

MAY, 1877.

The monthly evening meeting of the Society was held on Monday, the 7th May. His Excellency the Governor in the chair.

The following gentlemen, who had previously been nominated by the Council, were ballotted for and declared duly elected as Fellows of the Society, viz:—

1. John Perkins, Esq., Mayor of Hobart Town.
 2. Frederick John Simson, Esq., of Brighton.
- And the Rev. George Brown, C.M.Z.S., of the Wesleyan Mission to New Britain, as a corresponding member.

The Hon. Secretary (Dr. Agnew), brought forward the usual returns for the past month, viz:—

1. Number of visitors to Museum during April, total 1582.
2. Ditto to Gardens, ditto, ditto, 4198.
3. Seeds received at Gardens.
4. Time of leafing, etc., of a few standard plants in the Botanic Gardens during the month.
5. Books and periodicals received.
6. Presentations to Museum.

Meteorological Returns—

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq.—Table for April.
2. New Norfolk, from W. E. Shoobridge, Esq.—ditto.
3. Port Arthur, from Dr. Coverdale—ditto.
4. From the Marine Board—Tables from Mount Nelson and South Bruny for April; Kent's Group for December 1876, January to March, 1877; and Goose Island for March.
5. From Mr. Roblin—Abstracts and results of observations registered at the lighthouses and other coast stations in Tasmania during 1876.
6. Adelaide, from C. Todd, Esq.—Printed tables, monthly, from January to October, 1876.

The presentations to the Museum were as follows:—

1. From Mr. John Brazier, Sydney—A beautiful specimen of an Echinoderm (*Lobophora truncata*), from New Caledonia, dredged by the donor from a depth of eight fathoms. (With a note.)
2. From Mr. R. A. Murray—Specimen of rock with native silver, from the Hampshire Hills silver mine. (Van Diemen's Land Company.)
3. From Mr. Edward Nicholas, jun., Meadsfield—Specimen of silicious rock from between Lake Echo and the Serpentine.
4. From Mr. Arthur K. Johnston, Cleveland Bay—"A sample of fibre beaten from the bark of a tree, and used by the natives of the Louisiades Islands for making fishing lines and ropes for their canoes."
5. From Mr. W. Piguénit—Flower and seed of (*Banksia serrata*) from the North Coast of Tasmania.
6. From Mr. John Allison—A Bronze Cuckoo (*Lamprolaima basalidis*.)
7. From Mr. Penny, Queen's Asylum—A Pheasant, killed at New Town.
8. From Mr. Wilson, Bellerive—Crystals of Gypsum, from Riverina.
9. From Mr. J. E. Baynton—An internal cast of a fossil univalve shell, from Patea, New Zealand.
10. From Mr. James Wilson, Ashgrove, Oatlands. A White Hawk (*Leucospiza nove hollandiae*).
11. From Mr. R. Terry, New Norfolk. Section of a large fungus from a Peppermint Tree (*Eucalyptus amygdalina*).

12. From John Swan, Esq. Specimens of copper ore from the Duck River, Tasmania.

In reference to the monthly returns from the Gardens of "the time of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants," His EXCELLENCY remarked it would be interesting to notice if change of climate, or soil, or other circumstances modified the habits of certain English trees. From his own observation at the grounds about Government House he could state that some trees which, in England, came into leaf before others, here acted in an exactly reverse manner.

Discussion ensued, in which the Rev. W. W. Spicer, Sir Francis Smith, Mr. Justice Dobson, Mr. Swan, Mr. Allport, and Mr. Abbott took part; and on the whole, it appeared probable that varieties in exposure or position might influence different trees variously as to their leafing, etc. Mr. Abbott, however, engaged to obtain further and more precise information on the subject, and bring it before a future meeting.

The Rev. W. W. SPICER read a paper on "Aliens," or plants which have been introduced into the colony and naturalised. Illustrative of the paper a collection of plants was laid on the table, embracing all those referred to in the text. These, amounting to 140 specimens, were collected, mounted and named by Mr. Spicer, and very liberally presented by him to the Museum.

HIS EXCELLENCY informed the meeting he had written to England for a supply of cuttings of the new fodder plant, the Prickly Comfrey. It was probable this climate would suit it exactly, but that of England appeared to be too cold, as it did not seed there, and therefore cuttings were sent for. Its cultivation would be tried on the grounds at Government House, and, if successful, seeds or cuttings would be distributed throughout the colony. It appeared to be well suited to a deep sandy soil as the roots were found to go as far as nine feet in depth. It was of a vigorous nature, and in one district of England had been grown for fourteen years consecutively without any appreciable loss of strength or vitality. It had been known to produce the astonishing result of one hundred tons to the acre. Its own leaves were good manure for it. It was said to be the very best soft food for horses. It was very good for cattle, and supposed to be a preventative to the diseases to which they are liable, and also well adapted for dairy food, as it produced no unpleasant effect on the milk.

Colonel CRAWFORD saw the plant in cultivation at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester in England many years ago, but it did not seem at that time to be much thought of.

HIS EXCELLENCY thought that any discrepancies of this kind might be explained by the fact that there were two species of the Comfrey.

Colonel CRAWFORD, in connection with the President's remarks as to the probability that this climate would be more suitable to the Comfrey than the English, observed that the difference of the climates was very clearly marked by the growth of the blackberry and the sweetbriar on the Northern side of the island, as it far surpassed anything of the kind he had ever seen in England. The Blackberry grew into huge hedges, so high and dense that boys climbed up to the tops by ladders, and then went along the surface by laying down palings to walk upon. Large quantities were made into jam and sent to Queensland, where it was said to be good for bowel complaints. He thought large quantities of the small twigs of the Sweetbriar could be very profitably sent home to persons engaged in the manufacture of scents.

HIS EXCELLENCY had also been struck by the enormous hedges of the Sweetbriar in the Ringarooma district.

Mr. SWAN observed it was a curious circumstance as to the Blackberry that he had never seen birds feed upon it.

Mr. SPICER did not think either the Blackberry or Raspberry was eaten by birds in England, although the Strawberry was.

Mr. Justice DOBSON had great pleasure in proposing that a special vote of thanks should be given to Mr. Spicer for the paper which had just been read, and to which he and all present, he was sure, had listened with extreme interest. The Museum, too, could not but be much indebted to the learned author of the paper for the very liberal donation of the large collection of plants which accompanied and illustrated it.

The vote having passed, and thanks having been accorded to the other donors of presentations, the President left the chair.