

The first forest trees, consisting of beech, ash, oak and elm, were introduced by Mr. W. Guise Brittan; and soon afterwards a quantity were brought by the late Bishop-Designate,—Bishop Jackson,—but soon after his arrival, he resolved on returning to England, and gave the trees to Mr. Deans, by whom they were planted in the shrubberies at Riccarton, and are now tolerably lofty trees, producing seeds in abundance, from whence young trees are being largely raised and planted, by which Riccarton will soon become possessed of plantations of valuable timber.

The first Kean's seedling strawberry, the only really productive and valuable variety which has yet been brought to the Province, was introduced by myself from Auckland, in 1851, to where it had first been imported from England, in 1849, by the Rev. Mr. Cotton. Prior to the arrival of this very important variety, strawberries had been deemed unproductive in New Zealand, and so reported of by the Auckland Horticultural Society; this, however, soon superseded the Chili and other unproductive kinds, and produced fruit in the greatest possible profusion.

I was also the first to introduce from Auckland the brilliant scarlet blossomed hawthorn, one of the very handsomest of all ornamental dwarf trees for a grass lawn. These are now numerous in the Province, and will soon become one of its most admired plants. The original tree, brought from Auckland, was supplied to Mr. Pritchard, and is now standing in Dr. Stodman's garden in Cranmer square. It blooms very profusely, and bears an abundance of haws every season. It is, however, a peculiarity in the scarlet thorn, that a hundred thousand plants might be raised from its own seed, and yet every one of these would only be the common milk-white thorn of the hedges. The scarlet blossomed thorn is a purely accidental variety, which can only be perpetuated by budding or grafting twigs of it upon stocks of the common thorn.

The merit of first introducing the pinaster fir-tree is fairly due to the Rev. G. Cotterill, who furnished, in 1852, a quantity of the seeds of this handsome evergreen timber tree to Messrs. Harman and Davie, who raised and distributed a large number of pinasters from a garden where Cookham House now stands, and close by which six of the original trees, about 20 feet high, still remain.

To Dr. Earle, of the Grange, and Dr. Barker, of Christchurch, jointly, are fairly due the credit of first raising and proving in Canterbury the exceeding value and rapid growth of the blue gum. Dr. Earle's plant, which was first, in point of time, by a month or two only, was first obtained in a very peculiar manner. He had bought from me some Van Diemen's Land onion seed, among the young plants from which there appeared a young plant supposed to be an English honeysuckle, which, at that early date, was greatly prized because of the scarcity of plants of a similar class; very soon, however, it became obvious that it was not a honeysuckle, but a robust growing forest tree of astonishingly rapid growth, soon attaining a height of some four or five feet. An Australian settler happening to see it, pronounced it at once to be the Van Diemen's Land blue gum, and intimated that, from its rapid growth, it would be a most useful and ornamental tree in New Zealand gardens. Some short time after, seeds of the plant were obtained from Australia, which were eagerly sought for, the prices being as high as 20 guineas a pound; in one instance that sum was paid for nine ounces.

Lombardy and black Italian poplars, which are scarcely less valuable from their extreme rapidity of growth, were first brought to this Province, from Wellington, by Mr. Henry Phillips and myself simultaneously. These were rapidly increased from cuttings, and early formed one of the most prominent features in and around Christchurch, thereby relieving our landscape in some small degree of its then dreary monotony, and surrounding our houses with the lively green foliage peculiar to English forest trees, which at that early period of the history of our province was deemed no inconsiderable addition to our limited comforts.

The poplar, however, and especially the black Italian poplar, is not merely valuable for the rapidity of its growth, for its shelter, and for its ornament, but it is still more valuable, from the character of its timber, which very speedily attains to a large size, yielding planks from four to five feet in width, of a yellowish colour, very easily wrought, and very enduring for all sorts of inside work, such as flooring, and possessing the yet further advantage that it is all but impossible for it to catch fire—for, although it may smoulder, it will not blaze; and it was for this particular security against accident from fire that it was selected, many years ago, for the flooring and other interior woodwork of the drawing rooms, dining rooms, and other rooms in the spacious mansion or castle of the distinguished scientific Earl of Rosse, at Parsonstown, in Ireland, and in many other mansions and houses throughout the United Kingdom.

The Portugal laurel and the common English laurel—two of our handsomest evergreens—were first introduced, in 1850, by Mr. William Guise Brittan, who brought them with him in a Wardian case from London, by one of the first four ships: these were the parents of a large proportion of the fine laurels now in and around Christchurch; for, although the original plants were lost through some mismanagement in their removal some years afterwards from Mr. Brittan's residence, where the Lyttelton hotel now stands, a quantity of cuttings had fortunately been taken from them prior to removal; these rooted and grew freely, and saved for us two of our noblest evergreens, which are now plentiful, and will hereafter be largely used in ornamenting our grass lawns, in filling our shrubbery borders, and in forming beautiful hedges, at once highly ornamental and well adapted for the purposes of affording very efficient shelter.

To the same gentleman Canterbury is indebted for the introduction of the beautiful *arbutus unedo*, or strawberry tree, which was brought from London in the same Wardian case along with the laurels. The *arbutus* is one of the handsomest of English evergreens, and is invariably accorded the most prominent

position on all English lawns, and in all judiciously planted shrubberies, because of its handsome foliage, its numerous bunches of beautiful flowers of a waxy whiteness, and still more especially so from its numerous bright scarlet berries, exactly like highly coloured strawberries, which are usually found on the tree in all stages of growth, from the newly formed bunch of green berries to the brilliant scarlet ripe fruit, which at once attracts the eye and calls forth unqualified admiration. The original tree is still growing in great beauty at Englefield, the former residence of Mr. W. G. Brittan, but now the property of Mr. J. Campbell Aikman. This tree is by far the finest specimen of its kind in New Zealand.

Another of our most beautiful flowering plants is the *clianthus puniceus*, or parrot's beak; this plant was first brought into the province from Auckland by myself, in 1851; one of the original plants is still growing and flowering in great beauty, trained up some ten feet high, in front of Mr. Slater's house, in Lichfield-street. It produces a great profusion of brilliant scarlet bloom, which contrasts handsomely with its lively green foliage. Trained against a wall, or on an espalier rail, in the form of a hedge, closely trimmed in, it has a most gorgeous appearance when in bloom. It was, from a very early period of the history of the colony, found growing in wild profusion on the island of Kawai, a small island some 30 miles north of Auckland, from whence copper ore has, for many years, been exported in tolerable abundance. It is, however, very questionable whether this handsome plant can be claimed as indigenous, for although generally believed to be so, yet the colour of its flowers and the lively green of its leaves are entirely unlike the general character of New Zealand vegetation.

Amongst highly ornamental evergreens introduced from England there is none more deserving of our admiration than the *rhododendron*, one of our noblest evergreens, possessing a handsome foliage, and yielding annually a brilliant display of splendid bloom in all shades of colour, from the purple "ponticum" to the white "maximum," or the brilliant scarlet "alto clarence," well suited for plant stove-forcing in winter to ornament the greenhouse in very early spring with their beautiful bloom, which can be readily prolonged throughout a great portion of the summer if the plants be judiciously introduced by consecutive instalments, which have been less or more submitted to the well-known process of retardation. For the first introduction of this handsome evergreen the thanks of the province are due to Mr. Thomas Potts, of Governor's Bay, the Vice-President of this Society, who, in 1853, immediately before his own arrival, sent out two Wardian cases filled with *rhododendrons* in excellent health, and embracing many of the more beautiful varieties. These were originally planted in the garden of the Rev. Henry Jacobs, from where they were afterwards removed to Rockwood, and are now large, handsome bushes, under the skilful care of Mr. Henry Phillips.

Next amongst ornamental plants—handsome alike in foliage and in flower, and fondly esteemed because of the recollection of its home associations—is the *ribes sanguinea*, or scarlet flowering currant, which I had the honor of introducing into this province from Auckland, in 1851, while it was yet a great favour even there to secure this well known plant at a high price. It is now abundant amongst us, and greatly enlivens our shrubberies in early summer with its beautiful crimson blossoms.

It was at this time also that the handsome climbing plant, known by the name of the *dolichos lignosis*, a leguminous plant, with papilionaceous flowers of a pretty pink and white colour, well suited for covering the columns of verandahs, for which purpose it is largely used in Auckland, but here it was found to be too tender to survive the then severe winters; its cultivation is consequently confined to cold frames or greenhouses. Now, however, that the climate is so much improved, and the winters much milder, its acclimatization may yet be effected, with a little protection afforded during the months of June and July of the first winter. The same remarks and mode of treatment are equally applicable to the *passiflora edulis*, one of the passion flowers, which produces in Auckland a profusion of eatable fruit of a most peculiar flavour, with broad glossy green leaves, and well suited for the purposes of an ornamental climbing plant.

Another timber tree of considerable importance for the interests of the province was introduced by myself, in 1854; it is the *salix alba*, or Huntingdon willow. I had made several previous unsuccessful attempts to introduce this valuable tree, but at last succeeded in getting out from London three live plants in a glazed Wardian case, which had contained several varieties of poplars, a quantity of the dwarf edging box, and some roots of the lily-of-the-valley. The glass of the case, however, had been accidentally broken on the voyage, the sea had swept the deck and filled the case with salt water, and on arrival all the plants were dead except three Huntingdon willows, and the roots of the lily-of-the-valley. The three willows propagated very rapidly, and are now abundant in nurseries, and will soon become extensively planted, for it grows with great rapidity, and soon attains a height of from 40 to 60 feet, producing planks of from three to four feet in diameter, of a remarkably light timber, and so white that it is used for the purposes of inlaying in cabinet work; and because of the same qualities of lightness and whiteness, it is still more largely used in the dairy for such purposes as milk pans, milking pails, and skimming cups. It is also used to a considerable extent as handles for reaping hooks and sickles, in nibs for scythes, and even for scythe handles, and many other purposes of utility.

I have here referred to the lily-of-the-valley. I am fairly bound, however, to say this was not the first period of its introduction. I believe the merit of first bringing to Canterbury, and successfully cultivating this, the most graceful and fragrant of all our beautiful spring flowers, is due to the Rev. William Aylmer, of Akaroa, who brought it with him from Ireland, in 1851, along with a deep crimson rose, well suited for the columns of a verandah, and some other English plants, of which he was the successful introducer. The lily-of-the-valley is now growing in full perfection in his very beautiful grounds at Akaroa, producing annually a profusion of its lovely white blossoms partially hid amongst its handsome green leaves, and endeared to us not less by its beauty and fragrance than by its numerous pleasing home associations.