

## New Zealand Chemist and Botanist

Mr. B. C. Aston, who died in Wellington early this year, was not well known to the younger botanists for he had already retired from scientific work and from active membership of the scientific societies before our Botanical Society was formed. Nevertheless he always welcomed visitors to his garden in Karori and never tired of going over his interesting collection with them. Plants grown from seed collected in many parts of the world—*Puya* from the Andes, *Drimys* from Japan, *Rhododendron* species from the Himalayas, *Nothofagus* species from temperate South America—rubbed shoulders with many rare New Zealand plants.

In his younger years Mr. Aston was very active in the field, collecting with a keen, discerning eye. He sent everything to Cheeseman, for whom he had a profound regard, and those who turn the pages of the Manual will see how many records of rare plants are due to him. Cheeseman expressed his thanks to Mr. Aston "for many specimens collected through almost the whole length of the Dominion," and Petrie described him as "a most enthusiastic and capable collector." When Cheeseman came visiting Wellington in the early years of this century Mr. Aston took him out botanizing over the Makara hills or out to Turakirae Head in a buggy, and though much has changed many of the plants they saw are still growing in the same way as they did then.

Mr. Aston was a chemist by profession but there is little doubt that what he enjoyed most was exploring and collecting in out-of-the-way places. For many years he spent much of his spare time in the mountains, particularly the North Island ranges, and on one occasion visited four of the Subantarctic Islands. Of a number of these journeys he has left valuable records in the Transactions. He accompanied Cockayne to Mt. Holdsworth in 1906 and Petrie to Mt. Hector in 1907, on the first visits by botanists to the Tararua Mountains. In December 1907 he was the first "collector or naturalist" to make the crossing from Kaitoke to Otaki. Altogether he made at least nine journeys into the Tararuas. He was the first botanist to explore the Kaimanawa Mountains, spending a week there in 1911. In the Ruahines he followed up the early work of Colenso, and considerably extended the list of plants known from there. Among his discoveries from that range was the beautiful *Myosotis eximia*. His longest and most rewarding expedition was a combined crossing of both the Ruahine and Kaimanawa Mountains in January 1914. He was accompanied by R. A. Wilson and F. Hutchinson, an extract of whose account of the crossing concludes this tribute.

"We began to toil through lower, denser bush, then into thickets of sub-alpine scrub from which we could see out and about us, to sheer steeps of shaly rock beside us, and to the great

stony peak beyond us. We left the scrub behind at last, and about midday emerged into an alpine meadow under Te Atua Mahuru, a meadow of tussock and heath sheltering growths of alpine flowers, daisies and buttercups, the giants of their kind. . . . . From this meadow we could look out and see all the high tops of the Range. They lay round us in a wide half moon of peaks, Te Atua Mahuru and the rest, and I thought how they must have looked ages ago, just peering up above the restless sea."

G.B.C. and A.P.D.

## Council for the Promotion of Field Studies Great Britain

This Council was formed at the end of 1943 as a result of a widespread response to a suggestion that there was a great need for improved facilities for carrying out Field Studies in all subjects in which such study is an essential constituent. The President of the Council is Professor Sir Arthur Tansley and the Director and Secretary, Mr. F. H. C. Butler. The Central Office of the Council is at 10 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London, S.W.7.

Briefly, the aims of the Council are to provide facilities for every aspect of field work at first hand, and to set up for this purpose residential Field Study and Research Centres, distributed throughout Great Britain, in localities selected for the richness and variety of their ecological features, geological and geographical interest and archaeological and historical importance. The Field Centres will be available alike to all serious workers in the field, whether amateur or professional, whether as individuals or as members of a class from a school, training college or university; from a county college, technical college or youth service; whether as independent workers or as members of a research team, Learned Society or other corporate body. The Council wishes to co-operate closely with Local Societies and Field Clubs, and through the Centres should also be able to play an important part in the training of the community in sound knowledge, aesthetic appreciation and proper use of the countryside.

While he was in Great Britain recently Mr. N. L. Elder, of Havelock North, was able to find out something about the activities of the Council, and to pay short visits to two of the four Field Centres at present in operation. Here is a short report written by him, and approved by the Secretary of the C.P.F.S.:

I only became aware of the existence of the Council for the Promotion of Field Studies the day before its annual meeting, which I was fortunate enough to be allowed to attend as an