens at Kew, Oxford and Edinburgh where there might be 200 different species, but in private home gardens all over the country. In the U.S.A. - San Francisco to be exact - in my American friend's garden were several tall Cordyline australis flowering and scented and a matted bush of Muehlenbeckia nearby.

I was in the Scilly Isles off the coast of Cornwall. There, in the middle of the village square, the first tree seen on disembarking from the ferry was a huge pohutukawa. Cornwall gardens have Olearias (ilicifolia, arborescens, avicenniaefolia, colensoi and angustifolia), Hebes, Corokia buddleioides, Pomaderris apetala. In London suburbia are Senecio greyii, Lophomyrtus bullata, Cordyline australis, Brachyglottis repanda, Coprosma rhamnoides and Myrsine australis - all have their place among the roses and tulips.

Kew Gardens are a revelation. The entrance fee, by the way, is one penny and thousands, literally thousands go in every day. Every growing thing is named and the country of origin is shown on the label, whether it is in a hot or temperate house, rock garden, herbaceous border or scree bed. There are lime, conifer, azalea, rhododendron, oak, elm, poplar and beech collections from world wide sources, besides the herbarium consisting of nearly seven million specimens. I walked several miles through the rock gardens where colourful patches of Acaena, Helichrysum bellidioides, Cotula and Hebe from New Zealand all flourish among European and Asian species. I noticed a lone plant of Doodia media in the fern house collected by 'R. Coyle 19 ?' - presumably Mrs. Ruth Coyle of the Auckland Botanical Society. In conversation with the botanists of the fern houses I was able to tell them the temperatures the ferns grow in in their native habitat in New Zealand; about the special thermal area ferns, and our Waitakeres where there are so many filmy ferns and tree ferns. They were helpful to me, naming ferns I had found round the English countryside.

In the Oxford Botanical Gardens the herbaceous gardens and rock beds were interesting, many New Zealand natives being represented. The Hot House was closed but the keepers opened it for me as I had come 12,000 miles to see these wonderful places. In this particular house was a very straggly specimen of Pittosporum crassifolium struggling for existence.

Most of the New Zealand plants in the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens were growing wonderfully well. There were quite fifty different Celmisias - unusual rare ones I had to check in 'Allan'; a white carpet of Gentiana saxosa flowering was a lovely sight and a

strong sweet scent was traced to an Olearia odorata - a bush about 8' high just covered in blossom. There were Ourisia, Scleranthus, Cyathodes, Acaena, Leucogenes, Hebe, Helichrysum and ferns in the temperate houses. A Pachystegia insignis - the only one they had - was very sick looking but it was being well cared for in the way of drainage and sun. The botanist/gardeners were interested to hear how beautiful it is on the rock cliffs of Kaikoura. There were two plants incorrectly named so I ventured to tell the men and they removed the name tabs and checked up with their books. They didn't often have a Kiwi round who knows her native plants! However, we had quite a chat - they wanted to know first hand more of our natives. They were helpful to me regarding odd plants I found when touring Scotland. The grounds at Edinburgh Gardens are not as extensive as Kew but New Zealand plants were very well represented.

A tour of Norway by boat from Bergen to North Cape and Kirkenes and back to Bergen, calling into 32 ports, was an intensely vital experience. The distance covered was 12,000 miles and half of the journey lies within the Arctic Circle. Near Bergen the low hills are covered with spruce, fir and birch trees, with bare grey rocks on the tops. Further north, arctic tundra vegetation predominated. Bog asphodel, arctic heaths, saxifrage, Aconitum and the berries blueberry, cranberry dog berry all intensified the colourful autumn scenery. Cornus, Arctostaphylos and blueberry all have red foliage; Potentilla and Sedum have yellow flowers and Alchemilla has yellow lupin type leaves, though smaller. Many of the Norwegian plants are to be found in Scotland but the colour is not so noticeable.

I was extremely fortunate in Norway in having the boat courier with a considerable knowledge of the Arctic flora and who translated her Norwegian Flora book for me when necessary. Even on bus tours (of 40 people) she would stop the bus to allow me to get out and study the plants (of course the rest of the tour people were busy with their cameras!) Considering everything, it made the visit much more interesting with a knowledge of plant life than just sight-seeing.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Mr. Alan Esler would like the following back issues of the Botanical Society Newsletter for the D.S.I.R. file. If members have spare copies of any of them perhaps they could give them to Mr. Beever, who will then pass them on to Alan.

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