

SOME NOTES ON THE COBB VALLEY.

An area which has been little visited by botanists, or at least little written about by them, is the Cobb Valley of North-west Nelson. Until recently the usual route in has been by pack track from the Graham Valley to the Takaka River and thence either direct by track to the Cobb by way of Mt Arthur Tableland and Mt Peel; either way involves at least a day's pack-carrying. But now a road runs from Upper Takaka in to the Public Works dam site, and it is possible to go by car or P.W. Lorry right in to the floor of the valley. The upper Cobb runs through a large open gently sloping, formerly glaciated valley, about nine miles long and at a height of over 2000', before it flows through a narrow gorge. The valley floor is mainly grassed and is grazed by sheep and cattle. Many flanking peaks about 5000' high can easily be approached by climbing through the beech forest.

About 1880 Cheeseman visited Mt Peel which overlooks the Cobb, and Mr F.G. Gibbs has done much collecting here, including in his finds a number of species restricted to this area. However a number of plants are more widespread in this district than their distributions as given in Cheeseman's Manual would indicate; the following were noted during a tramping trip in the summer of 1942-43:-

In the grass of the valley floor: Stackhousia minima, Plantago triandra, Rumex neglectus, Acaena glabra and, at the corner of Chaffey's Creek and the Cobb River, Erigeris alpina.

In the water courses running off Iron Hill: Celmisia bellidifolia. On both Iron Hill and Mt Cobb: Gentiana vernicosa and Aciphylla polita.

Saddle between the Cobb River and the Burgoo R.: Anisotome deltoidea. Among the rocks of the ridge N.W. of Iron Hill there is an interesting form of Anisotome aromatica with small brightly shining leaves.

Perhaps the two most outstanding plants in this category, and two that can scarcely have been missed, although the Manual gives only Mt. Arthur and Mt Peel as localities in this area, are Celmisia traversii, strikingly beautiful with its large white flowers, large green leaves with rusty tomentum and purple petioles, and Senecio adamsii, a handsome small yellow flowered shrub; these both grow on Iron Hill, Mt Cobb, the head of Chaffey's Creek and very likely on most of the nearby high country.

Near the summit of Mt Peel is a small patch of Racoulia eximia, recorded by Cheeseman. However across the valley, on the Iron Hill ridge are many plants of a smaller silvery-grey Racoulia, more furry looking than that of Mt Peel, but still seeming to come in the R. eximia class. Also, on Mt Cobb there was seen a single plant of a Racoulia, looking rather sickly after those near Iron Hill, and more like the typical R. eximia.

Two plants which appear to be hybrids between Celmisia spectabilis and C. traversii were noted, one southwest of Iron Hill, and one in the head of the Cobb Valley. Both plants fitted with the description of C. christensenii of Cookayne in Trans. N.Z. Inst. Vol. 47.

Growing at the head of Chaffey's Creek just below the bush-line was a graceful Celmisia with slender bright-green white-rimmed leaves, having a white tomentum beneath. When pressed this looked very different the leaves then being silvery grey and it seems to be C. coriacea var. lanatifolia.

Any native plant lover who wishes to visit a region full of beautiful and interesting plants, and accessible to anyone reasonably active will scarcely be disappointed with the Cobb Valley.

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