

# ROYAL SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1869.

The monthly evening meeting of the Fellows, the first of the present session, was held on Tuesday, the 9th March, J. Barnard, Esq., in the chair.

The Hon. Secretary (Dr. Agnew) laid on the table the following returns :—

1. Visitors to Museum (February), 887.
2. Ditto to Gardens (February), 1,911.
3. Plants, &c., received at Gardens (February) :—From the Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch, New Zealand, seeds of *Areca sapida*, and *Cordyline indivisa*.  
From Mr. C. F. Creswell, 11 packets seeds and 9 species of bulbous plants received from England.
4. Seeds sent from Gardens :—  
To A. Verschaffelt, Ghent, Belgium, one packet of seeds of *Areca sapida*.
5. Time of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants in Botanic Gardens.
6. Books and periodicals received during January and February.

*Meteorological Returns* :—

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq., tables for January and February.
2. Port Arthur, from J. Boyd, Esq., table for January.
3. Swansea, from Dr. Story, ditto, ditto
4. Westbury, from F. Belstead, Esq., ditto, ditto and February.
5. Adelaide, South Australia, from C. Todd, Esq., Government Observer, tables for December, 1868.
6. Sydney, New South Wales, from C. R. Todd, Esq., Government Observer, tables for December and January.

The presentations were as follows :—

1. From J. Milligan, Esq., London.
  - (a). Seven packages of Tasmanian plants, named by Dr. Hooker, of Kew.
  - (b). Two ditto Italian plants.
  - (c). Six specimens of *Calymene Blumenbachii* from Wenlock Shale, Gotland
  - (d). Specimen of Esparto Grass.
2. From G. Whitcomb, Esq. :—
  - (a). Sample of coal from Lambton Colliery, Newcastle, and Bituminous Shale from Hartley, New South Wales.
  - (b). Sample of Sugar Cane-grown in Queensland.
3. From G. Krefft, Esq., Sydney Museum, per M. Allport, Esq., five prepared skins of birds from King George's Sound.
4. From Mr. R. T. Dyer, Brighton, an Albino variety of the Rosella Parrot (*Platycercus eximius*).
5. From the Hon. R. Officer, a White Hawk.
6. A Goshawk (*Astur approximans*).

7. From S. Hannaford, Esq., specimen of *Sipunculus* from Corio Bay, Geelong.
8. From Captain T. Nichols, Skeleton of a Fish from Howe's Island.
9. From Mr. J. Kelly, One Shilling of Queen Anne, 1707, and a Danish Copper Coin, 1771.
10. From Mr. S. H. Wintle :—
  - (a). A Vegetable Impression in Shale, from a height of between three and four thousand feet on Mount Wellington (*Endogenophyllites Wellingtonensis*. McCoy.)
  - (b). A Cluster of Plant Impressions from a Claystone Formation in Patrick-street.

[In reference to this specimen, Mr. Wintle mentioned in his note that he had for a number of years past been in the habit of examining the formation from which it was obtained, whenever he happened to be in the locality, but had not succeeded in finding any trace of organic structure until about three weeks ago, when he discovered several impressions similar to those presented. He also stated that he had sent some to Professor McCoy, who considers them of great importance, and will shortly determine the position they hold in the scale of fossil flora.]

- (c). Fragments of Shale, bearing impressions of Cryptogamic Plants from New Town.
- (d). Specimen of *Pholas* sp. from Rocks below Sandy Fay.
- (e). Collection of specimens of Coleoptera, &c.
- (f). Gall Fly and Nest, also a smaller species, with its Larva.

The Hon. Secretary read notes by Mr. Wintle, on the fossils and other objects presented by him. The recent *Pholas*, with its perfect syphon, preserved in spirits, and the shell of another embedded in the clay rock, into which the animal had bored to a considerable depth, were examined with interest, as also were the large and small Gall Flies, which produce their characteristic growths on the leaves of the gum and other trees. As to one of the fossils (No. 10, a) a letter was read from Professor McCoy, to whom it had been sent by Mr. Wintle for examination, and by whom, as a new species, it had been named *Endogenophyllites Wellingtonensis*.

Mr. M. Allport called attention to the many interesting specimens presented by Mr. Wintle; and mentioned in reference to the vegetable remains occurring in the clay rock, that similar impressions had been many years ago found by him (Mr. Allport) in vast numbers, in a quarry at the Old Beach, but from the coarser material, the difficulty of assigning to them their correct position amongst fossil flora was very great. Recently, Mr. Allport had found similar remains in a quarry near the Cascades, and that gentleman remarked that if a few more would interest themselves in a strict search, the probability was strong that remains of greater palæontological interest, and which would fix the geological age of the whole of these rocks, might be found. Referring to the wasp's nest presented by Mr. Wintle, Mr. Allport presented a similar nest with the wasp which constructed it, the wasp having been watched at work on the nest, caught and brought to the donor by a boy only five years old.

Mr. Barnard, in continuation of a former paper on the subject, read the following communication relative to the Esparto Grass, and laid on the table a sheet of Esparto paper :—“It may be in the recollection of the Fellows that, at the meeting of the Royal Society which was held on the evening of the 14th July last, on the occasion of submitting some observations on the desirability of acclimatizing the Esparto Grass for the manufacture of paper, with a view to the establishment of a paper mill in Tasmania, I was requested to prosecute the enquiry, and obtain further information on a subject considered of wide importance. Accordingly,

by the July mail I gave effect to my promise of compliance with that request, by placing myself in communication with an eminent commercial firm in London, and soliciting their co-operation in the matter; and I will now lay before the Society the result of the correspondence up to the present date, regretting, while sanguine of the attainment of ultimate success, that more should not have by this time been accomplished. By return mail, under date 11th September, 1868, these gentlemen write:—‘The short interval between the arrival and departure of the Marseilles Mail, has prevented our obtaining any useful information with regard to the Esparto Grass for the manufacture of paper; but you may rely upon our doing our best to assist you; and we will report, by next mail, the result of our inquiries.’ Agreeably to this intimation, on the 9th October I was favoured with the following particulars:—‘Esparto Grass.—We learn that 50,000 to 100,000 tons are imported here annually from Spain and the opposite coast of Africa. The last that was sold here fetched £4 15s. a ton, but scarcely any comes in here for sale. The bulk is bought by a company (in which Lloyd is the principal man) who have establishments in Spain, and own or charter ships for bringing in whole cargoes, and have a patent for dressing it here. It seems quite a monopoly, and other importers have discontinued. Under the circumstances, as you will conjecture, it is not easy to obtain information; but we have been able to get a sample of the last sold here, which we send you by this Mail. We are endeavouring to procure through some friends in Spain, a bushel of the seed. If we succeed, we will forward it to you; but it will be some time first.’ By the last Mail, under date 31st December, 1868, the same gentlemen write:—‘We have not succeeded in getting any further information about the Esparto grass; but we understand that another vegetable fibre—from Africa—is being tested by paper-makers, and promises good results. We will communicate any further information which we may obtain on the subject.’ The sample of Esparto grass referred to has been laid upon the table, and the Society will please to receive the information embodied in the foregoing correspondence in the light of a progress report, to be followed up by further information from time to time as it may be transmitted. I present a sheet of paper manufactured from Esparto grass, for which I am indebted to the courtesy of Messrs. William Knight and Co., merchants of the New Wharf, which will enable the members to judge of its quality.”

Mr. Justin Browne had seen it stated that this grass was driving rags out of the English market.

Mr. Napier observed that the profit from the grass must be enormous, as its price was but £4 10s. per ton, whilst the value of the paper produced from it was from £40 to £50 per ton.

Mr. F. Abbot read an interesting paper on the late transit of Mercury over the Sun’s disc.

The Secretary in laying before the meeting two specimens of the dried mutton fish (*Haliotis sp.*), prepared by the Chinese at South Port, read the following note from Mr. Justin Browne:—“I send you for exhibition at to-night’s meeting some dried Mutton Fish. The shell of this fish is well known as the ‘ear shell,’ and when living the fish envelopes the shell or nearly covers it, and clings to the rocks with great tenacity. The Chinese pierce the shell with a sort of spear, and the fish being thus paralysed is easily detached from the rock; it is separated from the shell much as an oyster is, and is then dried in a slow oven built for the purpose, after which the dried fish are packed in casks or cases for export. Before cooking, it is soaked in water for a considerable time. Crayfish are treated in the same manner, and are cured in large quantities.”

Mr. W. Knight, junr., exhibited a black powdery looking substance received from Mr Glover, who procured it on the West Coast. It occurs in considerable quantities along some of the freshwater creeks, and on some of the sea beaches and is carbonaceous in character—possibly the remains of firewood used by the Aborigines at their cooking places, where shell and other fish were consumed.

On the motion of Mr. Allport, seconded by Mr. Justin Browne, the thanks of the meeting were given to the authors of papers, and the donors of presentations, especially to Mr. Wintle, for his very interesting contribution.