

CHAIR OF BOTANY - PROFESSOR APPOINTED.

(From "The Dominion" of 1.2.1947.)

The vacancy for the newly-created Chair of Botany at Victoria University College has been filled by the appointment of Professor H.D.Gordon, at present senior lecturer-in-chief of the Botany Department at the University of Tasmania.

Professor Gordon is 34 years of age. He received his university education at Edinburgh University, where he graduated B.Sc. with first-class honours in 1933, and Ph.D. in 1937. He was for three years assistant in the Botany Department at Edinburgh, and for one year at Liverpool.

He was appointed senior lecturer at Tasmania in 1944, and senior lecturer-in-charge in 1946. He went to Tasmania in 1937, and during his stay there he has been engaged in the preparation of a book on Tasmanian flora a subject in which he has taken a deep interest.

It is expected that he will take up his new duties in June.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 18.11.46.

Dr. Newman's address dealt with trends in New Zealand botany against a background of world botany.

The earliest interest in plants was aroused because of their use to man, and the first botanical works were of the nature of descriptions by which particular plants could be associated with special uses. These descriptions involved the naming of plant parts, even amongst the Greeks as early as 200 B.C. The herbals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were still along the same lines.

From this grew up interest in floristics - the floras and florulas of limited regions. Taxonomy, or the considered classification of plants began to appear in the sixteenth century. With the development of the microscope about 1700 plant anatomy claimed interest, which increased again about 1850 owing to the work of Hofmeister. Plant physiology began with Stephen Hales in 1727, and leapt ahead after the emergence of organic chemistry about 1875. A little earlier mycology appeared as a separate branch of study, and soon after cytology became fashionable. With the rediscovery of Mendel's work in 1900 genetics was based on a solid foundation and about the same time Warming and Schimper established the beginnings of ecology and the study of plant communities. Newer developments (1920-1930) include tissue-culture, micrurgery (the manipulation of microscopic plants and parts of plants), statistical genetics, and scientific agriculture.

Dr. Newman had prepared a table showing how the proportional importance of each of these aspects had changed over the years, and proceeded to show how developments in New Zealand had followed the same general trends.

The early visiting botanists were interested mainly in what plants grow here. Those who settled in the country took up the question of geographical distribution within our islands and detailed taxonomic studies followed, first in vascular and then in non-vascular groups. New ecological methods were applied in the study of vegetation. Work in general morphology lead to anatomical work, but plant physiology and cytology have received little attention as yet.

Detailed analyses of papers published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand and the Journal of the Linnean Society of New South Wales were presented, these periodicals being taken to represent the work of amateur and academic, as opposed to technical botanists. Comparative graphs showed the greater interest in Australia in plant physiology in particular.