

ROYAL SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1868.

The monthly evening meeting of the Fellows was held on Tuesday, the 24th March, J. Barnard, Esq., in the chair.

Mr. William Knight, jun., who had been previously nominated by the Council, was after a ballot duly elected as a Fellow of the society.

Mr. M. Allport (on behalf of the Secretary, Dr. Agnew,) laid on the table the following returns:—

1. Visitors to Museum, February, 606.
2. Ditto to Gardens, February, 2003.
3. Plants and seeds received at Gardens.—From Mr. C. F. Wren, Auckland, New Zealand, 82 plants, of which 14 were dead on arrival. From Mr. T. Campbell Carey, 16 papers seeds, indigenous to Western Australia.
4. Plants and seeds sent from Gardens.—To A. Werschaffelt, Ghent, Belgium, per Windward, 10 small tree Ferns. To Mr. J. Harriss, Melbourne, 63 plants, 50 papers seeds, 50 varieties of hyacinth, and 24 ditto of ranunculus.
5. Leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants in Botanic Gardens.
6. Books and periodicals received.
7. Presentations to Museum.

Meteorological Observations.

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq.,—table for February, with summary.
2. Port Arthur, from J. Boyd, Esq.,—ditto for January.
3. Swansea, from Dr. Story,—ditto for February.
4. Westbury, from F. Belstead, Esq.,—ditto for February.
5. Sydney, New South Wales, from G. Smalley, Esq., government astronomer, printed table for January.
6. Lighthouses, &c., viz., Kent's Group, Goose Island, King's Island, Swan Island, South Bruni, Mount Nelson, for the six months ending the 31st December, 1867. From the Marine Board.

The presentations to the Museum were as follows:—

1. From J. L. Smith, Esq., (per M. Allport, Esq.) A curious fish found on the beach at Table Cape.
2. From R. D. Lord, Esq., Oatlands. A pair of mountain ducks (*Casarea tadornoides*), prepared for mounting.
3. From Miss Sharland. A Kingfisher (*Alcyone azurea*.)
4. From A. H. Maning, Esq. A White Hawk (*Astur Novæ Hollandiæ*), Shot at Sandy Bay.
5. From Mr. Young, Prince of Wales Bay, Glenorchy. A Petrel.

[With reference to this presentation Mr. Allport stated that the bird was taken at the time Mr. Young's premises were destroyed by fire. Being probably attracted by the light it flew through the flames and was picked up alive. Mr. Allport further remarked that it was unusual to find these birds so far inland although they were frequently seen off the coast.]

6. From J. Boyd, Esq., Port Arthur. Veneers of 28 varieties of Tasmanian woods, mounted and polished. These specimens were prepared for the Paris Exhibition, and shew in a striking manner the great beauty of many of the Tasmanian woods, and their value for ornamental purposes.
7. From T. Ashworth, Esq., Bath, per J. A. Youl, Esq. Five full sized diagrams representing salmon and trout captured in the Severn and Tay, and at Galway.

Mr. M. Allport read the following letter from Dr. F. Mueller, of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, which had been received by the Secretary, Dr. Agnew:—

“Melbourne Botanic Gardens,

“7th January, 1868.

“Allow me, dear Dr. Agnew, to offer you, as Hon. Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania, a few pages of observations on Tasmanian plants. If such contributions should prove acceptable for the Society's publication, I will gladly from time to time offer others, and thus special supplements would arise to Dr. Hooker's work from new material. This single contribution brings already 25 plants left unrecorded by my illustrious friend.

“The impression may thus also be removed that nothing was left to be recorded in Tasmania; thus intelligent and educated observers might feel induced to send methodically and periodically contributions to me for further elucidation of the plants of your islands.

“I long myself to visit King's Island and Flinders' Island, not merely because in those dependencies of Tasmania many a plant will yet be found new to your territory; but more especially with a view of contrasting the vegetation there with that of Gipps Land, and to trace it to its geological relation. The same physiographic enquiries may lead me yet to your Alps; and such excursions may contribute much also to the buoyancy of mind, and the consolidation or restoration of health, all of which I sadly am missing, as I am but partially recovered from my long and severe illness.

“By the next Hobart Town steamer I shall send a number of Chinese tea plants, and others calculated to live in your mild fern-tree glens. If you could afford space and provide a temperature of 80 deg. F., I could send also a plant of the magnificent waterlily, the *Victoria regia*.

“Your very regardful,

“FERD. MUELLER.

“N.B.—I could only send fragments of some of the plants in letter form.”

The paper alluded to entitled “Contributions to the Phytography of Tasmania” was then read.

In reference to Dr. Mueller's interesting paper Mr. M. Allport observed that the Fellows of the Society ought to mark in a distinct manner their appreciation of the Doctor's efforts to afford them instruction, and to benefit their Transactions by the contribution of valuable papers such as that he had just had the honor to read. Mr. Allport concluded by proposing that a special vote of thanks should be accorded to Dr. Mueller, which was seconded by Mr. Giblin, and unanimously carried.

Mr. M. Allport next called the attention of the Fellows present to the diagrams of salmon and trout forwarded as a present to the Society by Mr. James A. Youl, and which afforded another proof of the continual interest which that gentleman took in the welfare of Tasmania. In reference to the largest of these figures, which represented a fish weighing 50lbs., the probability was (if the statements of the learned were to be relied on) that the age of this fish was about 10 years, as after the 3rd

year salmon are supposed to add about six or seven lbs. per annum to their weight. Of course he (Mr. Allport) had had no opportunities of testing the truth of these statements himself, but judging from the rapid growth of some fresh water fish which he had carefully observed in limited waters, and from circumstances connected with the growth of some of our indigenous sea fish, he had little doubt of their truth. For instance, the kingfish which entered our rivers in summer, occasionally deposit their spawn far up towards the fresh water; on two separate occasions in the autumn he (Mr. Allport) had seen in the mouth of a small creek, near the river Jordan, a shoal of young kingfish from 4 to 8 inches in length, undoubtedly the produce of spawn laid that summer; with the first winter rains these fish disappear seawards, and in the summer following none but full grown kingfish are found, weighing from 12 to 15 lbs. The fish of intermediate size are never seen, and (though this is but negative evidence), the conviction was therefore strong in his mind that the kingfish grew from the egg into 12 lbs. weight in a single year. Amazing as this seems at first, it is not to be so greatly wondered at when we remember the voracity of these fish, and that their power of assimilating food is equal to their voracity. If one sea fish grows at this rate, it is but reasonable to suppose that many others also increase rapidly, and when we reflect that they are subjected to the attacks of innumerable enemies, is it not clear that the very existence of some species must depend in a great measure upon the rapidity of their growth? If it is true that many of our sea fish become rapidly marketable after spawning it is quite certain that very slight protection afforded to them on and near to the spawning places would prevent the utter eradication which has for a long time threatened many species. Unless something is done in this direction we shall sooner or later have to deplore the loss of valuable fish, which a little well directed care might now preserve for all time.

Dr. Butler mentioned that certain blue books containing reports on the salmon and other fisheries of the United Kingdom had recently been received from England, and were now in the Parliamentary Library. He thought it very desirable that all available information on the subject should be placed at the disposal of the Society, and moved that the Council be requested to apply to Government for the books referred to.

Mr. Giblin seconded, and the motion was carried.

A long and interesting conversation ensued as to the present state of the fisheries of the island, and the want of protection being extended to them. Several of the Fellows pointed out the want of some such system of protection, especially for the oyster fisheries, as is observed elsewhere. Mr. Davies moved, and Dr. Butler seconded, that a committee consisting of Messrs. T. Giblin, M. Allport, and H. J. Buckland be appointed for the purpose of enquiring generally into the state of the fisheries of Tasmania, including the oyster fisheries, such committee to bring up a report in order that some action may be taken by the Society to move the Government or Parliament in the matter. The motion was agreed to, and the usual vote of thanks having been accorded to the donors of presentations the meeting terminated.