

## RICHENDA PARHAM (1862-1947)

BRYONY MACMILLAN

Mrs Parham came to New Zealand from South Africa with her husband Charles in 1907. She was a journalist, novelist, and poet, with a keen interest in plant life. He was a mining and electrical engineer and they settled with their family in Hokitika. Here the vestiges of her interesting garden remained until the 1980s. In 1915 a booklet of 16 pages appeared entitled "Fernleaves", with handpaintings by her small daughters. In 1921 the family moved to Fiji where Charles Parham established a coconut plantation at Rukuruku Bay on Vanua Levu. His death in 1926 necessitated her move to live in Suva, while retaining her interest in the coconut plantation.

From 1922-1946 Mrs Parham studied, and collected specimens of Fijian plants. Her specimens were sent to the Natural History Museum, London, Kew Gardens, and Harvard University. In 1928 she had printed for private circulation *Some Medicinal Plants of Vanua Levu*. This was followed by three more articles in 1933, 1935 and 1937 recording native names and uses of plants. In 1943 The Polynesian Society, Wellington, published a book *Fiji Native Plants with their Medicinal and other Uses* by Mrs H.B. Richenda Parham, in which some 1200 native names are given, with their botanical names, their uses, and often descriptive notes about them.

Mrs Parham was a foundation member of the Fiji Society of Science and Industry. Her youngest son Bayard, and her grandson John, both made the study of plants their life's work.

### REFERENCES

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