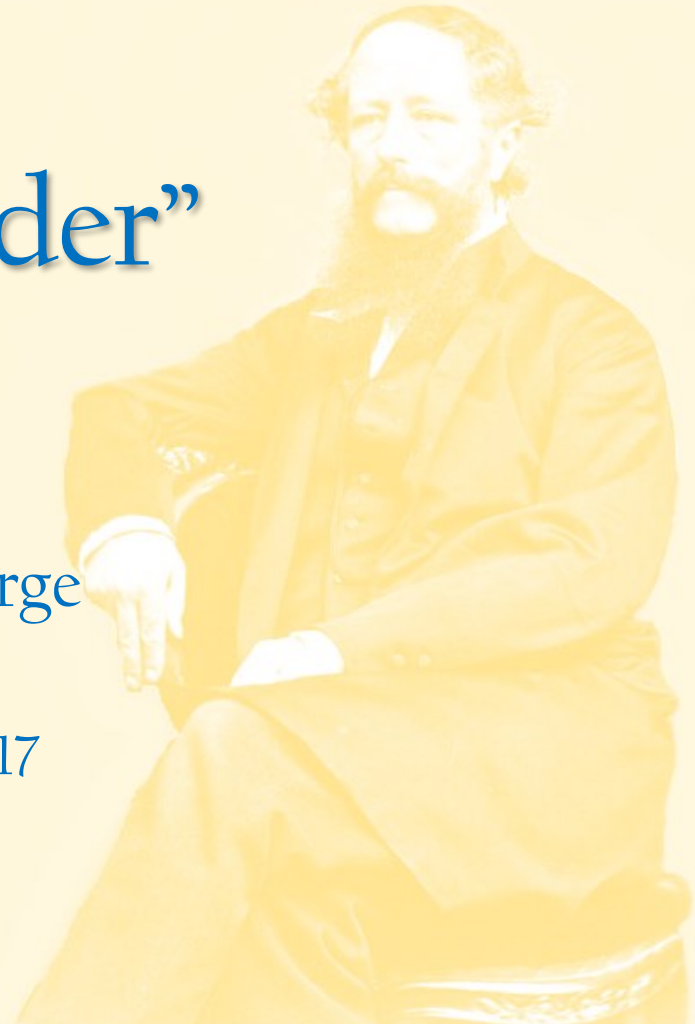


“My Botanical friend Felix Reader”

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Was Colenso conned?

Different accounts of

Felix Maximilian Franz Reader 1850–1911

Colenso's botanical friend

Between 1883 and 1886 William Colenso sent over 900 specimens of mosses to “Reader”.

When Colenso described the moss *Bartramia readeriana* (a synonym of *Breutelia pendula* (Sm.) Mitt.) in 1884 he wrote, “I have with pleasure named this species after Mr. F. Reader (formerly of Blenheim, New Zealand, but now of Victoria), an amiable, persevering and unassuming young botanist, and diligent collector of plants, especially mosses; which Order he has long made his particular and close study, and that from pure love of nature, and not for mere pecuniary gain”. [1]

FMF Reader wrote (from the Friendly Society Dispensary, Fitzroy, Melbourne) to JD Hooker on 1 June 1884, that he had “recently arrived from NZ... when in NZ I collected musci largely”. [2]

There are orchids, liverworts, and other plants in various Australian herbaria collected by FM Reader, and his main collection is one of the “significant historical collections,” purchased in 1906 by the National Herbarium of Victoria. The herbarium has 103 specimens of mosses and liverworts collected by the Rev. W. Colenso in New Zealand. [3]

In the Codicil to his will dated 13 November 1896 Colenso wrote, “I give and bequeath to my Botanical friend Felix Reader, Chemist of Dimboola Victoria the sum of One hundred pounds of which sum Fifty pounds is to be by him held in trust for his son William Colenso Reader until he attains the age of twenty-one years”. [4]

A Reader family view

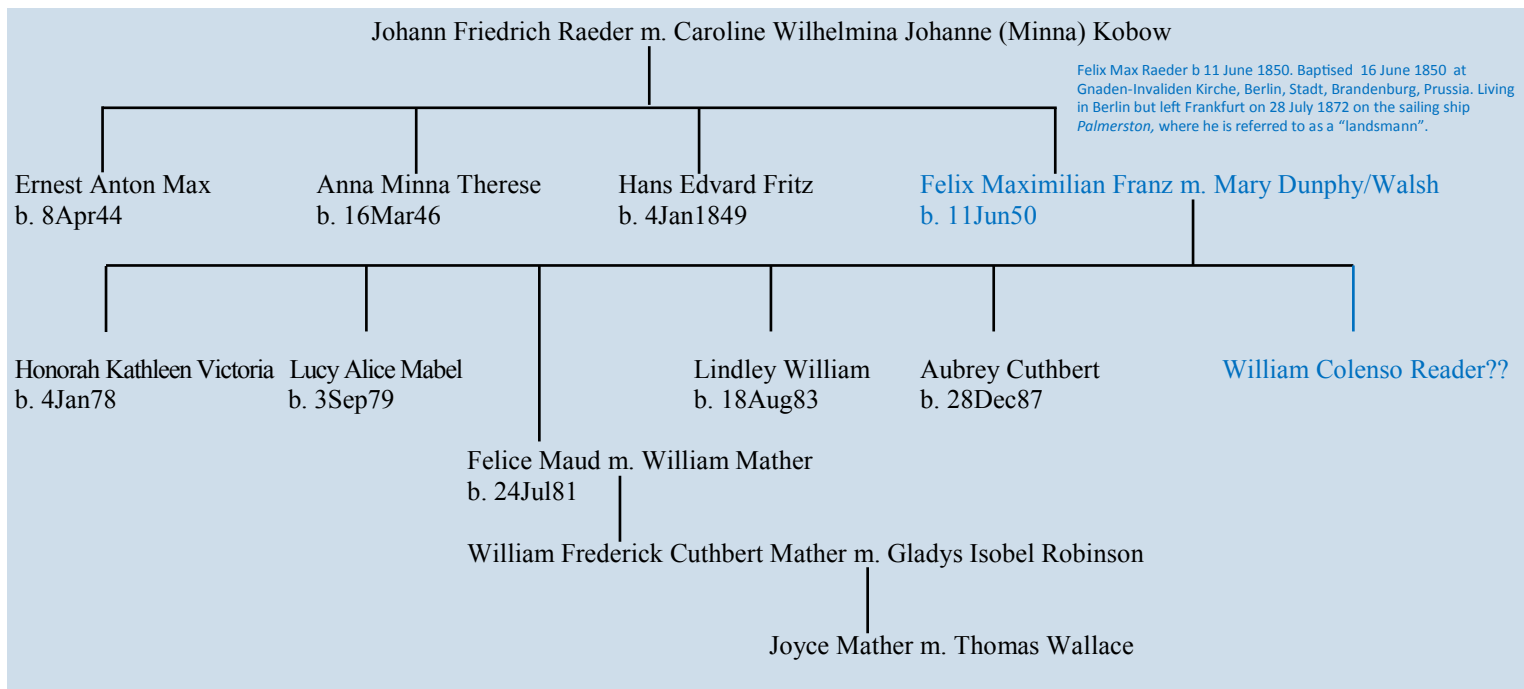
But Tom Wallace, married to Felix Reader's great grand daughter, wrote in 2016 that the Reader family records [5]

... do not contain any reference to William Colenso Reader, and at this stage we doubt that such a person ever existed.... We have no idea as to whether any Reader family members received any benefit from the will. Our research does not support the glowing picture of Felix Reader presented by William Colenso and described as his “botanical friend” in the codicil. On the contrary we believe that Felix Reader was a complete rogue.

The relevant parts of the family tree are on the next page. Mr Wallace continued,

Our potted history of Felix is as follows.

He left Germany from Hamburg aboard the ship Palmerston on 29-7-1872 to arrive in Dunedin on 9-12-1872. He appears to have left Germany under a cloud and his future activities suggest a person not wishing to be recognised or located. Although he arrived described as a farm labourer, he came from an upper-class family, was well educated and grounded in geology and botany. He did not hold a doctorate and was not a medico as described by his son Aubrey Reader. In 1882 Felix qualified as a pharma-



cist in Victoria. Aubrey Reader contributed to a short biography of his father Felix that was prepared by an officer at the herbarium in Melbourne. As Aubrey was not born until 1888 he had no first hand knowledge of the early years of Felix. As a result the biography contains many errors, partly as a result of the secretive behaviour of his father.

We believe that, shortly after arriving in NZ, Felix left for NSW where he used the name "Edward" Reader, being described as working in the

roles of prospector, fencer and botanist. "Edward" Reader has a record as a paid collector of botanical specimens for von Mueller (director Melbourne Herbarium) and others.

Edward Reader was collecting in the Tilba Tilba area at the time of the Bermagui murders; the murderer has never been identified. The day after the murders "Edward" Reader disappeared from the district. Cyril Pearl in his book "Five men vanished" outlines many of the various theories advanced in attempts to solve the mystery.

We believe that Edward/Felix Reader was responsible for the murders and made his way back to NZ and about mid-October was established there.

To fill in the gaps. In 1872 Felix left NZ for NSW where he prospected etc. as described earlier. Some time about 1875/6 he was back in NZ and obtained a position as a hospital dispenser.... Reader became involved with a female who described herself by various names as Mary/Maria Walsh/Walshe/Dunphy. She became pregnant about mid March 1877. Felix may have not been aware of this being back in NSW and leaving "Mary" to her own resources. Mary gave birth to Honorah Kathleen Raeder on 4-1-1878 and acted as informant for the birth registration supplying false details probably in an attempt to conceal the illegitimate birth.

Felix arrived back on the scene about 10-2-1878, the couple being married at Dunedin 19-2-1878. Felix being absent when Honorah was born. Two more daughters were born in NZ with Felix going to and fro between NZ and NSW. An affidavit prepared by Felix was presented in the Supreme Court on 13-7-1877, this related to an intestate situation.

Aubrey Reader had stated that Felix had married the matron of the Invercargill Hospital, in spite of diligent searching this has not been confirmed.

Felix described botanical specimens that he claimed were collected in NZ, Dec. 1879, March, April, Sept, Oct, Nov 1880, Sept., Nov. 1881. It is believed that these dates suggest that Felix was in NZ when in fact he was in NSW prior to the murders. By ignoring these dates and considering dates of conception for Lucy Alice and Felice Maude then the attempt by Felix

to construct an alibi falls apart. The plants could have been collected at any time and falsely labelled. The only times that require Felix to be in NZ are the conception dates, he could have been back and forth to NSW in between these dates.

Bermagui and the evidence [6]

There was a rush to Bermagui on the southern NSW coast when gold was reported there in September 1880. In October Lamont Young, a geological surveyor, his assistant and three other men disappeared, apparently during a fishing trip. Some have concluded they suffered an accident at sea, others that they were the victims of foul play, perhaps poisoning, as a long necked blue bottle was found in the damaged boat. A murderer has never been identified.

The inconclusive enquiry, pressure from Lamont Young's family and the offer of rewards for information kept the mystery alive.

In 1893 Tilba Tilba butcher Adam Innes met a man called Edward Reader on a train in West Australia. The man's irrational behaviour when the Bermagui murders were mentioned led Innes to make a statement to the police, and that in turn led to the then Constable Colyer at Bermagui, to formulate a theory that Reader was the killer.

Reader was at Tilba Tilba near Bermagui at the time, collecting mosses and heather for the Sydney and Melbourne Herbaria. He had reportedly mentioned there was a person he wanted to kill and he left the district very suddenly and unexpectedly the day after the five men disappeared. He destroyed everything in his hut, but a blue bottle similar to that from the boat was found in his room.

Reader was always regarded as a man who was suffering under a sense of some great personal injury from allusions he occasionally made and it is alleged to be in connection with his wife and daughter in England. He was a recluse, irritable and easily annoyed, but a thorough gentleman and polished in his manners. It was always commonly known that he intended a desperate revenge on some person. Reader regularly received letters from England. He said he came from a place a few miles from Manchester, England, and was of good family. [7]

The inference is that Edward Reader was the killer, but Constable Colyer, the man who painstakingly developed this explanation, was described as a policeman with an active imagination.

Oh, and for what it's worth, blue glass strychnine bottles have short necks: the ones with long necks are castor oil bottles.

What is the truth?

There is no direct evidence that the Bermagui tragedy was murder, nor (if it was) that the man called Edward Reader was the murderer nor (if he was) that he was an alias for Felix Reader. The conclusions rely on inference and speculation.



Evidence that relies on an inference to connect it to a conclusion of fact allows for more than one explanation. Different pieces of such evidence are required, each corroborating the inference drawn from the others to come to a single logical conclusion.

Was Edward Reader the Bermagui murderer?

Several other men were suspected of the murders at the time and the suggestion that Edward Reader was the murderer did not arise until 13 years after the deaths. Nonetheless there is a cohesive body of inferential evidence suggesting he was.

Three months before the murders Baron von Mueller spoke highly of his collecting, which "he did with a disinterested zeal and energetic toil, which are beyond all praise". [8]

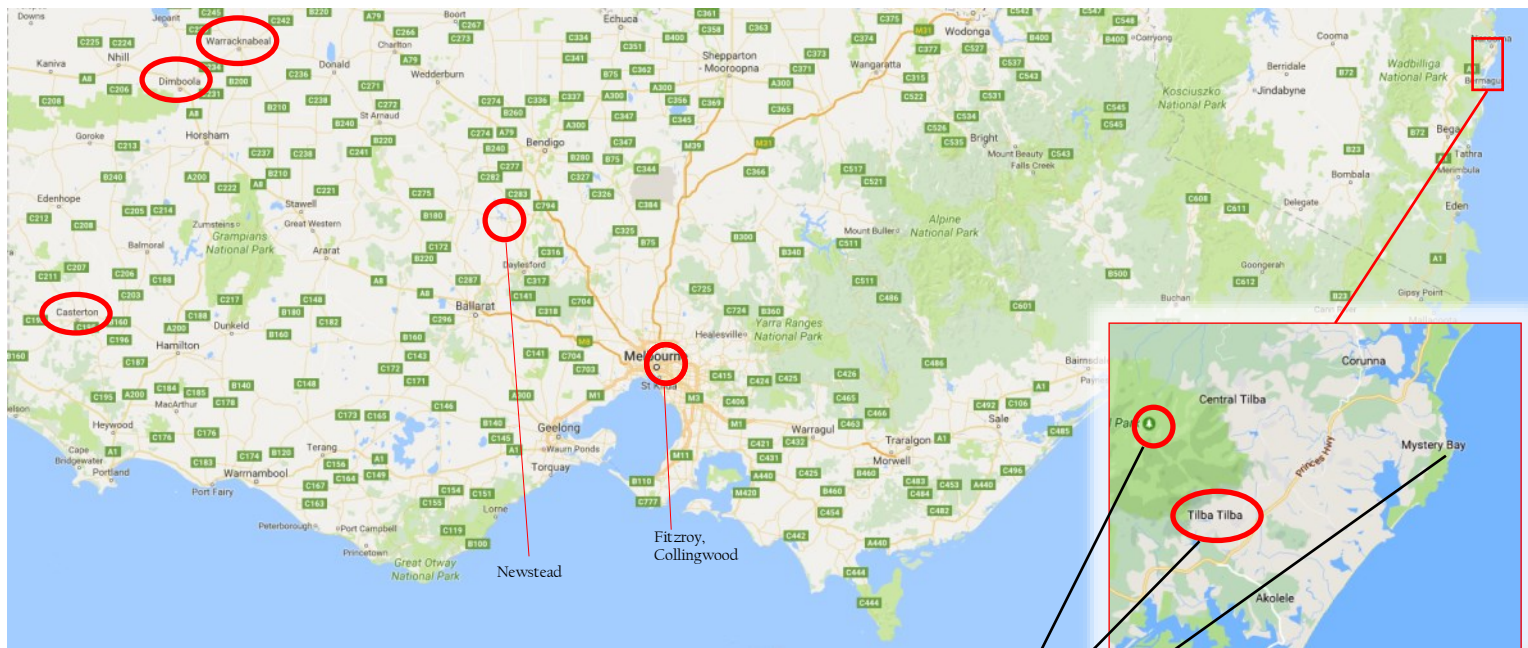
But that doesn't make him innocent.

Were Edward and Felix Reader the same person?

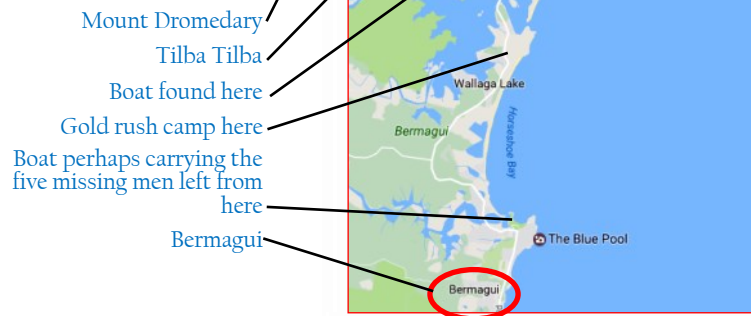
Each collected mosses for von Mueller and each was in Australia in the early 1880s. Beyond that is speculation.

Felix Raeder "appears to have left Germany under a cloud", took passage as a "landsmann" rather than as a health professional, changed his name to Reader and never registered as a voter and was never naturalised in New Zealand. That is a pretty common story for young men sent to the other side of the world after trouble at home and no other inference should be drawn from it. Furthermore, for a man with something to hide he began, within ten years of arrival, to lead a very public life, running a chemists' shop, writing for the local papers.

The family believes he went to Australia "shortly after arriving in



Parts of Victoria and southern
New South Wales showing
significant places in the
Felix & Edward Reader stories



NZ” and certainly we can find no record of him in NZ between December 1872 and 5 August 1876 when “Mr Felix Raider” was appointed dispenser at Invercargill hospital.[9] There is no record at the Medical Council of New Zealand (but its records are fragmentary) and the Otago Medical School opened only in 1875; pharmaceutical education was by apprenticeship, the National Pharmacy School opening in Dunedin in 1962.

There is no record of him in Australia in that period either and no certain shipping list recorded. He may have been serving an apprenticeship with a Dunedin chemist, or he may, as he indicated, have worked initially as a farmhand.

He married a woman named Maria Walsh in 1878; on her first child's birth certificate she called herself Mary Dunphy, on later birth records Mary Walsh. No inference about her character should be drawn from the range of names—she was born in Ireland, maiden name Walsh, father Patrick Dunphy (from birth certificates of her children and her own death certificate), so her parents were probably unmarried. The birth certificate of their first child Honorah Kathleen Victoria is dated January 1878, so she was born before they married—common practice. Later they would backdate the year of their marriage to 1877—common practice. Kathleen would develop St Vitus's Dance and heart valve disease, no doubt consequences of rheumatic fever; she would be engaged in “domestic duties” at home all her life.

Did the Bermagui murderer need to have special pharmaceutical knowledge? Not necessarily: by 1881 Australian farms were being abandoned because of the rabbit plague and every rabbitier knew strychnine came in blue glass bottles.

Were Edward Reader and Felix Reader alike? No: the man identified as Edward Reader by Tilba Tilba butcher Adam Innes on the train in

West Australia in 1893 (when Felix Reader was 43 years old) was “a fussy old man”, “a gentlemanly middle aged man”, “the old gentleman”, an “old fellow”. He identified himself as English. Constable Colyer thought in 1893 that Edward Reader would be about 70 to 80 years old—perhaps born about 1820 (Felix was 43—born 1850 and was German).

Felix Reader had a sabre-scar on his face from a wound in the Franco-Prussian war—not mentioned by those who knew Edward Reader.

By nature Felix was (according to son Aubrey [10]) an unobtrusive reticent man, of medium height but stocky and powerfully built; he once wore a short “goatie” beard. Edward was (according to Colyer),

... about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, (had) thin and clearly cut features, blue eyes, grey hair, beard, moustache and whiskers; he always wore his beard somewhat goatee mode... fairly well built, square shoulders now somewhat stooped.... Spoke deliberately but quietly when excited and with great precision and given to gesticulating with his hands.

An Edward Reader, probably but not certainly the same man, was in Muckleford in 1856, was said to have been prospecting on the Tuross river 25 years before Colyer wrote his report—in about 1868. He was robbed in Sydney in 1869. These all predate Felix Reader's arrival in New Zealand in 1872.

How might we explain the absence of William Colenso Reader?

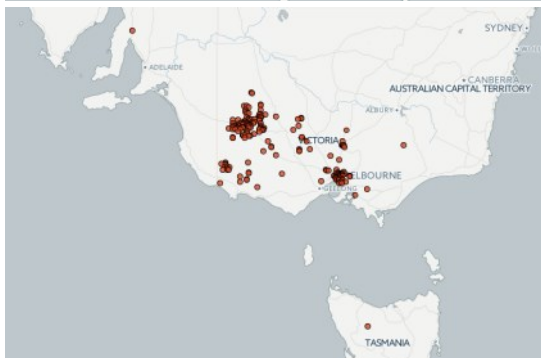
Felix and Mary's last surviving child was Aubrey, born in December 1887 when Mary was 32. Lindley William Reader was born in 1883 when Colenso's relationship with Felix was at its closest: it seems likely he was the one named after Colenso. It would be unusual to use the name William a second time.

Colenso included his legacy to William Colenso Reader when he wrote the codicil to his will in 1897, two years before he died. There is no record among the documents relating to Colenso's will at MTG Hawke's Bay to show this legacy was ever paid.

Aubrey Reader wrote that his father's "latter years had been saddened by financial difficulties and some domestic misfortunes". One of the misfortunes was the charge that he had performed a fatal abortion in 1901. Another was Lindley William's paralytic stroke after exertion in 1910. Felix died in 1911; Mary had cancer in her liver and outlived him by only a year.



Collection sites
attributed to
E Reader 1879-1880



Collection sites
attributed to FM
Reader 1881-1911

Plants in current collections

Both Edward Reader and Felix Reader were plant collectors for Ferdinand von Mueller. On 28 July 1880 the Baron referred to Edward Reader in a paper he read before the Linnaean Society of New South Wales,

Mr. Edward Reader, a resident near Mount Dromedary, became induced to gather the plants of his vicinity with a view of tracing the southern limits of the more northern Plants of New South Wales. This he did with a disinterested zeal and energetic toil, which are beyond all praise. The series of species never before found so far south, is already sufficiently advanced to offer it for publication; though during the spring months many other, particularly herbaceous plants, would likely be added, if search in his district could be continued. [8]

Edward Reader's work did continue but the last of his specimens from southeast NSW currently in herbaria is dated October 1880, the month of the murders. After his disappearance, letters arrived for him at Tilba Tilba Post Office, and anxious botanists sought information from the postmistress,

... from Mr Moore the Curator of the Sydney Botanical Gardens inquiring if Reader had received a certain letter from him containing a remittance of £10, and stating he felt anxious not receiving an acknowledgement from Reader. Also one from the late Baron von Mueller making similar inquiries.... The Baron again wrote displaying deep interest and anxiety in Reader, he expressed a profound astonishment at Reader's remarkable disappearance and stated that as Reader was such a reliable man he had used his influence to get him

appointed a Forester in the locality and that the appointment was assured and also that Reader was aware of it. [7]

The family believes that Felix Reader went back and forth across the Tasman between 1877 and 1881, speculating that he changed his name to “Edward”; his NZ moss collections during 1880 may have been falsely dated in order to construct an alibi for the Bermagui murders of 9 October 1880.

There is only one specimen in the **Auckland Museum** collection collected by “Reader”, undated and marked simply “Australia”.

Felix Reader was one of the important contributors to the Armstrong Herbarium, now in the **Allan Herbarium** at Landcare Research, Christchurch, where there are 52 (mostly undated) specimens collected by F. Reader, including an undated 18 from Hawke’s Bay (with a flowering *Caladenia minor* and a flowering *Clematis indivisa* revealing spring collection). The few NZ collections that are dated are labelled “1880”, 8 Feb 80, 1 Nov 80 (Awatere). The Australian collections are dated 1890, 1894, 1897, 1900, 1903.

Of the 79 plants at **Te Papa** in Wellington collected by Reader, most are undated, but there are Marlborough collections dated 5 Sep 80, “1881”, 2 Oct 81; there is a Hawke’s Bay collection attributed to Reader dated 1881. There is at Te Papa a Tilba Tilba collection dated 1880 (a moss, M033000) collected by “E. Reader”.

The **Australian Virtual Herbarium** records 595 collections by “E. Reader”, all made between June 1879 and and October 1880; 2,504 collections by “F.M. Reader” range from 1881 to 1911.

There are specimens of fungi—eg *Ramalina celastri* (MEL 2363387A)—in the **National Herbarium of Victoria** said to have been collected by FM Reader in Hawke’s Bay between April and September

1882. These must have been collected by Colenso for Reader—or else Reader was in Hawke’s Bay for almost a year from the spring of 1881. The herbarium has over 600 specimens collected by Edmund (Edward) Reader.

The Napier *Daily Telegraph* of 10 October 1882 reported on the previous evening’s meeting of the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute. Colenso’s enthusiasm for Reader is clear, but if Reader had been in Hawke’s Bay the report would probably have mentioned it,

Mr Colenso then read the more popular parts of his Botanical paper, (omitting the technical portions,) in which he had described several new plants, some of them being novelties from the S. Island, of the genera *Carmichaelia*, *Olearia*, and *Symphyogyna*, obtained from the herbarium of Mr F. Reader, who had collected them at Blenheim. Specimens of all those plants were shown, together with several others; among these latter were some beautifully mounted Ferns of a large size, also from Blenheim, prepared by Mr Reader; and a few others (striking ones) collected by Mr Hamilton, Mr Winkelmann, Mr John Stewart, and other Members; all of them excited great and continued interest. A cordial vote of thanks to Mr Reader, for his numerous curious and beautifully preserved exhibits, was proposed in energetic terms by Mr Colenso, seconded by Mr Holder, and carried unanimously.

In the **National Herbarium of NSW** there are three specimens attributed to FM Reader from Eurobadulla in southeast NSW (just north of Bermagui) one of which is dated 3 August 1880: *Parsonsia brownii* (NSW 716773), collected at Mt Dromedary. Edward Reader lived at Mt Dromedary and he was certainly in the vicinity in August 1880. The three NSW herbarium specimens thus suggest either

- (1) Both Felix and Edward Reader were in the Bermagui region in 1880, Felix (unwisely if he were a killer seeking an alias) using his own name; or
- (2) specimens collected by E Reader have been wrongly attributed to FM Reader (which appears to have happened with the Colenso specimens from Hawke's Bay attributed to him) or
- (3) E Reader sent specimens to F Reader—ie, they knew each other (NB. E Reader was also too old to have been Hans Edvard Fritz, Felix's brother); or
- (4) they were the same man.

Letters from both Edward Reader and Felix Reader have survived, so the handwriting can be compared. They are very different (see next page).

Was Reader a rogue? Was Colenso conned?

We don't think so. Clever killers can of course hide their tracks but there is nothing other than the surname (not clever if it was an alias), medium height, a goatie beard and a shared interest in gathering mosses to suggest Edward Reader and Felix Reader were the same man. On the contrary there is a good deal to suggest they were not.

Edward Reader could well have been the killer, if indeed this was murder. If so he was either delusionally paranoid or a psychopath. To kill five men in order to revenge oneself against one of them is surely psychopathological.

He was a loner “who was suffering under a sense of some great personal injury.... a recluse, irritable and easily annoyed.... he intended a desperate revenge on some person.” [7]

That reads like a schizoid personality breaking down into frank psychosis. Not, we hasten to say, the “double personality” of midtwentieth century populist fable (altogether too neat), but the isolated, reclusive, darkly suspicious, persecuted—and sometimes brutally murderous—reality.



The first herbarium record of *Ulex europaeus* (gorse) in Australia; collected at Studley Park, Melbourne in 1884 by Felix Reader.

⑦

Tilba Tilba, N.S.W.
Mr Cobargo
March 18/80

Sir,

Enclosed I forward parcel
of Robert Mayer & Co also Root
of New, and in reference to
same beg to state, that, the roots
of this is long, thin & shaft like
throwing up clusters at intervals
of from 12 to 18 inches - my packet
of sponges being over the standard
weight I had some difficulty in
inducing the Post Master to receive
it. I hope that it has come to hand,
my ever thank God has repaired their
wounded strength. I am Sir,
Most Respectfully,
Baron von Mueller M.D.Sc. Your Obedient Servant
Felix Reader

A letter from Edward Reader to Baron von Mueller
from Tilba Tilba on 18 March 1880—7 months before the murders

Newslead, April 20th 1910

Professor Alex. J. Ewart, D.Sc. &c.

Dear Sir,

The grass from Mr Arapiles is a variety
of Hooker's *Dichachne pruriens*, and this name,
to my mind, is preferable to that of *Stipa micrantha*,
which, as you pointed out, is synonymous with
Nees' *S. verticillata* & the true *micrantha* of Coville.
I doubt, however, that the validity of the two
genera being separated stands good, it is a matter
of opinion.

I do not think that this form has been recorded
or exhibited, at any rate, not as *subcarnata* -
a variety.

Yours sincerely,
F. M. Reader

A letter from Felix Reader to Prof AJ Ewart dated 20 April 1910.

Biography of Felix Reader compiled by an officer of the Melbourne Herbarium from Aubrey Reader's recollections of his father [8]

READER. FELIX MAXIMILIAN, F.R.H.S.

Pharmaceutical Chemist b ? 1853 d 24 March, 1911.

He was born in Berlin, Germany, of an aristocratic family whose real name (according to his son, A.C. Reader) was 'von Reyder'—(thus, no relation to E. Reader, who collected at Tilba Tilba, N.S.W. in the 1880s).

As a young man of about 17 he fought for his fatherland in the Franco-Prussian War—1870—being then a lieutenant in the artillery and receiving a sabre-thrust in the left cheek (the scar of which he carried for the rest of his life). He was a person of wide culture, training at first as a medical man and securing a German doctorate. He learned to speak French, English and Italian, as well as German, as became an accomplished musician.

He left Germany some time in the middle 1870s and migrated to New Zealand (ship and route unknown).

Thereafter he never contacted his parents or relatives again and rarely discussed his previous life in Europe even with his children.

Foreign medical qualifications not being recognised in New Zealand, Reader trained there as a pharmacist and eventually practised pharmacy—apparently first in the Blenheim district (Marlborough Province and County in the South Island).

He must have possessed a natural keen interest in plant life, for he began collecting and forming a private herbarium at least as early as 1879 (His New Zealand specimens in Melbourne herbarium bear the dates Dec, 1879, Mar, Apr, Sept, Oct & Nov 1880, Sept & Nov 1881, and some mosses collected in 1882). Most of these specimens are from Marlborough County; alpine plants are lacking (except some that were communicated to him by JB Armstrong in 1881), so it would seem that he made no excursions into the Southern Alps or into the North Island.

While in New Zealand, he married Mary Dunphy, erstwhile matron of Invercargill Hospital, and his first three children (Kathleen, Lucy and Felix) were born there.

Late in 1882 or early in 1883, Reader came to Melbourne, Vic, and gained employment at Singleton's Dispensary Collingwood. He soon made the acquaintance of Studley Park flora along the Yarra, collecting specimens there as early as May 1883.

About this time he also became pianist for the Melbourne Philharmonic Society (according to AC Reader) and retained the position for four years. The last two of his five children (Lindley & Aubrey) were born in Victoria.

Reader was elected a member of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria in May 1884 and in October of that year he read a paper entitled 'On the history of botany before the time of Linnaeus'. In January 1885, he read another paper—'The phaenogamous plants of Studley Park, Kew—near Melbourne'—which was published with an annotated list of species in Vict. Nat. 1: 172–176 (Mar. 1885). In this article he acknowledges the assistance of Baron von Mueller, with whom he had become closely acquainted—an association that continued until the Baron's death in 1896.

Thereafter, Reader exhibited many specimens at meetings of the Naturalists Club.

During 1888 he took up residence as a pharmaceutical chemist in Dimboola remaining there for almost 16 years.

The Wimmera flora and that of the Little Desert were full of fascination for him; and he made a very extensive collection, not excluding mosses, lichens and fungi. Between 1892 and 1896 he sent many moss collections to the German authority, Carl Muller, who described some of them as new species in *Hedwigia* (mostly during 1898/99).

Following Muller's death, he corresponded with V. Brotherus in Finland, and also send fungal material to Daniel McAlpine, the Government Pathologist in Melbourne. Baron von Mueller visited him in Dimboola on at least one occasion. Reader was particularly interested in Mt Arapiles, paying that isolated sandstone peak at least eight visits and collecting extensively there (3/11/1893, 10/11/1894, 10/3/1895, 3/11/1895, 1/3/1896, 24/8/1896, 27/4/1897 and 9/4/1898). On one occasion he was accompanied there by his youngest child Aubrey (Mr AC Reader now of McKinnon). Although St Eloy Dalton, at that time Shire Secretary and Engineer at Dimboola, was also a keen local botanist in constant touch with Baron von Mueller there was no collaboration whatever between him and Reader.

Early in 1903, Reader moved his business headquarters to Warracknabeal, and continued to collect along the Yarrambial Creek and other parts of that district. After four years he moved again, to Casterton (in 1906) and from there to Newstead (about the middle of 1909). In October 1902, he had visited the Goulburn River near Seymour where he collected a few plants.

Apparently some time in 1906 he sold his private herbarium to the National Herbarium of Victoria (then under the Department of Agriculture) for the sum of £80.

On 7th October, 1908, there also arrived at the National Herbarium, from Casterton, 17 volumes of books and pamphlets for which Reader was paid £8.

He engaged in active collecting throughout his three years at Casterton (1906–1909) sending at least 16 collections of plants for determination by Professor Ewart and staff at the National Herbarium (see copies of Herbarium replies among official correspondence) and most of the specimens bear the regional label "County of Follett". His son (AC Reader) relates that, while living at Casterton, Reader became lost in the bush for three days (on a botanising excursion) and had the police out looking for him, but he eventually found his own way home.

During his brief residence at Newstead (18 months), botanical collecting continued and apparently the last specimens he gathered were of the type of *Prasophyllum ciliatum* Ewart & Rees—at Green Valley near Newstead on 19th June, 1910. Thereafter his health declined, and late in 1910 or early in 1911 he returned to Dimboola where he died on March 24th, 1911. Two days later his remains were interred in grave No. 509 at the Dimboola Cemetery, the Roman Catholic Rev. Father GP Waldron officiating at the burial.

Reader's latter years had been saddened by financial difficulties and some domestic misfortunes, and his passing went quite unnoticed by the local newspaper (*Dimboola Banner*). There is a brief obituary in *The Victorian naturalist* 27: 236 (April 1911). His son (AC Reader) avers that the father, to whom he was apprenticed as a chemist, was no business-man and would have done much better on the research staff of some natural his-

tory institution—his great, over-riding interest was natural history, and, besides a very fine herbarium, Reader also had a large insect collection (the present whereabouts of which is not known—perhaps destroyed?) (EH Martindale, a next door neighbour states that Reader's constant companion was an old greyhound dog, "Sloper").

Among the amateur botanists of Victoria he holds a high place: all his collectings were labelled and mounted in the neatest possible manner, and, in importance they rank equal with two others at the National Herbarium—those of Raleigh A Black and Herbert B Williamson.

The exact number of specimens is not known, but they must embrace many hundreds.

By nature he was an unobtrusive reticent man, of medium height but stocky and powerfully built; he once wore a short 'goatie' beard.

Apparently no photograph of him has been preserved.

Following is a list of taxonomic publications:—

Details of FM Reader's 'Contributions to the flora of Victoria' published in *The Victorian Naturalist* (1897–1906):—

1. 13: 146–147 (Mar. 1897)—*Acacia glandulicarpa*—sp. Nov.
2. 13: 167–168 (Apr. 1897)—*Stipa acroclita*—sp. Nov.
3. 14: 83–84 (Oct. 1897)—*Tillaea exserta*—sp. Nov.
4. 14: 163–164 (Apr. 1898)—*Prasophyllum fusco-viride*—sp. Nov.
5. 15: 31– (July 1898)—*Dawsonia Victoriae*—C. Muell. [Translation of an original moss description from *Hedwigia* 36 (1897)].

Felix Reader in the *Victorian Naturalist*

"The Phanerogamous plants of Studley Park, Kew, near Melbourne."

Reader F (1885). Part I. 1 (15) 172.

———— (1886) Part II. 2 (2): 24;

———— (1886) Part III. 2 (3): 36.

"Contributions to the flora of Victoria."

Reader F (1896) No. I. 13 (11): 146.

———— (1896) No. II. 13 (12): 167.

———— (1897) No. III. 14 (6): 83.

———— (1898) No. IV. 14 (12): 163.

———— (1898) No. V. 15 (3): 31 (Karl Muller in *Hedwigia*, translated from Latin by F Reader)

———— (1898) No. VI. 15 (5): 59. Ditto.

———— (1898) No. VII. 15 (8): 96.

———— (1899) No. VIII. 15 (11): 143.

———— (1900) No. IX. 16 (10): 158.

———— (1901) No. X. 17 (9): 154.

———— (1901) No. XI. 17 (9): 155.

———— (1902) No. XII. 19 (7): 97.

———— (1905) No. XIII. 21 (12): 177.

———— (1905) No. XIV. 22 (3): 51.

———— (1906) No. XV. 22 (9): 158.

———— (1906) No. XVI. 23 (1): 23.

———— (1906) No. XVII. 23 (4): 89.

The musician

Felix Reader was said to be a person of wide culture who became an accomplished musician. He sold a trichord piano in Blenheim in January 1881.

According to his son Aubrey, in about 1883 he became pianist for the Melbourne Philharmonic Society and retained the position for four years.

Rod Reynolds, Archivist at the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, told us,

The records of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society for the period concerned are reasonably complete, but unfortunately there is no mention of Felix Reader. It is more than probable that a piano was used for rehearsal purposes and indeed a piano is mentioned as an asset of the MPS. There is no record of rehearsal accompanists until about 50 years later. Felix Reader may have served as a rehearsal pianist but we can be fairly certain that he was not used as a concert pianist. I have searched through the concert records for 1882 to 1888 and where an orchestra was not used, the records clearly state that an organ was used, and we have the names of several appointed organists for that period. The minutes of the society do exist but do not go into details of rehearsals.

I looked out for singing teachers and a couple of other classifications as well with no success.

The period in question is noted for performances by several different choral societies and choral festivals, and it is known that there was considerable sharing of choristers. It may be that he was associated with some of that work but again nothing appears in newspaper entries that have been scanned in Australia's "Trove database".

TIMELINES

Felix Reader/Raeder/Raider/von Reyder in blue and **Edward Reader in brown**

1820–1830 Edward Reader (ER) born near Manchester.

1850 Felix Maximilian Franz R. (FR) born Berlin. 1854 Mary Walsh born New Ross, Co. Wexford, Ireland, father Patrick Dunphy.

1856 ER Miner at Muckleford Reef, nr Castlemaine, Vic.

1867–1869 ER Quartz Miner (gold quartz reefs) in Queensland. Gold was found at Gympie in 1867.

c.1868–1871 FR said to have trained in Germany as chemist or doctor with a grounding in botany and geology. The Humboldt University Administration in Berlin has no record of him, however.

1868 ER said to have been prospecting on the Tuross river.

1869 13 February *Sydney Mail's* "Law Gazette" report case involving robbery of ER who was apparently robbed by a prostitute. His property included a magnifying glass and compass.

1872 29 July FR leaves Hamburg (suggestion of disgrace) on *Palmerston* (assisted immigrant, Felix Raeder, 22, occupation "landsmann"), 9 December arrives Dunedin.

1872–1873 ER First known on the NSW coast. Prospecting on the Tuross River. Fencing etc. May 1873 Wrote to the Bega Gazette about Nelson Reef. This reef was opened late 1872 by a group of Bega townfolk.

1872–1876 no NZ or Australian records of F. Reader.

1872 ER described as prospector, fencer, botanist. Janet Harrop is matron at Invercargill Hospital.

1873–76 a Mr Woodman is dispenser at Invercargill hospital. 1874 a Mrs Art is matron there.

1873 15 May ER writes to the editor, *Bega Gazette & Eden District or Southern Coast Advocate* about quartz crushing.

1876 5 August “Mr Felix Raider” appointed dispenser at Invercargill hospital.

1876 11 August Invercargill Hospital advertises for new matron (Mrs Gordon appointed); hospital dispenser Raeder wrote resigning as was “about to get married – resignation accepted” but he didn’t marry then.

1877 2 April Raeder stabs foot as hospital dispenser; midApril Maria conceives; 13 July Supreme Court NZ affidavit – still as hospital dispenser at Invercargill; 24 July complains (as “J Raider”) still dispenser; 25 August new dispenser Mr Septimus Myers of Queenstown appointed.

1878 4 January Kathleen born in Dunedin; 19 February Felix Reader and Maria Walsh “domestic; spinster” marry at St Josephs Dunedin—she said to have been matron Invercargill Hospital; early December Maria conceives Lucy.

1879 FR pharmacist in Blenheim; botanical specimens collected; 3 September Lucy born.

1879 ER collected at Mt Dromedary for von Mueller.

1880 ER Collected at Mt Delegate, Tilba Tilba, Narira Creek, Bonang, Genoa River, Nungatta.

1880 18 March ER writes to von Mueller from Tilba Tilba; 9 October Bermagui murders; 11 October ER departs Tilba Tilba & is not heard of again till 1892; FR collects plants in NZ on 5 September and 1 November; November Maria conceives Felice.

1881 6 January F. Reader, Blenheim, wins prize for mounted NZ grasses and mosses; 13 January advertises a piano for sale from “Grove Road, opposite Parker’s” Blenheim; plants collected in NZ; 12 March letter from Blenheim to *Marlborough Express* re bumble bees; 24 July Felice born in NZ. November/December specimens attributed to FR collected in Hawke’s Bay probably by Colenso & sent to FR.

1882 27 February FR letter to *Marlborough Express* on useful weeds; April–September plants said to have been collected by FR in Hawke’s Bay; Oc-

tober Colenso describes plants collected by FR near Blenheim. 25 November Maria conceives Lindley; 13 December FR registered as pharmacist in Victoria after qualifying. Practising at UFS Dispensary, Fitzroy.

1883 early in year FR employed in Singleton Medical Dispensary Wellington St Collingwood (the old building now housing “Melbourne’s finest gay pool & sauna”); living Campbell St Collingwood; collecting in Yarra; 18 August Lindley born; FR said to have been pianist for Melbourne Philharmonic Society for 4 years. Offers NZ shells in exchange for cryptogamic plants.

1884 FR elected member Victoria Field Naturalists’ Club (FNC); Oct reads paper on Linnaeus. Colenso describes *Bartramia readeriana*. FR finds gorse.

1885 Jan Paper on Phaenogams of Studley Park (Part 1) read, publ March in *Vic t. Nat.* 1: 172; Part 2 in 2: 24; Part 3 in 2: 36; he read an occasional paper and exhibited at many early FNC meetings but published little till 10 years later.

1887 Moves to Dimboola. 28 Dec Aubrey born.

1888 residence as chemist in Dimboola for next 16 years. [another “F. Reader” is at Havelock, Marlborough, NZ with family; and still there in 1905].

1890 12 May & 2 July Colenso writes to FR.

1892-96 collecting & sending specimens to Carl Müller in Germany; 16 February 1892 Colenso writes to FR.

1892 Edward Reader encountered on a train between Perth and Albany.

1893 FR pays Govt Printer 13s.

1895 18 September Colenso’s will written.

1896 13 November Colenso’s codicil: leaves £100 to F Reader, of which £50 to his son “William Colenso Reader”, possibly Lindley William Reader; von Mueller dies; Reader corresponds w. V Brotherus (Finland), K Müller (Germany) & McAlpine (Melb) & begins series of 17 papers on plants in *Victorian Naturalist*, the last in 1906.

1897 writes to *Australasian* about freak thistle.

1901 suspected of doing abortion on 21 May causing death of Flora Burns of septicaemia (Warracknabeal, she was exhumed); 18 June application for *nolle prosequi*; 26 July prosecution abandoned.

1902 or 1903 moves business to Warracknabeal

1906 moves to Casterton; sells Herb. Reader to Melbourne Museum; last paper on new plants in *Victorian Naturalist*.

1908 5 May lost in bush near Casterton. Son Aubrey indentured apprentice in his practice at Casterton.

1909 or 1910 moves to Newstead.

1910 finds Type of *Prasophyllum ciliatum* Ewart & Rees; writes "Our Orchids" *Newstead Echo* 3 August 1910. Lindley William has "stroke".

1911 early, returns to Dimboola; 24 March dies Dimboola aged 61.

1912 Mary dies.

Acknowledgements

During the course of our enquiries we emailed the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria at Melbourne and received this helpful reply from Philip Bertling, Library technician,

... all evidence points to Felix Reader (1850–1911) and Edmund [aka. Edward] Reader (?–1880?) being two very separate and different individuals. The excellent *Australian Botanist's Companion* (2009) by Alex S. George provides biographical information about both Edmund and Felix Reader. It appears that Edmund was something of a rogue who mysteriously disappeared in 1880. Felix Reader on the other hand was a most respectable pharmacist and plant collector who provided Mueller with several specimens.

We agree and thank him. We also wish to acknowledge, for help of various kinds, Felix Reader's great great grandson-in-law Tom Wallace who started us on this investigation; Cathy Dunn, Collections Assistant Archives at MTG Hawke's Bay; Dale Conway of the Dimboola and District Historical Society; Andrew Cullen at the Medical Council of New Zealand; Tim McKenna of the Prahran Mechanics Institute; Rod Reynolds, Archivist of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society; Brett Clark of the Pharmacy Foundation of Victoria; Rolf Brednich for contacting the Humboldt University Administration in Berlin.

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9. *Southland Times* 5 August 1876.
10. Reader AC (Aubrey) date unknown. Biography of his father Felix Reader.

A selection of clippings

New Zealand newspaper clippings are from *Papers Past*, Australian from *Trove*, unless otherwise stated.

Southland Times
5 August 1876

It was resolved on the motion of Mr Kingsland, seconded by Mr Roche, that Mr Felix Raeder should receive the appointment of dispenser to the Hospital, Mr Woodman, the present dispenser, having tendered his resignation sometime ago.

2 December 1876

The dispenser, Mr Felix Reader, wrote hoping that as he was about to get married, the committee would accept his resignation, and let him go as soon as possible. The Committee resolved to advertise at once for another dispenser, in order to comply with Mr Reader's request.

4 July 1877 ORDER OF JUDGE.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW
ZEALAND, WELLINGTON DISTRICT.

Friday, this thirteenth day of July, 1877.

UPON reading the Affidavits of JONAS WOODWARD, of Wellington, Public Trustee, and of Felix Raeder of Invercargill, Hospital Dispenser, I do order that the Public Trustee, the Curator of the Estates of Deceased Persons, shall be Administrator of all and singular the goods, chattels, and credits of John Jackson Gibbons deceased, and that this order be published in the *SOUTHLAND TIMES* newspaper.

(Signed) J. PRENDERGAST, C.J.

19 July 1877

ACCIDENTS.—A young man, 18 years of age, and son of Mr Myers, brickmaker, Waikiwi, met with a disagreeable accident while out shooting on Good Friday. He was foolish enough to smoke his pipe while engaged in loading his gun, and it is presumed that a spark from his pipe dropt or was blown into the powder flask, which exploded in his hand, shattering his thumb in a fearful manner. After the young man had been taken to the Hospital, Dr Yorath, having consulted with Dr Cotterell, decided to amputate the thumb, and it was amputated accordingly. We regret that while the Hospital dispenser, Mr Raeder, was handling one of the amputating knives subsequent to the operation referred to above, the instrument slipped through his fingers, fell upon his left foot, and passed right through it. The wound bled profusely, and it will no doubt be the means of making Mr Raeder go lame for sometime to come.



Amputating knife c. 1880

Southland Times 24 July 1877

A letter from the dispenser, Mr. J. Raider, was read in which he complained in no measured terms of the conduct of the wardman, his neglect of duty, and his uncourteous demeanour. Mr. Raider stated that he could not retain his position if subjected to the annoyances of which he complained. The President said that he had carefully considered and tested the truthfulness of these complaints, and must bear out Mr. Raider's statements. The building was filthy fore and aft, and in anything but the state that a hospital should be in. The late Dr. Yorath had complained, and so had other medical men connected with the institution. The Secretary endorsed this view. A sub-committee to consist of Messrs Hall, Moffett, and Willoughby was appointed to investigate the matter and to report at next meeting.

Marlborough Express 6 January 1881

MARLBOROUGH ART FESTIVAL.

A prize open for competition to persons of both sexes, for the best collection of dried and mounted New Zealand Grown Grasses and Mosses, collected by the competitor.—Honorable mention and book, ("Tasmanian Bush Friends,") F. Reader.

Marlborough Express 13 January 1881

New Advertisements.

FOR SALE.

A SPLENDID TRICHORD
PIANO (lately imported.)

F. READER,
Grove Road,
Opposite Parker's.

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Marlborough Express 12 March 1881

To the Editor of the "EXPRESS."

Sir,—Relating to Mr. Tissiman's interesting letter in Wednesday's paper. I find in perusal of the subject an article on the importation of humble bees into New Zealand, in Science Gossip, written by Mr. T. L. Belt, which may not be generally known. In a previous article it is mentioned that the farmers in New Zealand are anxious to introduce humble bees, as they are said to be necessary for the successful cultivation of clover, which they aid by carrying about the pollen. This evidently implies that humble bees aid the fertilisation of clover, but does not exclude the self-fertilisation of it. Mr. Belt in his article mentions the following:—"If the common humble bee (*bombus terrestris*) were sent out, it might do a great deal of harm, and very little good. It obtains the nectar from the red clover and other flowers with narrow corolla tubes, or otherwise difficult of access, by boring holes on

the outside, as has been shown by Darwin. The red-tailed humble bee, (*bombus lapidarius*) on the contrary, always goes to the natural opening of the flowers, and is the great agent in fertilising the narrow-tubed ones. I once watched a small patch of red clover for upwards of an hour. Both of the above species came to it. *Bombus terrestris*, without exception, buried its head amongst the flowers, and made holes at their base, or sucked the nectar from those already made. *Bombus lapidarius* just as invariably went to the opening of the flowers, although the most of them had holes made by the other species. *Bombus lapidarius* has a longer proboscis than *bombus terrestris*, and this is probably the reason for the different way in which they go to work. Early in the summer I have seen young individuals of *bombus terrestris* sucking the nectar from the flowers of the scarlet runners, in a legitimate manner, but they soon learn to make by preference the holes at the base. The successive steps in their education may be watched from their first hesitation, and awkward attempts to do this to the instinctive-like facility they attain later on in the season. My recollection is that *bombus lapidarius*, although it has the longest proboscis, has also the shortest temper and most virulent venom, and, if it be not set free as soon as its first angry note is heard, it will not fail to punish severely. Notwithstanding this trait in its character, I have no hesitation in recommending that it is the one that should be sent out to New Zealand, and that *bombus terrestris* should not be." Hereof one may accept it as granted that the common humble bee sucks the nectar from the clover and other plants, but proves injurious to the fertilisation of them.—Yours, &c.,

F. READER.

Blenheim, March 11, 1881.

THE MEDICINAL VIRTUES OF SOME OF OUR COMMON WEEDS

REGARDING Bleheim from a botanical, or, rather, "weedy" point of view, even a most casual observer cannot fail to notice the great number and variety of weeds met with everywhere. These weeds are by no means indigenous to New Zealand, but have been introduced through the agency of colonisation. The rapidity with which they have spread is a remarkable circumstance, and considering that they have been introduced within the last twenty-five years, it is certainly surprising that they have become so abundant. It is an historical fact that whenever man settles in a new country, he not only carries the weeds that are most troublesome in cultivated ground along with him, but he also exercises an influence on the indigenous vegetation, and so wherever cultivation is apparent, the native plants are rapidly displaced, and possibly exterminated, by the introduction of foreign weeds, and the floral aspect of the country greatly altered, but perhaps not always advantageously. Among the most common weeds is the southistle *sonchus oleraceus* L., found on roadsides, fields, gardens, etc., so well known that it hardly needs description.

All bird fanciers know it well, as canary and other birds are fond of it. It attains a height of two or three feet in the wild state, but as a garden weed it grows 6ft. high. It has a comparatively thick, hollow-branched stem, with thin, usually much lobed leaves, that, with their lower part, nearly embrace the stalk; the flowers are arranged in rounded heads. Each of these heads consists of many small flowers, enclosed in scales, or bracts. As the fruiting season approaches one can notice, instead of the yellow flowers snow white heads, consisting of the fruit-

tipped with a white feathery appendix called the pappus. The juice of the southistle, given in drink, relieves short wind. Pliny states that it has caused gravel and stone to be voided by urine, and cured foetid breath. If warmed with some oil of bitter almonds and a peel of pomegranate, and dropped into the ears, it cures deafness when there is no internal defect of the organ, singing, etc. It makes an excellent application for ladies to wash their faces with to clear the skin, gives it lustre, makes the sallowest skin as pure as alabaster, and renders them beautiful for ever; for this latter, however, I cannot vouch. The decoction of the leaves and stalks causes an abundance of milk in nurses. Southistles are said to be indigenous to New Zealand, but I am doubtful about it. There is a variety, the rough southistle, *sonchus as-*

per A1, which has darker leaves, and the margin of the leaves studded with small, spinous teeth. This variety is found mixed with the other form, and possesses the same properties.

Then the dandelion, *leontodon taraxacum*, L., which must not be confounded with the cat's ear or cape weed, *hypochaeris radicata* L., a very common plant about Bleheim on roadsides, waste places, pastures, etc., paddocks may be seen covered with a sheet of yellow flowers, whereas the dandelion occurs in small patches as yet. It may be easily distinguished from the cape weed by the solitary heads of flowers, fistulated flower stalks, and by the leaves twice or thrice as large, and without hairs. Dandelion is a very useful tonic in chronic diseases of the liver, and in other affections, accompanied by derangement of the biliary organs, as in some forms of dyspepsia and of cutaneous diseases. It is also diuretic and aperient, and used in cachectic disorders generally. A decoction is made of the fresh root sliced, 1oz to the pint of water, boiled down to half a pint and strained, adding two drachms of cream of tartar, a wineglassful to be taken twice or thrice daily. The French use the leaves in salad, and the Germans roast the root for coffee. A useful preparation of it is made by Mr Dunstone, under the name of Essence of Dandelion, which, by the bye, can be procured at chemists for

6s 6d per bottle. The Cape weed possesses astringent properties.

Next the plantain, or fibgrass. Of this I notice two species. The way bread, or way broad leaf. *Plantago major* L, is easily recognised by the leafless flower-stalk, and numerous small green sessile flowers, which are arranged in a spike by the leaves clustered at the base of the flower stalk, and is distinguished from the other *p. lanceolata* L, namely, by the broader leaves. It is an exceedingly common weed, being found in pathsides, waste places, pastures, etc. The leaves are astringent and bitter, and have been long held in popular esteem as a wound herb. It is used as an external application to ulcers, and indolent scrofulous tumors. A decoction of the root; sweetened with honey or sugar, is excellent for allaying the hacking cough in consumption. It is also effectual for toothache, and valuable for dropsy and jaundice. The bruised leaves afford a remedy for burns and scalds. One part of plantain in decoction, and four parts of the bride of beef, boiled together and clarified, heals spreading scabs, or itch, also ring-worm. It is remarkable that it is the chief remedy for the bite of the rattlesnake in India, for which discovery an Indian received a great reward from the Assembly of South Carolina. Plantain juice, mixed with lemon juice, is an excellent diuretic. The seeds are used

for feeding cage birds. Then, again, the sorrel, of which there are several species. the sheep's sorrel, *rumex acetosella* L, the crisp leaved, *R. crispus* L, and the blunt leaved sorrel, commonly called docks, are the most frequently met with. The sheep's sorrel is found especially in dry pastures. It is a perennial slender plant, often tufted at the base, lying flat on the ground. The lower leaves are halbert-shaped, the uppermost sessile. The whole plant is often bright red in Autumn and may be recognised from a great distance. In chewing the leaves the acid properties of the plant may be at once perceived. The decoction of the root, or the powdered root are effectual for worms, and cooling. The seeds are astringent and useful for bloody flux. Sheep's sorrel, and other species of sorrel abound in oxalic acid, used for cleaning purposes, as polishing brass, etc. The crisp and obtuse-leaved species are larger plants, with long leaves and flower axis. At the fruiting period the plants assume a red, or dark brown color. The two last mentioned have astringent bitter and tonic properties, and may be used for skin diseases advantageously.

Harrubium vulgare L, the white horehound; particularly is a valuable plant, which may be observed in several places, forming extensive patches. It has spreading branches, and is white with thick woolly hairs, the leaves are wrinkled and

the white flowers arranged in crowded whorls. The whole plant has a peculiar aromatic odour, and a very bitter balsamic taste. It was long held in high estimation as a tonic expectorant, at the present day it is employed in chronic coughs. An infusion may be prepared by pouring one pint of boiling water upon 1oz of the herb, and let it stand for an hour; a wineglassful, sweetened with sugar, is the dose. Candied horehound is prepared by evaporating a strong syrup of the herb to dryness; a small bit of this may be allowed to dissolve in the mouth frequently. Syrup of horehound is made by boiling a pound of sugar with the same quantity of a strong decoction of leaves until it assumes the proper consistency. Galen maintains that horehound opens obstructions of the liver and spleen. The powder or decoction destroys worms, and the green leaves, bruised, and boiled in lard, and made into an ointment, are a good application for wounds. An agreeable preparation of the herb is the so-called horehound beer. An excellent receipt for chronic bronchitis is the following: Upon half an ounce of the dried herb pour half a pint of boiling water, let it stand for an hour, and strain. Of the strained liquid take 1½ oz. of paregoric 1drachm, and extract of liquorice 10 grains, mix, and take this for a draught three times daily.

Another valuable plant is the spearmint, *mentha viridis* L, which may be seen in damp places, especially on the banks of the Opawa and Omaka, and elsewhere, probably escaped from the gardens. It has a perennial root stock, and a stem two to three feet high, which is erect, and, when luxuriant, branched below, with long dark green leaves; these are sessile, or the lower ones slightly stalked; the pale blue flowers stand in spiked heads on the top of the plant. Spearmint emits a fragrant odour when rubbed, and has a pungent, aromatic taste. Mint is mentioned in all early mediæval lists of plants, and was cultivated in the convent gardens of the 9th century. Turner, who has been called the "Father of English Botany," states in his "Herball," that the garden mint of his time was also called "Spere Mynte." It is used in the form of essential oil and distilled water. In the United States the oil is employed by confectioners and the manufacturers of perfumed soap. Dioscorides states that it has a heating, binding, and drying quality. Applied to the forehead and temple it relieves pain in the head. The whole plant is used, fresh or dried, and is excellent for flatulency, sickness, vomiting, and weakness of the stomach, and creates an appetite. The decoction, gargled in the mouth, cures sore gums and mouth. It has been said to repel the secretion of milk, and to act as an emmenagogue.

The wild parsnip, *peucedanum sativum*. Dent, also escaped from the gardens. It may be seen in waste places and pathways; differs little from the garden plant, the root is shorter, and less juicy. The wild parsnip has clearing and opening qualities, and relieves pains and stitches in the sides, and is excellent for colic. The seeds possess bitter and tonic properties.

The round-leaved mallow, *malva rotundifolia*, of Auth, frequently met with on waste places and roadsides, is a plant with many stems lying along the ground, and obscurely lobed and crenate leaves, which are in outline shaped like a kidney, and very long stalked. The pale blue or whitish flowers are fasciated in the axil of the leaves. Made into a poultice it is good for boils and inflammatory swellings, also for sore throats. The leaves are used in decoction for clysters, and cure gravel.

The pimpernel, *anagallis arvensis*, L, called also "poor man's weather glass"—the flowers opening in clear weather. A pretty, slender, erect, or prostrate plant, found on roadsides, fields, waste places, &c. It has weak stems, with opposite oval or narrower leaves. The flower stalks are slender, erect in flower, decurved in fruit; and the flowers are of a red color. Galen states that they are useful for closing wounds and to clean foul

ulcers. The juice or distilled water is much esteemed by French ladies to cleanse the skin from any roughness, deformity, or discoloring, being boiled in wine and given to drink. O, vanitas vanitate! It cures stings of bees and wasps, and even mad dogs. Used internally and applied outwardly, it removes obstructions of the liver and kidneys, and expels gravel. Ray states that the distilled water is effectual in consumption, being mixed with milk. It is also found useful for dropsy, nervousness, and epilepsy.

The self-heal *prunella vulgaris* L, also called carpenters' herb hook, heal, and sickle wort, is a small hairy perennial herb with a creeping root-stock, square stalks, and oval stalked leaves. The purple or violet flowers are arranged in dense terminal heads, surrounded by orbicular leaves. The decoction of the herb or the herb made into an ointment, is a good application for bruises and sores. It is serviceable to close and heal wounds. The juice used with oil of roses to anoint the temples and forehead cures head-ache and the same mixed with honey of roses cures ulcers in the mouth and throat. It is also used for bloody flux and pains about the neck.

The chickweed, *stellaria media* L, is a weak-branched herb, with a line of hairs on one side of the procumbent stem. The lower leaves are stalked, the upper one

sessile, in outline like an egg drawn into a point, the white inconspicuous flowers stand on long and slender stalks. It is found everywhere in gardens, waste grounds, &c. The plant chopped and boiled in lard produces a cooling ointment and is applicable for ulcers, sores, &c. The juice is serviceable for inflammation of the eyes. The leaves made into a poultice are a cooling remedy for inflammation. It is also found useful for spitting of blood, consumption, hæmorrhage, and cutaneous diseases generally. Some German physicians affirm that chickweed, combined with elecampane, is a specific for hydrophobia.

The knotgrass, wireweed or hogweed, *polygoum aviculare*, L., troublesome in gardens, sometimes forming thick wiry masses, is one of the commonest weeds we have. The stalks lie upon the ground, and are branched from the base with oval or narrower leaves. The small flowers of our species are generally whiteish with a slight red tinge, and clustered in the axils of most of the leaves. It is a good astringent. A decoction of the roots, stalks, and leaves are applicable to all bleeding complaints; the juice made into an ointment is a remedy for inflammations, breakings-out, and wounds.

The shepherd's purse, *capsella*, *hirsia pastoris*, L., called toywort, pickpurse, and casewort also, a common plant to be found

on waysides, hedges, &c. The small white flowers stand in little clusters at the top of the stalk. The leaves are more or less indented at the edges, and those at the base of the stalk arranged in clusters. The seed-vessels or short pods are shaped like a bag or pouch. It may be applied to cuts and fresh wounds, and, made into a poultice, will be found serviceable in erysipelas. It is applicable for bleeding from the nose, and in diarrhœa and dysentery.

The watercress, *nasturtium officinale*, R. Br., a perennial aquatic, green or olive brown plant, often floating, is found in creeks and rivers, and often choking them. It attains an extraordinary size in New Zealand, never seen in England. The leaves are pinnate, and the leaflets sinuate-toothed. The white flower leaves or petals are twice as long as the calyx or sepals. It is used to cleanse the blood and for scurvy, and possesses diuretic properties. The decoction cleanses ulcers, and the leaves, bruised, or the juice may be applied to the face or other parts troubled with freckles, pimples, &c., at night and washed away in the morning. The juice mixed with vinegar and applied to the forehead and head is a good application for dullness and drowsiness.

There are numerous other introduced weeds possessing medicinal virtues, but as they occur mostly individually I will not further enumerate them. No doubt, as

new species are being constantly introduced from Britain and other countries, at some future time more important medicinal herbs, as *heabane*, *foxglove*, *aconite*, &c., will be naturalised in sufficient numbers to be made practical use of. But I trust that as the medicinal properties of some of our indigenous plants are being now practically experimented upon by competent medical men, we will be enabled ere long to find our requisites in our native flora.

F. READER.

Blenheim, Feb. 23, 1882.



Shepherd's purse

Victorian Naturalist 1884; 1 (2): 9.

EXCHANGES.

—o—

A small collection of New Zealand shells offered for Australian Cryptogams other than Filices (to be fully named, mounted or unmounted), or for copies of S.S. Record from the commencement to December 1882.—F. H. Reader, F.S. Dispensary, Smith-street, Fitzroy.

Victorian Naturalist 1885; 1 (10): 97.

Papers read—1. Mr. Reader gave a very interesting paper "On the History of Botany before the time of Linnæus," in which he traced the growth of that study from the earliest times, and mentioned the various writers who had left records of their work.

Victorian Naturalist 1884; 1 (10): IBC.

EXCHANGE.

Mr. F. M. Reader would be glad to exchange New Zealand Ferns for species of *Uvaria*, *Melodorum*, *Mollinedia*, *Cryptocarya*, *Pachygone*, and *Cleome*. 103 Smith Street, Fitzroy.

Victorian Naturalist 1886; 3 (1): 11.

Mr. F. Reader, a collection of micro-fungi; a series of medicinal plants; and a number of parts of Cooke's "British Fungi."

Victorian Naturalist 1885; 1 (15): 172.

THE PHANEROGAMOUS PLANTS OF STUDLEY PARK, KEW, NEAR MELBOURNE.

BY F. READER.

Read before the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, Jan. 12, 1885.

(PART I.)

Of all the so-called parks situated in and near Melbourne, none claim that somewhat misused appellation in a wider sense than Studley Park. It is almost entirely surrounded by the curiously winding river Yarra, whose banks and rocky slopes are verdant with luxurious growth of manifold herbs and grasses. Umbrageous wattles with golden blossoms diffuse in spring a delicious aroma. Stately eucalypti, she-oaks, native cherry and blue-berry trees predominate; in short, Studley Park presents all those attractions so freely supplied by nature in this vast dominion of the globe. Hence the park is the resort of many pedestrians who gladly avail themselves of the so easily attainable retirement from the city's overheated dwellings, to cast off every day's care and drudgery, and enjoy nature's beauteous treasures.

Studley Park affords the botanist many points of interest by the manifold and varied forms of species. Save marine algæ, species of

Victorian Naturalist 1896; 23 (1): 23.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FLORA OF VICTORIA. No. XVI.

BY F. M. READER, F.R.H.S.

(Communicated by J. F. Haase.)

(Read before the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, 9th April, 1906.)

CENTROLEPIS PLATYCHLAMYS, sp. nov.

A minute slender, glabrous moss-like plant, usually under 1

FREAKS OF NATURE IN PLANTS.

The accompanying drawings, showing freaks of nature in the sow thistle, have been received from Mr. F. M. Reader, F.R.H.S., of Dimboola.

Explanation of Figures.—No. 1 represents the normal state of the sow



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*, L.). No. 2 abnormal state of same. Here the upper part of the stem exhibits complicated proliferation of the inflorescence, showing both supernumerary lateral branches of the inflorescence, and then median prolongations of the same branches. In the inflorescence of the lower part of the stem the florets are nearly all regularly tubular, not ligulate, as they are usually; a reversion to the typical state of things. (After Masters.)

The Horsham Times 10 May 1901

(FREAKS OF NATURE IN ANIMALS!)

No small amount of interest was centered on a freak of nature exhibition in one of the windows of Mr. F. M. Reader, chemist, on Saturday afternoon, in the shape of a lamb with two heads, four front legs, two hind legs and two tails. The animal was born near Dimboola and Mr. Reader, who dissected it, informs us (the "Northern Argus") that it belonged to both sexes, had but one heart, one spine, one stomach and two lungs. It is still on exhibition at Warracknabeal.

One Thing and Another.

A chemist named F. M. Reader, of Warracknabeal, has been committed for trial for procuring an illegal operation upon a domestic servant named Flora Burns, who died of blood poisoning.

Otago Daily Times 22 June 1901

Owing to the suspicion that an illegal operation was the cause of the death at Warracknabeal (Victoria) on May 21 of Flora Burns, a young single woman, the body was exhumed, and an inquest held. The jury found that death had resulted as was suspected, and F. M. Reader, a chemist, who was present in custody, was committed for trial.

The Argus 26 July 1901

A PROSECUTION ABANDONED.

WARRACKNABEAL, Thursday.

Concerning the committal for trial of F. M. Reader, chemist, of Warracknabeal, by the deputy coroner's jury, in connection with the death of the girl Flora Burns from blood poisoning, a telegram has been received by the local police to inform all witnesses not to attend the Supreme Court at Horsham, as a *noïe prosequi* has been decided on.

Horsham Times 1 March 1898

At the meeting of the committee of the Horsham and Wimmera District Agricultural and Pastoral Society on Friday afternoon reports on the weed, *Euphorbia Drummondii*, recently found growing on the society's grounds, and said to be very plentiful on the Horsham Common, from which place it is supposed to have been brought, in sand, to the Show Grounds, were read from Mr. St. Eloy Dalton, F.L.S., engineer to the Lowan Shire, and Mr. F. M. Reader, F.R.H.S., Dimboola. Both gentlemen agreed in classing the plant as poisonous and as a menace to stock, especially to sheep. The poison laid chiefly in the milky secretion of the weed, and in the opinion of Mr. Reader the plant is one of the most poisonous in Victoria, or indeed Australia, to the whole of which it is common. If eaten in the early morning, before it has been dried by the heat, the weed is almost certain to prove fatal to sheep. It is rarely eaten by stock except when other feed is scarce. Its action upon sheep produces most extraordinary effects. The head of the poisoned animal swells to an enormous extent and becomes so heavy that the sheep cannot support it and therefore drags it along the ground. The ears also swell, and any part of the pounce touched by the poison turns black. Very little of the poison will kill a sheep. In the opinion of Mr. Dalton the plant is an annual one and therefore possible of easy eradication, whilst Mr. Reader holds it to be a perennial, and consequently difficult to be got rid of. The latter gentleman

recommends that the land infested should be ploughed up and sown with perennial fodder plants. As the weed, which grows chiefly on land that has been overstocked, resists heat to a remarkable extent, it is chiefly dangerous in the autumn, when the old pasture plants are shrivelled and the new vegetation has not appeared. The cordial thanks of the society were conveyed to Messrs. Dalton and Reader and also to Mr. Murray McPherson, of Brimpaen, by whom the presence of the weed on the Show Grounds was first apprehended.

The Leader 2 May 1908

LOST IN A SCRUB.

CASTERTON, Sunday.

A rather disconcerting experience happened to a middle-aged man named Reader, who is a local chemist, on Easter Monday. Mr. Reader took advantage of the holiday, and rode his bicycle to Strathdownie, where he dismounted and wandered into the heavy timber in search of herbs, he being a well known botanist. He lost his way, and after tramping several miles through the bush found himself down near Dartmoor. He turned his course and wandered back towards Strathdownie, which he reached after two days' walking. He was much fatigued after his unique experience and being without food.

BULLETIN of the LLOYD LIBRARY of BOTANY, PHARMACY AND MATERIA MEDICA

J. U. & C. G. LLOYD

CINCINNATI, OHIO

MYCOLOGICAL SERIES, No. 3

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The Lycopodaceae of Australia, New Zealand and Neighboring Islands

Illustrated with 15 Plates and 49 Figures

By C. G. LLOYD

INTRODUCTORY.

Australia is the richest country in the world in Lycopodaceae, and more strange and endemic genera are found there than in any other continent. Our knowledge of the subject is based on relatively scanty material. Probably not more than a hundred specimens have reached the museums of Europe and most of these are at Kew. A majority of the species are known only from a single collection. I do not feel that the knowledge we have of the subject is more than introductory. The work that has been done with the Lycopodaceae of Australia is mostly sporadic, scattered descriptions of supposedly "new species" by authors who desire to attach their names to them. The only systematic work is in Cooke's Handbook of Australian Fungi, which is a very complete compilation of this sporadic work. The author of this pamphlet has spent fourteen months in the museums of Europe in a systematic study of all the material to be found there, and he has been enabled to study practically all the type specimens on which descriptions of Australian species have been based. In addition we have solicited our correspondents to send us specimens and desire to acknowledge our indebtedness to the following who have kindly forwarded specimens:

MISS JESSIE DUNN, Wellington, N. Z.
F. M. READER, Warracknabeal, Victoria.
J. T. PAUL, Grantville, Victoria.
W. R. GILFOLLY, Melbourne.
ROBERT BROWN, Christ Church, N. Z.
R. T. BAKER, Sydney, Australia.
J. G. O. TEPPER, Norwood, S. Australia.
ROBERT M. LAING, Christ Church, N. Z.
J. S. TENNANT, Ashburton, N. Z.
WALTER GILL, Adelaide, Australia.
W. W. WATTS, Sydney, Australia.

We are also advised of a shipment from D. McALPINE, Melbourne, sent to our Paris address (107 Boulevard St. Michel) but at the time this pamphlet was written the package had not reached us. Specimens received are acknowledged in detail under the species to which they belong.

CORRECTIONS.

The plates and the first form were printed in the absence from home of the author. Several mistakes have occurred.

Scutellum melanocephalum page 1, correct to *melanosporum*.
Phellorina Delastreii page 10, correct to *Delastreii*.
Scleroderma verrucosum, Plate 31, correct to *verrucosum*.
Castoreum radiatum, Plate 38, correct to *radiatum*.
Scleroderma aurantiacum, Plate 31, correct to *aurantium*.

C. G. LLOYD,

Paris Address:

107 Boulevard St. Michel, - - Paris, France.

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From Warracknabeal Felix Reader contributed (along with Robert Laing of "Laing & Blackwell" fame) to the *Bulletin of the Lloyd Library of Botany, Pharmacy and Materia Medica* 1910.

TYLOSTOMA PULCHELLUM.—Said to be a minute species that grows on branches(?). It was described by Saccardo (Bull. Soc. Myc. 80, p. 118). I have seen no specimens.

We have received Tylostomas very scantily from our Australian correspondents. A single specimen from F. M. Reader, Victoria, is we think, *Tylostoma Purpusii* recently described from the Western United States. A specimen from J. G. O. Tepper has a protruding mouth and would ordinarily be referred to *Tylostoma mammosum* of Europe, but it is not that species.

PHELLORINA AUSTRALIS.—Stem short. Outer peridium rugulose,* light yellow. Gleba bright ochraceous. Spores globose, rough, 5-6 mic.

It is with considerable doubt that we refer a specimen received from F. M. Reader (Fig. 7) to Berkeley's species. The plant differs from *Phellorina Delastreii* in its shorter stem, the peridium not covered with loose scales, the bright ochraceous color of the gleba. The type specimen of *Phellorina australis* (*Xyloporina australe* Linn. Jour. 13, 171) at Kew is very old, almost without gleba and has a much longer stem than the plant sent by Mr. Reader.



Fig. 7.

Specimens in our Collection.

Warracknabeal, Australia, F. M. Reader.

OUR ORCHIDS.

[BY F. M. READER.]

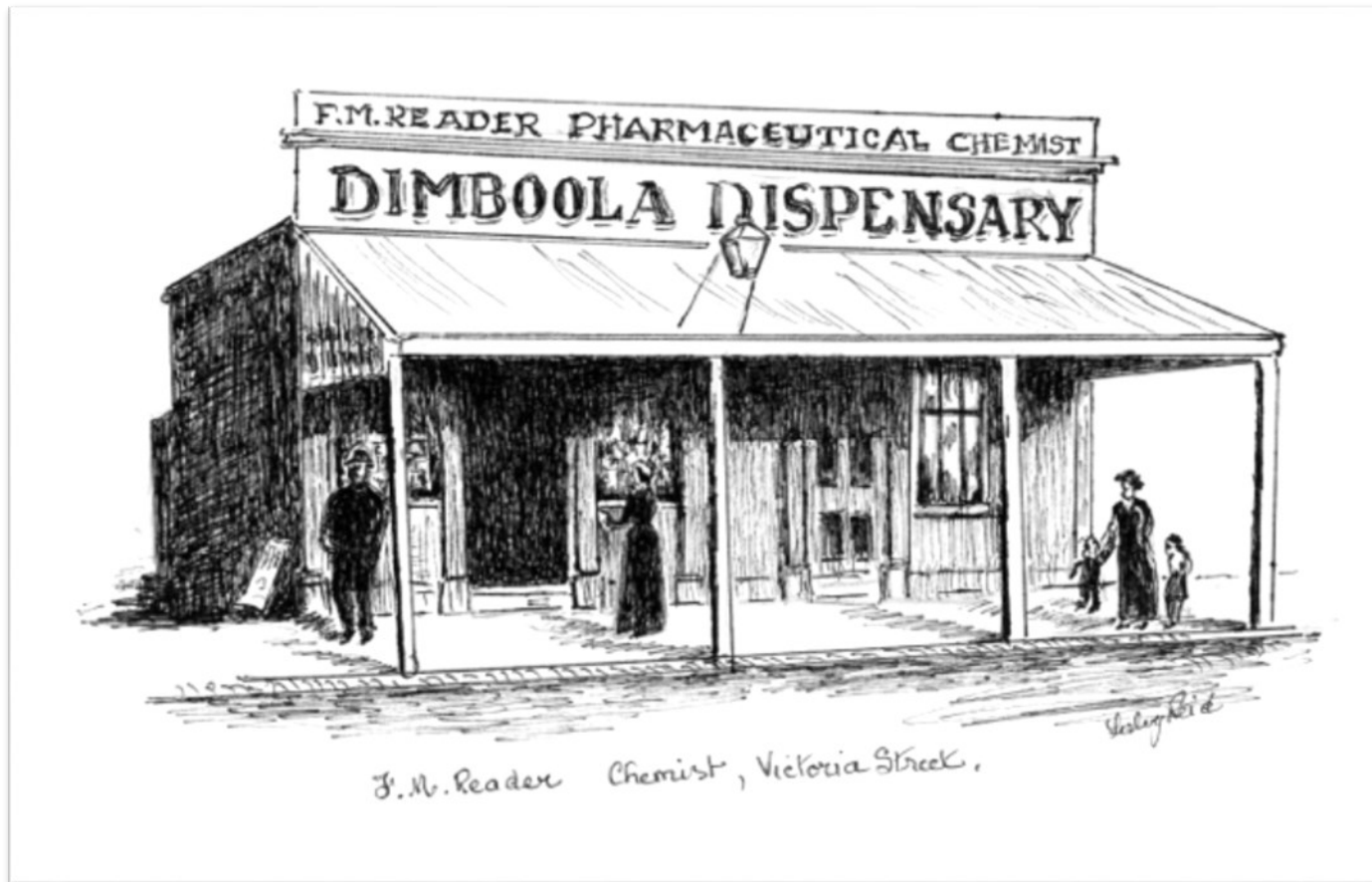
Among the many beauty spots of our picturesque Victoria, Newstead and its surroundings can surely hold their own. It is true we have no lofty mountains, or stupendous and precipitous gorges, as may be found at Mount Buffalo, Erica, and others; our hills, dales and guillies are more of a soothing nature, and a truly inspiring a "dolce far niente" even the most indolent of mortal beings would not cavil at. Many forms of vegetation occur here, from the lofty Eucalyptus to the tiniest moss, and among these the natural order of Orchidanae (orchis order, or more familiarly known as orchids) are strongly represented. Mimicry of forms in flowers is well exemplified in these beautiful and often bizarre plants, and thus we have among extra-Australian species—the butterfly orchis, (*Habenaria bifolia*, simulating the shape of a butterfly), the bee orchis (*Ophrys apifera*, fly orchis (*O. masculina*), frog orchis (*Haben-*

aria viridis), lady's slipper (*Cypripedium Callicolus*), and many others. Among our own plants, many pretty and quaint forms grow in the shelter of that grand heritage of our forests of valuable timber trees, and there we have the parrot's head (*Pterostylis nutans*), the flower being all the world like the head of a parrot; mosquito orchid or orchis (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*) representing a mosquito; spider orchid (*Calandenia Patersoni*), the long filamentous sepals and petals being uncommonly like the sprawling legs of some spiders; rabbit orchid (*Diuris maculata*); whiskers or blue beard (*Calochilus Robertsoni*), and numerous others. One of the earliest flowering (April to July) are species of *Prasophyllum*, leek-leaf orchids, of which there are no less than six distinct ones; and, curiously enough, one of these have never been found in Australia before, and hitherto been recorded as growing only in Tasmania. The honor of discovering this plant, *Prasophyllum brachystachyum*, is due to Mrs. Reader, and this find will be published in the Melbourne scientific journals, whence it will be made known all over the scientific world. This event may induce some of our ladies who are inclined to pedestrianism, and not

afraid to negotiate our hills, to look for these and other plants, and, perchance, discover some species new to science, which is not out of the range of possibilities. Their names would then be immortalized after the fashion, for examples, *Prasophyllum Doweri* (Dower), *P. Rowi* (Rowe), *P. Macilwicki* (McIlwrick), and so on. Orchids offer a fascinating study, and to search for them in their native haunts is an invigorating and health-giving recreation. A day spent among them is a day spent well.

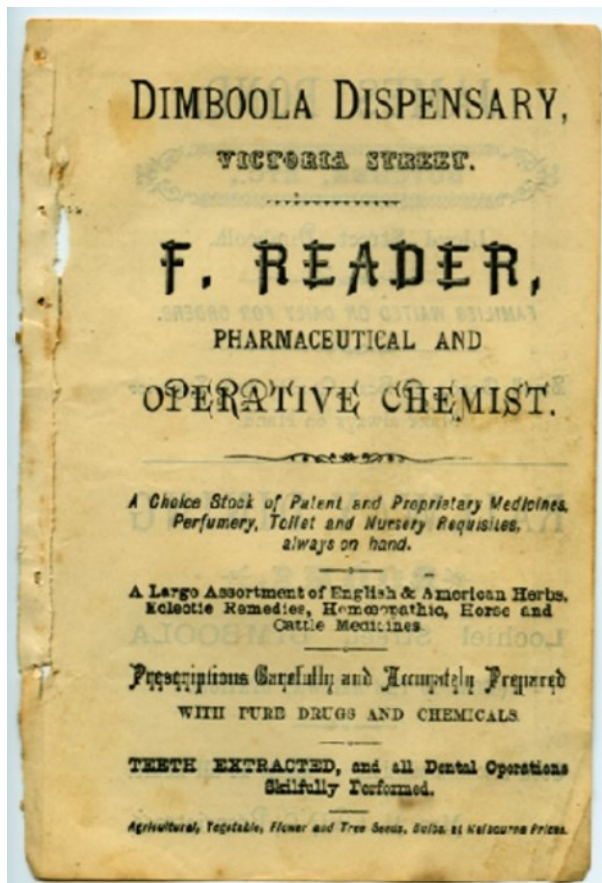
'Midst ferns and flowers and trees
O'er hills a soothing breeze;
Six days of toil; one of rest,
God's nature; the day spent best.

A pity about the typos, but pleasing to see Mary Reader recognised as a fellow collector. Various initials appear on Felix Reader's herbarium specimens, apparently acknowledging those who discovered the plants—including "M.D." (Mary Dunphy, his wife) and "K" (spinster daughter Katherine [Kate]?).



F.M. Reader Chemist, Victoria Street.

Felix Reader's Dimboola Dispensary
by Lesley M Reid, from the Dimboola & District Historical Society 2010 calendar : *Sketches of historic Dimboola*.
Reproduced courtesy of Dimboola & District Historical Society.



As eclectic in his typography as in his practice...
 Felix Reader's advertisement, reproduced courtesy of the
 Dimboola and District Historical Society

READER.—On the 24th March, at Dimboola, F. M. Reader, pharmaceutical chemist, beloved husband of Mary Reader, and beloved father of Kate, Lucy, Felice (Mrs. Mather), Lindley, and Aubrey.

The Horsham Times 31 March 1911

Another death at Dimboola is that of Mr. F. M. Reader, chemist, of Dimboola. the sad event occurring somewhat suddenly on Friday last. The deceased gentleman was born at Berlin, and after reaching manhood's estate, he came out to New Zealand, where, as a medical student, he "walked" one of the principal hospitals. In 1887 he came to Victoria, and settled in Dimboola, opening as a pharmaceutical chemist. Here he remained some years, but about ten years ago he left and engaged in business in Warracknabeal, in the Western district, and in Newstead. Last year he returned to Dimboola, where he carried on business up to the time of his death. Deceased was a most enthusiastic botanist, and at one time had a complete collection of New Zealand plants. He exchanged botanical specimens with France, Germany, Russia and other places. His services were highly valued by the late Baron von Mueller—he was the discoverer of a number of new and rare plants—and it is asserted that after the death of the baron he was offered the post of Government Botanist. This honor he reluctantly declined. Deceased, who was 58 years of age, leaves a wife, three daughters and two sons.



Reader's Daisy, *Brachyscome readeri*, from an image at
http://saseedbank.com.au/species_information.php?rid=758