Botanizing in the Nelson District is becoming increasingly popular with members of the Society. Below Mrs. P. Hynes and Miss M. Barr and Mrs. B. Knight tell us something about their activities in that rewarding region.

A WEEKEND ON MT. ARTHUR.

Katherine M. Knight.

After a week at Arthur's Pass with the Auckland Botanical Society we spent several lazy days at Moutere, near Motueka. From there, we gazed up at Mt. Arthur and decided that, after our recent alpine experience this would be an easy mountain to climb.

We approached the mountain from the Nelson side, leaving the truck 2 miles beyond Ngatimoti, at 6 p.m. Two hours of steep climbing showed us that we were scarcely the veterans we thought we were. The track was well marked, but had no plants of botanical interest to divert us, except for introduced herbs such as horehound, Californian stink-weed (Gilia), and foxglove etc. These had no doubt been spread by the sheep which had for many years been driven to summer quarters on the extensive table-land.

Our goal for the night was the Flora Hut, c.3000 ft. About half way there, we passed into dense bush of the North Island rain forest type with nikaus, northern rata, kahakaha, (Astelia solandri) and several different tree ferns. These plants, and the heavy undergrowth had been missing from the forest at Arthur's Pass which we had been exploring the previous week. Instead of one species of beech, Nothofagus cliffortioides as at the Pass, there were four: N.cliffortioides, N.truncata, N.fusca, and N.menziesii. The red beech, N.fusca, ceased at 3,500 ft. while silver beech, N.menziesii continued on to the plateau in a tangled wind-swept form. Mixed with these beeches were many of our taller Podocarps:- rimu, totara etc. Here, too, was Senecio hectori, with its deciduous leaves often one foot long, and its branches topped with white cineraria-like flowers. Peti-peti, Blechnum discolor was common on the track.

We awoke next morning to the sound of the deer stamping in the clearing around the hut. We were delighted too, to find that the wekas, which had been calling in the night, were plentiful and quite friendly in the daylight. While washing in the stream we found a nettle, Urtica incisa and Olearia lacunosa without the brown tomentum on the back of the leaves. By torch light we had passed this the previous evening as Pseudopanax lineare, so familiar from the previous week. From then on we met several hybrid forms of O.lacunosa, and Pseudopanax lineare was present too, as an undergrowth in the beech forest. I discovered later that a number of plants reach their Northern or Southern limit in this area: Pseudopanax lineare, Ranunculus lyallii, Celmisia traversii are a few examples of the former, while Nothofagus truncata, Brachyglottis repanda, Laurelia novae-zealandiae (pukatea) Suttonia salicina, (toru) and Metrosideros robusta (Northern rata) are examples of Northern plants not found below this district.

We set out early in the hope of reaching the summit before mid-day. The mountain, we were told, was notorious for clouding over about noon. Everywhere through the sub-alpine forest and along the more open tracks were huge sponges of lichens which had become so heavy with moisture that they had fallen to the ground. Huge cushions of moss, several kinds intermingling, told of a heavy rainfall. Quite suddenly, as we climbed into a new belt, we found ourselves in a most eerie place. Around us for quite a distance was a closed community dominated by sprawling trees of mountain Nei nei, Dracophyllum traversii. The twisted red trunks, shedding their bark, were arranged in a candelabra-like fashion, with small rosettes of leaves topping each branch. This is the out-size spiderwood, and grows as much as 30 ft. high. We walked for some time through this pre-historic plant world, on a carpet of sphagnum and lichen with only a few stunted members of the Heath family (i.e. Gaultheria, Pentachondra, Leucopogon) and Dacrydium bidwillii, a small sundew, Drosera stenopetala, and a small piri-piri, Acaena sp., to remind us of a more recent civilisation.

From the second hut, we crossed an open tableland of fell field which seemed to stretch for miles. We were too late to see the flowers of the yellow bog-lily, or Maori onion, Chrysobactron hookeri, which spreads in damp places here, proof against fire and stock. Here we found Hebe montana in flower, Phormium colensoi, the mountain flax, and Dracophyllum longifolium, inanga. There were more Hebes, Ourisias, Euphrasias, Gentians and Celmisias to add to the long list of new names we had learnt at Arthur's Pass. Celmisia dallii was the most striking new daisy found here between 4 - 5,000 ft. It had petals and leaves recurved at the tips, numerous leaf-like bracts down the flower stalk, as in Senecio, and a rosette of large leaves six to eight inches long, backed with rusty gold down. Many hours could have been spent on this mountain meadow. As we looked west we could see ranges of jagged peaks, barren and windswept. Yet this plateau had a good depth of soil and a bewildering number of species.

Climbing higher through stiff tussock and prickly cushion plants we saw once only a westerly slope covered with vegetable sheep, Raoulia mammillaris, which in its mountain setting was a delicate duck-egg green. We hurried on in the hope of climbing above the clouds which were surrounding us already. We ate lunch in heavy mist with only 500 ft. to reach the summit. Finally most of the party went on to the top leaving two of us huddled together in a limestone sink hole. We would call them back to the correct ridge, if necessary, on their return. We learnt from this experience what exposure on a mountain could mean.

The triumphant climbers returned after two hours, clutching 5 or 6 unusual plants. The clouds had not lifted to show the glorious view to Karamea, but visibility was good enough to reveal plants of Notothlaspi, Myosotis, Pimelia and highly coloured Epilobiums with flowers half an inch across.

The weather deteriorated quickly now and we set off down in heavy rain. We arrived back at the Flora Hut about dusk, to find most unexpectedly Mrs. Hynes and Miss Barr, whom we knew to be botanising in the Cobb district. In spite of a drenching they too were most enthusiastic about the scenery and the number of new plants they had seen.

Next day, as we descended down the lower Flora track in the rain we were aware of passing botanical gems in the forest, but our supersaturated

minds could absorb no more. The only answer is the tin of small change already placed in my drawer and labelled "Mt. Arthur Return Fund".

A TRIP TO NORTH-WEST NELSON

P. Hynes.
M. Barr.

When we arrived at the Cobb, finishing touches were being made at the Dam, workers were being drafted elsewhere and buildings were being demolished, but we were fortunate in having a hut placed at our disposal. The Cobb Valley extends 19 miles back to Lake Cobb, and the lake behind the Dam is 5 miles long.

The vegetation along the lower levels of the Valley is quite interesting. There I found Traversii baccharoides, easily mistaken for a Senecio, so great is the resemblance. The bog lily, Chrysobactron hookeri is abundant and also Arthropodium candidum, the dainty little sister of the rengarenga lily. Olearia virgata was a mass of white bloom, its fragrant scent noticable long before we came to the tress. Botrychium australe was common under the tall teatree scrub, and Clematis australis, so attractive in both flower and seed, adorned the harsh shrubs of Pittosporum divaricatum and Aristotelia fruiticosa.

One enjoyable day was spent in walking back down the road and along to the Asbestos mine. The only exciting find was Pittosporum dallii, and in view of our subsequent movements that day would have been spent more profitably on the Cobb Ridge.

Then an easy morning's walk took us through the stunted beech forest to Lake Sylvester, 4,300 ft., where we spent two nights. Here in the open tussock the most striking plant was Celmisia traversii. The stems and bracts are covered with a rich brown tomentum, as is the back of the leaves, while the petiole and mid-rib is dark purple. We were enraptured with the abundance of Gentians, which were then, in late January, flowering at their best. The silvery leaves of Astelia cockaynei, glistening in the sun, made a pleasant contrast to the uniform colouring of the tussock grasses. In exposed places large matted patches of two cudweeds would catch the eye. These were Gnaphalium traversii var. mackaya, and G.collinum, the whole plants being covered in white cottony wool. Large rocks would be covered with the hard interlaced branches of the porcupine plant, Hymenanthera dentata var angustifolia. We came across one small colony of vegetable sheep. It was not in flower and then looked like cushions of blue-green velvet. The dainty fern, Cystopteris fragilis was found in crevices of rocky outcrops as was Schizeilema haastii.

We climbed Iron Hill, 5,500 ft. and from there looked across to the Lockett Range with Lake Lockett in the foreground. The summit ridge produced the usual alpines. Haastii sinclairii, Helichrysum microphyllum, Drapetes, Hebe ciliolata syn H.gilliesiana, etc. One plant