

On a warm ridge, on the eastern side of the valley, where some of the party climbed to tree-top height and looked down on the forest, there was Metrosideros scandens smothered with fat buds and a few clusters of brick-red flowers, forerunners of winter's floral profusion. There, too, we saw a number of small specimens of Mida salicifolia. They occur fairly frequently on the ridges in this neighbourhood, always, it would seem, in warm aspects.

More refreshment under the tree-fern canopy fortified the party for the beginning of the homeward journey. Before setting out for the railway station we strolled along the road for a short distance to see a flourishing patch of Elatostema rugosum. This is quite plentiful in this district, though the Levin area is not far from its southern limit. Frost will blacken and cut the patch we admired, but it will sprout again as well as ever.

It is a long time since the last combined outing of the Wellington Botanical Society and the Levin Native Flora Club, and it is to be hoped that other such gatherings, surely of mutual benefit, may be possible from time to time.

Frances C. Duguid.

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#### SOIL CONSERVATION.

On the evening of March 17th, Mr. D. A. Campbell of the Rivers Control and Soil Conservation Service entertained members with a film show. Two spectacular movies showed some of the great works carried out by the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States of America. Giant pylons striding across the reclaimed farmlands of the Tennessee Valley, carrying power into small farmhouses and great fertiliser works, demonstrated to us very forcibly the wide scope and manifold benefits of this huge soil conservation organisation. When we questioned Mr. Campbell about work in New Zealand he had many interesting remarks to make from his own observations. The problem of accelerated erosion in the North Island of New Zealand was largely an indigenous one, a problem of slips on steep slopes, which could not be compared directly with the vast landscapes of the Tennessee Valley. Judicious planting of slipping hillsides with suitable trees has proved successful in arresting soils movement in parts of the North Island where Mr. Campbell has worked. Many different plants were named which have been used in trial plantings by the speaker who has attacked these urgent problems with great energy and enthusiasm. A cordial vote of thanks was passed but the vigorous discussion carried on till the doors of the building were closed and the members finally dispersed on their different roads home.

G. B. C.

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#### A FUNGUS GARDEN.

The exhibit of larger fungi which were gathered by several members for display at our reception on May 19th made a very colourful 'Fungus Garden'. The bright shades, beautiful shapes and great variety of these plants are surprising to many people. They are abundant in the bush only at the time of year when few folk are abroad for they fruit during autumn and winter. They grow very fast but last for a short time and so are easily missed. Many of them like the brilliant purple puffball, Secotium porphyreum and the small dainty clubs, Clavaria spp. of all colours, may fruit half-hidden in the litter of the forest floor. When one has developed an eye for fungi one can spot these shy specimens and unearth them, often to the surprise of others who would walk past the same place seeing nothing particular. There is often something of a camouflage effect when the fungi are growing in the bush. When they are gathered up and many put together the bright conspicuous colours are striking, but in their natural haunts they harmonise with their surroundings. A few always shout their presence. The common puffball, Secotium erythrocephalum, can seldom hide its brilliant red head, and the introduced scarlet toadstool, Amanita muscaria, is always a startling sight. In order to get for our show some perfect specimens of this very decorative species, one of our members hunted long to find some which had not been handled and broken by someone else. She crawled into a dense thicket in the middle of a place where they were growing in abundance, collected the elegant toadstools and safely made away out with the fragile load which duly appeared in the fungus collection.

G. B. C.