O B I T U A R Y - Professor Arnold Wall (1869-1966)

In the early years of our Society, when he lived in Mt.Eden, Professor Wall was closely associated with our activities. He worked on our committee, he was one of our Presidents and he wrote us a bulletin - "Those Troublesome Names", which later grew and developed into a much more elaborate publication - "The Botanical Names of the Flora of New Zealand" - by Professor Arnold Wall and Dr H.H. Allan.

He was a keen collector, and when in Auckland was interested not only in our "natives" but also introduced weeds. He was a most discriminating observer, and had I think an especially sharp eye for the small things. He once told me with some amusement that he had on occasion discovered plants on routes traversed by eminent botanists. It was he thought, because his eyes searched the ground and often noted unobtrusive little herbs. Indeed, I think he had rather a liking for small delicate things - he would have concurred with G.K. Chesterton's contempt for the "modern vulgar worship of mere size."

I remember he once showed me a small exercise book concerned with an overseas trip. He liked to have souvenirs of places that especially interested him, and with him such souvenirs took a characteristic form. When he had lingered in a chosen place savouring its literary or historic background, he would look about and collect from wall or crevice some little wild flower or tiny weed - "That," he remarked, pointing out an unobtrusive little crucifer, "came from the Vatican Gardens."

I always thought, that unpretentious little exercise book was somehow symptomatic of him - the poet in him that chose to mark the passage of his journey with tiny fragile things, and the naturalist in him that noted so exactly the surroundings, then pressed his specimen with loving care then set it in his book, noting its location in that precise elegant handwriting.

I do not doubt that those gentle tokens brought past scenes vividly to his mind, for his memory was astonishing. He could collect a plant in a particular locality, and years later give the most precise directions for finding the exact spot. Last time I was in Christchurch, when he was by ordinary standards a really old man, I remember some one visiting him from the Museum to check on the localities of certain plants that had been collected long ago. If he gave you a location you accepted it as a matter of course. His directions for finding it were always precise and definite.

Like most naturalists he loved his garden, though his manifold activities left him no undue time for gardening. But he had the characteristic English love of a good lawn. "I always see that I have a green lawn" he once remarked. "How?" I asked thinking of droughts and water restrictions. "Oh," he said, "I put it down in buffalo grass." "But" I said, looking at the slight erect figure (and this was long before the days of motor mowers) "How do you mow it?" "Oh", he said "There's no difficulty, provided you mow it two or three times a week." He shook his head, "I really couldn't stand a brown lawn."

He was a delightful companion on a ramble. It was little that escaped his searching eye. From his background in the humanities often came fascinating scraps of information. He was moreover well supplied with diverting anecdotes.

His use of the apt word often delighted one. I remember he once said, commenting on the activities of some small birds "The movements of birds are so neat." a comment I have often remembered when watching birds.

He was always ready to give freely of his knowledge. He would have heartily agreed with Pope's saying that "The worst averice is that of sense." His knowledge was passed on to a wide public, but it was given just as readily to the most humble private enquiress. I am sure that in the early days of our society, when he was with us on a ramble our members all appreciated this, and we all felt deprived when he returned to Christchurch.

But he left something behind him. Our society as a whole was richer for his sojourn with us, and this was especially so for those of us who knew him best.

Marguerite Crookes.

SOME IMPORTANT BOTANICAL WORKS BY PROF. A. WALL

The Botany of Christchurch	Christchurch Revised edition	1953
The Flora of Mount Cook	Christchurch	1925
Some Problems of Distribution of Indigenous Plants in N.Z.	T.N.Z.I. 57 (pp 94-105)	1926
The Botany of Auckland (with L.M. Cranwell)	Auckland Ed.2.	1943

NEW PLANT RECORDS?

KING FERN and KAURI

I would like to start some discussion to which all can contribute - the distribution of some of our plants - so please let me have your notes. I will start the ball rolling with two of our best known, and amongst our most ancient plants - the King fern (Marattia salicina) and the Kauri.

Continued:-