

ART. XXXIV.—*Remarks on New Zealand Trees planted at Parawai, Thames, at and subsequent to the Year 1873.*

By J. W. HALL.

[*Read before the Auckland Institute, 7th October, 1901.*]

It is much to be regretted that a well-organized arboretum for indigenous trees and shrubs has not been established in each of the great centres of population. The extensive, and frequently wanton, destruction of the native bush has been going on at such a pace that it will soon be difficult, if not impossible, to get sight of some of the rarer species. And, unfortunately, the planting of our beautiful New Zealand trees has not generally been adopted, perhaps from the mistaken idea that they are difficult of culture. Partly to disprove this, but principally because I had a great liking for the occupation, I some thirty years ago began a plantation on a piece of land at Parawai, Thames. My success may be gauged by the report just read by Mr. Haszard, giving the data and measurements he has so kindly taken.*

One plantation is in a rather shallow gully, and is about an acre in extent; the other is on a gently rising hill, and is about 2 acres. The trees are grown under almost natural conditions, without cultivation, and were generally less than 1 ft. high when planted. A hole about 2 ft. square was dug for their reception, and a handful of bonedust added. The plants were then left almost unattended, except that the fern and scrub were occasionally cleared from around them. Unfortunately, a few fir trees, originally intended for shelter, were left too long—indeed, some are there yet—and thus the growth was impeded.

Measurements of the pohutukawa and puriri were difficult to obtain, as these trees, especially the pohutukawa, run much to branches. The latter tree should be more extensively planted than it is at present. It is easily grown, and, unlike most New Zealand trees, will bear a slight scorching. It would be a very suitable tree for planting on railway cuttings and embankments, as its closely matted roots would prevent the ground from slipping. One of my pohutukawas, planted about thirty years ago, is quite 40 ft. high, and makes a prodigious display of deep-crimson blossoms about Christmas time. It is greatly to be regretted that more of these fine and useful trees have not been planted in the Auckland Domain and

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Albert Park. The Domain might easily be converted into a splendid arboretum of New Zealand trees.

Compared with *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *Pinus insignis*, and the *Eucalypti*, our indigenous trees are certainly of slow growth; but in a favourable situation and suitable soil the kauri, rimu, totara, puriri, and others make fairly rapid progress and require very little attention, though cultivation and bonedust will certainly hasten their growth. The aspiring development of the kauri, the deep-green foliage of the puriri and karaka, and the graceful habit of a young rimu are all very attractive to the lover of trees.

Some of the shrubs and low-growing trees are also very beautiful—for instance, the whau, the leaves of which sometimes exceed 1 ft. in width and 2 ft. in length. The climbing ratas (*Metrosideros*) are also well worthy of attention. *M. diffusa*, displaying its wealth of crimson blossoms early in the spring, *M. albeflora*, laden with large white flowers late in December, and the scarlet *M. florida* in the early autumn, are well worthy of cultivation, and, though difficult to transplant, grow freely from seed. This, however, is a slow process, but if planting were carried on extensively it would have to be resorted to.

Cultivators are too apt to think that selecting a large specimen will insure rapid development, whereas the reverse is generally the result. It may not be generally known that the puriri and totara, and doubtless many others, can be grown from cuttings. Surrounding part of my plantation is a well-established totara fence grown exclusively from cuttings.

Besides the trees mentioned in Mr. Haszard's list, there are many others too recently planted to make the measurements worth recording. Additions are constantly being made to my collection to replace failures and establish fresh species. Some of the commonest kinds I have found most difficult of cultivation. I have not yet succeeded with the tawa, the taraire, or the pukatea. Perhaps the most troublesome of all are the semi-alpine ones—they suffer so much from the drought in summer and the frost in winter.

One object in making these plantations was to induce the visits of our rapidly disappearing native birds. The frequent visits of the riro-riro, the piwakawaka, and the kotare, with occasional incursions of the ruru, the tui, and the pipiwhararoa, and still more rare appearance of the kaka, kukupa, kohoperoa, weka, and miromiro, have amply repaid my expectations.

In conclusion, let me express a hope that these few cursory remarks may induce others to attempt the cultivation of our indigenous flora.