

DESCRIPTION OF A FERN (*BLECHNUM CARTILAGINEUM*), NEW TO THE TASMANIAN LIST.

By R. M. JOHNSTON, F.L.S.

By the kindness of Mr. Leonard Rodway I have had the opportunity given me for making a critical examination of a new fern discovered recently at George's Bay by Mr. G. K. Hinsby. Both of these gentlemen are well known as industrious collectors of plants, more especially as regards our little known *Fungi*, and we may hope to gain from them at some early day further valuable additions to our knowledge of the Cryptogamic plants of this island.

The new fern submitted to me by this gentleman might at first sight be readily mistaken for some of the abnormal forms of *Lomaria discolor*, where, at times, several of the pinnæ of the fertile fronds are less contracted or enrolled upon each other; but a closer examination showed that the lines of *sori* were arranged differently, being continuous, and situated close and parallel on each side of the costule, with a membranous indusium opening from under the costule outwards, and thus answering exactly to the generic characteristics of *Blechnum*. This genus is very closely allied to *Lomaria*, but in the latter (whose linear *sori* are placed nearer the margin, and opening on the inner side next to costule), the *sori* at length covers the whole of the under surface, and these are themselves often closely enwrapped by the marginal borders of pinnæ which sometimes assumes a cord-like appearance by the extreme flexure. The margin of the species of *Blechnum* about to be described are not so characterised, the *sori* only at length covering the costule and middle of pinnæ; the margins are not reflexed.

Still further examination showed that the species discovered by Mr. Hinsby was in all respects identical with *Blechnum Cartilagineum*, Swartz, a species hitherto only known from the mainland of Australia, where it is found in similar situations, *i.e.*, along creek-sides and borders of scrubs, in southern Queensland and New South Wales, and in several places in Gippsland, Victoria. The addition of a new *genus* as well as a new *species* to our list of Tasmanian Ferns, is of the very greatest interest, and now that we know of its existence locally, I am convinced it will soon be discovered in other localities, where possibly it has been overlooked or confounded with the everywhere abundant *Lomaria discolor*. I have a vague idea (now that I have examined the George's Bay specimen), that I have seen the same fern on the banks

of the North Esk, overhanging the river between Launceston and St. Leonard's. The Launceston botanists might easily verify this matter.

The following is a description of the new species thus referred to :—

Genus BLECHNUM. Linn.

*Rhizome* short and thick, or slightly elongated, and horizontal or erect; *fronds* pinnate, deeply pinnatifid, or in some species (not Australian) bi-pinnate or even simple; *pinnæ*, or segments, narrow; *sori* in a continuous line on each side of the costule, with a membranous indusium opening from under the costule outwards, the two sori often at length confluent, concealing the costule (mid-rib.)

B. CARTILAGINEUM. Swartz.

*Caudez* oblique, densely clothed at the crown with blackish febrillose scales; *stipes*, strong, erect, 4-6in. l., scaly and muricated in the lower part; *frond*, ovate-oblong, 1-2ft. l., 6-9in. br; *pinnæ*, numerous, erecto-patent, linear, 4-6in. l.,  $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ in. br., narrowed gradually towards the point, the margin finely toothed, dilated and connected at the base, the lower ones not conspicuously smaller than the others; *texture*, coriaceous; *rachis* and both surfaces naked; *veins*, fine; *sori*, in a broad line, close to the mid-rib. Hab.—Temperate. Australia (New South Wales, Queensland, Gippsland, Victoria: George's Bay, Tasmania.)