

QUARTERLY NEW LETTER

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It is always pleasant when members are able to bring news of their wanderings to the Society. I do not know how many of our members are familiar with Mt. Holdsworth. Those who are will have pleasant memories revived by Mrs. Fisher's article. Those who are not will wish to visit the area. Our thanks to Mrs. Fisher for her reminiscences.

MT. HOLDSWORTH REVISITED

After an absence of nearly twenty years and in the case of my husband a good thirty years, we decided to return to this most wonderful area of the Tararuas.

Blessed with perfect weather we arrived at Bannister Hut at the foot of Mt. Holdsworth mid-afternoon. Our first task was to make enquiries about the state of the hut half way up for when we last saw it, it was very derelict. So we wandered along Lounelley's Flat on the bank of the Waingawa River. Here we saw masses of Racoulia tenuicaulis and Pratia angulata. The track through the Beech forest was lined with Enargia parviflora and everywhere there were beautiful specimens of Blechnum discolor, Polystichum vestitum, Kidney Ferns and Cyathea smithii. Many species of filmy ferns were observed.

On learning from some people who had just come down from the top that the so called Mountain House has been rebuilt and is indeed quite habitable, we decided to make a dash for it. At first our way was through mixed forest - plenty of Kamahi, Hinau, Pseudowintera axillaris, Neopanax simplex - every forest giant

poplar trees. This was the kind one sees on Christmas cards and was full of white berries. Spindle berries (Euonymus europaeus) made pink splashes in the bare hedges. In the south roads were lined with Cork trees. They are a species of oak with dark green leathery leaves. The bark had been cut from the trees to a height of six feet.

December was spent in Spain, a country of red soil, olive trees and grape vines planted in the neatest rows I have ever seen. Cork trees were quite plentiful here too and in the South date palms were hanging with golden bunches of delicious dates. Small fan palms covered the hill sides and Paper-white jonquils kept them company and crowded beneath fruit trees. White Alyssum was abundant by road sides and in the ploughed fields and what looked like golden carpets of buttercups turned out to be the Bermuda buttercup (Oxalis pes-caprae.) No doubt this, along with Alyssum would be a troublesome weed. Prickly pears are used extensively for hedges, and towards the south almond trees were already flowering, giving the first sign of spring. Rice and cotton are both grown in Spain. The cotton we saw being picked, but the rice was not yet planted. A strange little kind of arum lily with maroon coloured stripes, I found flowering beside the road, and in some dry stony places many herbs grew. Among them were rosemary, thyme, borehound and two or three species of lavender. In one place small short-stalked blue irises grew on the banks beside the road, and around Valencia orange groves stretched for miles bearing ripe fruit.

January brought a few days' trip through Jugo Slavia and here another sign of spring in spite of the snow - small crocuses in flower beside the road. On the border of the forest I noticed cyclamen plants but not yet in flower. In Greece I also noticed these same cyclamen leaves and found crocuses in flower on the hills and small mauve and white anemones and tiny grape hyacinths and scillas. Asphodels were just coming into bloom and at Mt. Olympus, flowering gaily among the ruins of the past were Stylosis irises and large anemones similar to the ones we grow in our gardens.

When we arrived in Turkey in February and came near to Antioch in the south, spring really seemed to have arrived. The cyclamen were flowering all over the hills. small miniature types with pink and cerise coloured flowers. Orange crocuses and tall clumps of asphodels also were in bloom and a large bright yellow milkweed (Euphorbia) bore gay flower heads. A very sweet-scented mauve daphne, with gray-green leaves was also plentiful in the south. On our return a month later I found some of the ponds covered with the white flowers of a kind of pond-weed. Parts of Turkey, I noticed, were totally devoid of trees of any description, although the soil appeared to be fertile.

I In Syria, Virginia Stock grows wild and along with a species of Erodium and a mustard-like plant makes beautiful patches of yellow and mauve on a colourless soil.

In some parts Syria's soil is red, making magnificent colour schemes with the flowers and grass. Asphodels became even thicker in Jordan. These I believe are the "lilies of the field" of the Bible. I frequently found the garden variety of Ranunculus. Among the ruins of Jerash, bright red anemones made a splash of colour and in the dry stoney ground below sea level near the Dead Sea, I discovered purple Salvia, a mauve creeping rock-rose and a single mauve stock.

The violets grow wild in Spain, Turkey and Greece but were not in flower when I was there. Unfortunately having no book on Mediterranean plants I was not able to identify many interesting specimens which I found.

Ruth Coyle

The Editor had thought that there would be no account of the Ohakune trip, so this one from Mrs. Fisher comes as a pleasant surprise. Our thanks for it.

ANNIVERSARY WEEK-END TRIP TO OHAKUNE

27-30th JAN. 1962

On Friday 27th January 1962 at 3.30 p.m. about three dozen enthusiastic members of the Auckland Botanical Society left for Ohakune. The trip down was uneventful. We had our tea in a very beautiful park at Te Awamutu and after admiring the fernery and flower beds, set off for the middle of the island.

On Saturday we went to the Blythe Hut, the bus taking us up the new road as far as the bridge. Here we started off up the beautiful Ohakune track. Pseudowintera colorata with its rich reddish hues, Beech, Libocedrus bidwillii, some with Apteropteris malingii growing up their trunks, Enargia parviflora together with Dawsonia superba and other mosses fringed the edge of the track. As we got higher, Leptopteris superba became evident. Finally Nothofagus cliffortioides dominated the scene, each with its quota of "filmies" adorning it.

Unfortunately the weather was not very kind to us for it came on to rain just before we reached the hut. While we having lunch, it really set in and by the time we got back to the bus we were pretty wet. We saw bushes of Hebe tetragona