

SVEN BERGGREN IN NEW ZEALAND

Section I

The visit to New Zealand in 1874-5 of Sven Berggren the noted Swedish botanist and world authority on mosses and algae has been hitherto known to New Zealand students only through his two formal taxonomic papers. Any published comments of a general nature so far located were buried, untranslated, in a Danish geographical periodical¹ and in it he was dealing chiefly with the hot lakes region. His note in the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* on ticks in the wool of a dead sheep² could hardly be said to add to the corpus of discerning impressions of the New Zealand landscape. The first of his two papers, published in 1877³, described twenty-four species, seventeen of which were new with one new order but it was not until twenty-one years later that his study of New Zealand liverworts appeared.⁴

Some years ago while newspaper searching for references to the central North Island area the writer found a fleeting mention of Berggren in the Taupo region in January 1875.⁵ An approach to Lund University, the institution of which he was a staff member at the time of his antipodean visit, seemed worthwhile. The University at first were unable to help and had no record of any manuscript material on the visit. However three years after the initial request, on the eve of abandoning the seemingly forlorn hope, an excited letter from Miss Margareta Donner of the Manuscript Department of the University Library of Lund advised that the manuscripts in question had just been returned to the Botany Department. Photocopies of the journals were most generously enclosed.

But if survival of the archive was confirmed, its perusal was still a major challenge. The text was apparently in old Swedish script in faded pencil and the xerox copies did not compensate for the deficiencies of the original. Two translators tried unsuccessfully to make some headway, and it seemed that after all, despite the tantalising identification of well-known place-names in an otherwise meaningless page, Berggren was not for us. However we were most fortunate in interesting Mrs Barbro Macnamara, then a student at Library School, in the formidable task. In the time she could make available Mrs Macnamara succeeded in providing what may be regarded as a good working translation of much of the copy, despite certain indecipherable wastes. The main record consists of four diaries with a separate overlapping descriptive summary of the thermal regions section, and correspondence with New Zealanders and others about his visit.

The diary entries vary greatly in length depending upon Berggren's interest, mood and available time. Even when full they are set down in