

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

BOTANIC GARDEN BOARD, 1880-81

(TWELFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEETINGS of the Board were held on the 20th July and the 31st December, 1880.

The work done in the gardens during the year has been only conservative, the expenditure in wages having been kept below an average of £19 per month on account of the precarious nature of the revenue at the disposal of the Board. The most frequented parts of the domain have been thoroughly underbrushed, and a wide opening cut along the paths, to admit sunlight and air in places that remained damp after rainy weather. A considerable number of young trees have been planted out to replace blanks. The encroachments of gorse have been checked as far as possible, but it will be necessary to adopt some more active measures for this purpose, as a large area contiguous to the Upland Farm boundary is at present lying waste from the spread of gorse.

The fences, roads, and bridges have been put in good repair, the young plants have been cleaned up, the main entrance improved, and the flower-beds renewed and kept in order.

A further advance has been made in the preparation of the ground for the systematic collection of plants intended for the use of botanical students; but, until the Board can feel justified in spending a sum of about £70 on it, this most desirable addition to the gardens must remain in abeyance.

From the share of the Californian seeds, imported last year by Government, that was placed at the disposal of the Board, about 2,700 young trees have been raised. From last year's stock 479 trees have been distributed to various public institutions for planting their grounds—such as the Parliamentary Buildings, and church and school reserves in various parts of the colony. About 834 plants have been disposed of by sale, and a considerable number are still on hand, but not sufficient to supply the orders that have been received.

The keeper of the gardens was sent in April last to the Tararua Mountains, and, with a small expenditure of about £5, succeeded in obtaining a fine collection of live alpine plants from an altitude of 5,000 to 6,000 feet, among which were several novel or rare species.

A valuable collection of plants, hitherto almost unknown in the live state, has also been obtained for the gardens by the taxidermist to the Museum, who accompanied the "Stella" on the annual trip to the Auckland Islands, in March last.

The Board has been indirectly the means of introducing to the colony a consignment of Japanese fruit and foliage plants, which will, it is expected, prove of great value, as being suitable to the climate. It was represented to Government that Mr. Tiffin, of Napier, was about to visit Japan on a horticultural expedition, and that it would be a good opportunity for getting Japanese plants for distribution selected by a thoroughly-competent and enthusiastic collector. The suggestion was cordially entertained, and, as a result, in April last, twelve cases were received, containing 1,800 plants, of which the following is a list:—50 oranges, 1,000 persimmons, 300 kiakie, 100 giant chestnuts, 150 maples, 200 bamboos. Owing to unfortunate delays in the course of transmission some of the plants did not arrive in good order, but still a very large proportion were in excellent condition, and have been distributed to applicants on payment of a charge that will recoup expenses.

The Board has to acknowledge donations of plants and valuable seeds from the following gentlemen: Messrs. Mason, Mantell, Drake, Barraud, Harding, and Hector.

The gardens are much frequented during the summer months, and, considering their defenceless condition, surrounded only by an open fence, and having no staff to maintain them at all proportionate to their extent, it is satisfactory to have to report that they suffer no material damage, and that, as a rule, the public show, by their good behaviour, that they appreciate and value the advantages which the domain affords them.

The attached statement of accounts shows the source of revenue for the past year, and the manner in which the funds have been spent.

The balance to the credit of the Board shows a slight increase over that with which the last year was commenced, being £287 2s. 8d.

JAMES HECTOR,
Manager.

Approved by the Board.
ARTHUR STOCK,
Chairman.

28th July, 1881.