

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.

On the basis of his analysis Dr. Newman predicted that in New Zealand work in plant physiology, anatomy and mycology would probably increase proportionally at the expense of ecological and taxonomic studies.

A feature of New Zealand botany was the small prominence given to the subject by the University, the first full Chair of Botany being filled only in 1946.

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PROTECTION OF A RARE SPECIES.

The Christchurch Domains Board Bulletin No. 2 was issued by the Botanic Gardens Christchurch in August last. Written by W.B. Brockie it deals with Ranunculus pauciflorus, a species known only from an area of under four acres at Castle Hill where in 1940 a total of about 75 plants could be counted. It is recorded that the area containing the Ranunculus is to be declared a reserve under the Scenery Preservation Act, and will be enclosed by a fence to keep out stock which have threatened to exterminate this rare species.

Mr. Brockie tells too of a small experimental nursery plot that he enclosed at Castle Hill in 1940, and of the growth within it of plants both undisturbed and transplanted, and of seedlings. Fine photographs show the limestone basin that is the home of R. pauciflorus, a plant in its natural habitat, one in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, and a 20 year old one grown in the homestead garden at Castle Hill.

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MEMBERS' EVENING 16.12.46.

Many members contributed exhibits to the December meeting. The President and Mrs. Newman had brought along a series of Australian plants, and some New Zealand relatives for comparison.

A comparative set of Pittosporum twigs had been prepared and mounted by Mr. R. Green, a country member. They were displayed on his behalf by Dr. Cone, who had herself brought some fine pen and ink drawings as a sample of what she has done towards a popular fern book to be published shortly.

Mr. Morris Jones, Mr. Boddie and Mr. Duncan contributed from their gardens a wealth of fresh specimens including Scutellaria novae-zealandiae, the hybrid Senecio Alfred Atkinson, Edwardsia longicarinata, hybrids between Aristololia fruticosa and A. racemosa, and a particularly fine series of flowering manukas.

Mrs. Samson had made three posies; a patriotic one of red manuka, white renga lily and purple-blue Hobe speciosa; a Hobe one of H. matthewsii, H. diosmaefolia, and red H. speciosa; and perhaps the most attractive, a third of Acaena novae-zealandiae var. pallida with large heads and bright red spines, and the fluffy grass Doyouxia billardieri.

Miss Moore showed some excellent herbarium specimens made by children of eleven and fourteen years, pupils of the Warkworth District High School; also specimens, sent by Mr. Michie from Kaitaia, of a 'giant' Pomaderris phyllocafolia, of which he has found a patch of several thousand plants - a novelty awaiting formal record.

Miss Hodgson had brought from Wallaceville hill a series of orchids of the genus Thelymitra, including not only the common and well-known T. longifolia var. alba and the less familiar T. pauciflora but also T. caesia, known hitherto only from near Auckland and T. decora previously recorded from nowhere south of the Volcanic Plateau. Miss Hodgson is to be congratulated on these extensions of records and also to be thanked for her observation that Pterostylis barbata was abundant on Wallaceville hill this spring.

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