Rambles on Mount Matthews

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BECOMING acquainted with the late Dr. L. Cockayne in 1928, I soon became an eager and enthusiastic pupil. The botanical problems he talked of seemed to me to be very much worth while. The Doctor's age precluded him from strenuous rambles so I collected extensively and he commented freely on my specimens and suggested further excursions. After investigating *Wintera* hybrids, I tackled *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. Seeds were collected from the different sorts and the resulting plants can be seen in a hedge in "Otari". *Melicope* and *Paratrophis* hybrids were next studied, as well as the Alseuosmias, while a large collection of Gaultherias was sent to Kew Gardens. This led to a botanical exploration of Mount Matthews, the highest peak in the Rimutakas. All my holidays for the next six years were spent on this job, most of the work being done from the Palliser Bay side, necessitating a tramp of eleven miles from Orongorongo to Muku-Muku hut at the bottom of the hill. Every main ridge and every creek was faithfully covered. I had never climbed a New Zealand mountain before and the high country vegetation was a revelation to me. The lovely *Senecio elaeagnifolius* and *Olearia colensoi* are prominent shrubs on many acres from ten [two] thousand feet up. Natural rock gardens were found at eighteen hundred and at two thousand seven hundred feet. Veronicas, Hebes, Hoherias, Senecios, Olearias, Helichrysums, Ourisias, Aspleniums, Euphrasias, Libertias, Oleas, Pimeleas and many more were cultivated in my garden and at "Otari". In going over the same ground at different times of the year, I found an amazing number of species to add to my list.

Many visits were paid to the Doctor's home at Ngaio. Sometimes we strolled round his garden and he showed me plants from all over New Zealand. Many were being studied to determine whether they were new species, hybrids, epharmones or what not. This plan I have followed with any puzzling plant ever since, with some success. A question about any one of the eminent men whose photographs formed the "Rogue's Gallery" in his study would bring out a string of entertaining reminiscences.

The Ourisias on Mount Matthews vary from plants that flower at one inch high with only one whorl of small-sized flowers, up to plants two feet tall with seven whorls of flowers one inch across. Every possible variation in size and number of flowers can be found, especially on the natural rock gardens, on creek banks and along wet gullies.

Senecio latifolius we first saw about fifty feet up an almost perpendicular rock face, and a piece was shot down with a .303 rifle to add to the list.

One gully at the north end of Hinakitaka stream had us beaten for some time. It looked a beautiful place, and as there seemed no practicable way to get to it, I had the idea that it might contain some plant the goats had eaten out elsewhere. We got there eventually by the aid of a rope, with a hook on the end, but nothing remarkable was found after all.

The only mistletoe found, although Beech is common, was the tiny *Korthalsella salicornioides,* growing on Manuka. Ramarama and Tawa are both missing, though common enough in the "Five-mile" bush and are sparingly present on Tapokapoto.

Dr. Cockayne told me that the native Calceolaria (*Jovellana repens*) had not been reported for ten years or more and that it was my job to find it. I managed to do so, and later proved that it is extremely common in places, particularly near the headwaters of Tapokapoto stream. Among the plants growing on Mount Matthews, that are uncommon elsewhere, are a green-flowered form of *Corysanthes rotundifolia,* a bright yellow-flowered variety of *Olearia colensoi,* a hybrid between *Helichrysum alpinum* and *Gnaphalium keriense,* and a mountain form of *Poa anceps.* A plant of *Macropiper excelsum* with variegated leaves was found on Big Hill, and a beautifully variegated Koromiko (*Hebe salicifolia*) on Mount Tapokapoto . . .

Mount Matthews is extremely steep in places and rock slides or shingle slips are common. On the steep slides one can sit down on a flat stone and paddle a way down for several hundred feet in a few minutes. Towards the bottom of one or two streams are awkward falls that have to be scrambled round, and the bottom end of one of the main ridges is practically unclimbable. Goats are extremely common, and there are a number of wild pigs. Wherever these latter abound, the speargrass, *Aciphylla squarrosa,* is sure to be dug out and the parsnip-like root eaten. The mountain is bush-clad to the top so that true alpines are absent, but subalpines are able to flourish in many places where it is too rocky for trees. The charming *Senecio greyii,* with bunches of yellow daisy like flowers, occurs near the bottom of the hill, its range being from Pahau River to Cape Palliser. Still to be found are the Nikau palm, the mountain maire, *Olea montana,* and the broad-leaved cabbage tree, *Cordyline indivisa.* Adding their beauty are the scented orchids, *Earina,* three kinds of *Clematis,* including the large white-flowered *C. indivisa,* the Hinau, with its Lily of the Valley like flowers, and the well-known Titoki, Kowhai, Lacebark, Rata, Whitewood and Wineberry. The Prince of Wales fern is common, and the large handsome grass, *Danthonia cunninghamii,* is also worthy of mention.

I found a swarm of hybrid Aspleniums in which at least four varieties are mixed up, and the Doctor was greatly delighted with them . . . Later I got hybrid Uncinias, rushes, grasses, coprosmas and so on. I also found many swans that turned out to be geese, and "introduced plant" got to be familiar at times in my lists . . .

Hook-grass without Hooks

MR. B. G. Hamlin in his revision of the hook-grasses (A Revision of the Genus *Uncinia* in New Zealand, *Dominion Museum Bulletin 19*) supports the idea that the "hook" at the end of the rhachilla, or axis, is a reflexed glume. "This is borne out", he says, "by a few rare specimens in which the "hook" is replaced by one or more glumes bearing male flowers in their axes. Such evidence would appear to invalidate the idea . . . that the "hook" has developed as a dispersal mechanism from a simple seta [bristle]." Recently I noticed some examples of this sort of replacement in a plant of *Uncinia involuta,* collected on Mt. Egmont and grown on in a pot at Taita. Mr. R. R. Julian, Soil Bureau, took the photograph reproduced here. The specimen is deposited in the Botany Division herbarium at Lincoln (No. 159201).

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Portion of spike of *Uncinia involuta,* showing replacement of "hooks" by glumes bearing male flowers.