

# ROYAL SOCIETY.

SEPTEMBER, 1867.

The usual monthly evening meeting of the Fellows was held at the Museum on Tuesday, the 10th September, F. Abbott, Esq., in the chair.

The Secretary, Dr. Agnew, laid on the table the following returns, &c., for the past month :—

1. Visitors to Museum, 810.
2. Ditto to Gardens, 1,333.
3. Plants, &c., received at Gardens.—From Mr. Marshall, Huon, 1 box containing *Blandfordia nobilis*. From Dr. Mueller, Melbourne Botanic Gardens, 8 species Ferns.
4. Plants, &c., sent from Gardens.—To Melbourne Botanic Gardens, 41 species seeds, 100 Elm and 200 Sycamore plants. To Dr. R. Schomburgh, Adelaide Botanic Gardens, 45 plants. To the Acclimatisation Society, Christchurch, New Zealand, 12 varieties of Conifer seeds. For decoration of St. George's Church, Battery Point, 21 plants. For grounds at salmon ponds, New Norfolk, 36 plants, and 6 dozen mixed bulbs. For grounds of New Norfolk Asylum, 12 plants of *Cupressus Lambertiana*.
5. Time of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants in Botanic Gardens.
6. Books and periodicals received.
7. Presentations to Museum.

## Meteorological Returns.

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq.—Table and summary of observations for August.
2. Westbury, from F. Belstead, Esq.—Table for August.

The following presentations to the Museum were brought under the notice of the meeting :—

1. From W. Stokell, Esq., specimen of the common English snake (*Natrix torquata*). Lizard from Fern Tree Valley, Tasmania. A fish (name unknown) caught in the Derwent.
2. From J. Maclanachan, Esq., an English partridge (*Perdix cinerea*), and a red-tailed finch (*Estrelda ruficauda*) from Queensland.
3. From C. G. H. Lloyd, Esq., Queensland, per Major Lloyd, 7 prepared skins, viz., red-winged lory (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*), Cockatoo Parakeet (*Nymphisicus Novæ Hollandiæ*), male and female. Banded Grass Finch (*Poëphila cincta*), male and female. Spotted-sided Finch (*Amadina Lathamii*). Grebe (*Podiceps gularis*). Warbling Grass Parakeet (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).
4. From J. Allen, Esq., Adelaide. A larger specimen of the India-rubber-like substance referred to at last meeting.
5. From J. Cogle, Esq. Specimens of lava, sulphur, &c., from Lake Taupo, North Island, New Zealand.
6. From Colonel Chesney. Two Emu's eggs from Victoria.
7. From Mr. F. Abbott, jun. A Spanish coin (silver), date 1728.

8. From Mr. J. Ferguson, Tinder Box Bay. Shells of *Janthinus* and *Spirula*.

Some drawings by Mr. Ferguson, illustrative of the inhabitants of these shells, were laid before the meeting, one of them (*Spirula*) representing such a peculiar condition of animal life that the Secretary intimated his intention of writing to Mr. Ferguson for further information on the subject.

In reference to the specimen of *Spirula* and the figure of the animal said to have been attached to one of them by Mr. Ferguson, Mr. M. Allport called attention to the curious fact, that, although thousands of these shells were constantly found in many parts of the ocean there had been but one instance recorded of the discovery of the perfect animal; several fragments of the creature had been found, all tending (like the perfect specimen referred to) to prove that the shell was an internal, and not an external one as represented by Mr. Ferguson. The details of the drawing by Mr. Ferguson were so carefully executed that it would seem impossible he should make a mistake in so important a matter as the number of arms, yet in his representation there are but six, whereas the smallest number ever found in the cephalopods (to which division of the mollusca *spirula* belongs) is eight. Either this must have been a much mutilated specimen, or the animal figured did not belong to the shell. The rarity of perfect specimens might be accounted for by the creatures inhabiting a deeper zone than the ordinary ocean squids so frequently washed on board vessels. In such a position the *spirula* would be eagerly sought by predaceous fish, and their shells whether perfect or in fragments would subsequently be voided in numbers.

The Secretary brought under notice a letter from the Superintendent of the gardens asking that the question as to the employment of prison labor might be reconsidered, and stating that the work of the gardens was already getting in arrear for want of necessary assistance.

Mr. Abbott thought that the prisoners might be kept to a great extent out of view of the public, and thus one objection to their employment might be removed.

The Secretary observed that the Fellows were well aware that owing to the reduction of the government grant the gardens could no longer be kept up in the same condition as heretofore. This was much to be regretted, as they had always been a local feature of great interest both to ourselves and visitors, and it was especially to be regretted at present when in a few months we might expect to see His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, and the many officers of the fleet which would accompany him. He (the Secretary) had asked the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer if it was possible any increase could be made to the grant, but was informed that it was not in the power of the government to do more for us at present. Indeed our anxiety for the welfare of the gardens had, as on many former occasions, been attended with serious injury to ourselves, as £50 had been taken from the small income of the Museum and added to that of the gardens. Even with this assistance, however, Mr. Abbott would be unable to bring up his arrears of work, and although prison labor when formerly offered by government had been refused by the Society, he (Mr. Abbott), pressed by the urgency of the case, had addressed the letter alluded to, to the council. The council was aware that the general meeting alone could take action in the matter, but in the meantime thought it well to bring it under the consideration of the present meeting.

Mr. M. Allport had a decided objection to such labor. We should have to pay an overseer to look after it, and it would be much better to give the money to an efficient free laborer.

Mr. Davies had also a very great objection to such labor in the gardens, still he thought we might try the experiment at least for two or three months.

Mr. Bilton thought under present circumstances it was a matter of necessity to employ these men, and, as Mr. Abbott suggested, they might be kept out of sight as much as possible.

Mr. Justin Browne thought the question of prison labor was somewhat different now to what it was when discussed on a former occasion. Then, as now, it was highly inexpedient that it should be made use of, but circumstances had arisen which in a manner constrained us to keep the gardens in a creditable condition, he would therefore propose "That a special general meeting be called to reconsider the question."

Mr. Bilton seconded, and the motion was carried.

Mr. Davies suggested, in case the prison labor was made use of, that the gardens might be closed till about 2 o'clock every day for a month or two. By this means a great deal of work could be quietly carried on without the public coming at all into contact with the prisoners. (This suggestion received the general approval of the meeting.)

The usual vote of thanks to the donors of presentations having been passed, the meeting separated.