

ROYAL SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1870.

The first monthly evening meeting of the session was held on Tuesday, the 8th March, J. Barnard, Esq., in the chair.

The Secretary, Dr. Agnew, laid on the table the following returns:—

1. Visitors to Museum during January and February, 1836.
2. Ditto Gardens ditto, 3687.
3. Time of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants in Society's Gardens during February.
4. Tench supplied from pond in Gardens during February, 12.
5. Books and Periodicals received in January and February.
6. Presentations to Museum since last meeting.

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 for December and January.
4. Westbury, from C. Belstead, Esq.,—ditto for January and February.
5. New Zealand, from the Government,—ditto for November and December.
6. Brisbane, Queensland, from E. McDonnell, Esq., Government Observer,—tables for October, November, and December, 1869.

The presentations to the Museum were as follow:—

1. From Miss H. Mayson and Miss J. Mitchell—A collection of Shells from East Coast of Tasmania.
2. From J. T. Leake, Esq., Campbell Town—A specimen of Roman Brick from St. Albans, England (the ancient Verulamium).
3. From the Very Rev. Archdeacon Marum, per Dr. E. S. Hall—A collection of Fossils from neighbourhood of Dromedary Mountain.
4. From Mr. O. H. Hedberg—A collection of Swedish Coins and Notes.
5. From Mr. Dinham—Two stone Hatchets made by Aborigines of Australia and Tasmania. Portions of Skull, &c., of Aborigine dug up at Mona Vale, Tasmania. A fossil Seed from the sandstone, Somersetshire, England, found 80 feet below the surface.
6. From Mrs. S. Crouch—A collection of weapons, &c., from Fiji and Samoa, viz. :—One Fijian Pillow, two pieces Tappa cloth, one female Fijian chief's Dress, one Paddle, two War Clubs, one piece Samoan Cloth, one Sandwich Island Spear, one Spear, Skull of Porpoise, Fœtal Porpoise.
7. From Mr. M. Weber—A War Club from Fiji.
8. From J. W. Graves, Esq.—Two skulls of Axis Deer from Slopem Main.

[These deer were bred from those imported by Sir W. Denison from the Lower Ganges, and turned loose on Tasman's Peninsula.]

9. From Mr. Fencker—Four specimens of auriferous quartz from the Pioneer Reef, Lyndhurst (Waterhouse).
10. From W. A. B. Gellibrand, Esq.—A stone Axe from New Zealand.
11. From H. M. Hull, Esq.—A Lizard, 8 Crickets, and two Fish.
12. From J. W. Graves, Esq.—Nest of Sparrow from a gum tree in Mr. Turner's millyard. A Black Snake (*Hoplocephalus curtus*).

[This snake was killed near the upper end of Goulburn-street, Hobart

Town, and measured 4ft. lin. in length. The light colour of the specimen is due to its having but recently changed its skin when killed.]

13. From Mr. G. Weaver—A Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*).
14. From Mr. Luttrell—Specimens of Quartz from Tomahawk River and Pioneer Reef, Waterhouse, that from the latter place being auriferous. Four small Crabs from North Coast.
15. From Mr. D. Chisholm—A large Fungus from a gum tree. Skeleton of young Sting Ray.
16. From Mr. A. Nicholas, per Mr. F. Abbott—A fossil Spatangus from New Zealand.
17. From Mr. R. Propsting—A Swamp Hawk (*Circus Assimilis*—Allied Harrier).
18. From Mr. Geo. W. Rex—The crop of a Fowl containing an entire Whip Snake.
[This specimen was discovered on the fowl being killed, and in course of preparation for the table. The bird had previously presented no unusual appearance, and had received no injury from swallowing the reptile.]
19. From Mr. A. Neilson—A very large specimen of the common Slug, which when alive measured six inches in length.
20. From Mr. F. Smith, Holbrook Place—A large mollusk (*Aplysia sp.*), from Brown's River.
21. From Mr. R. James—Part of the skeleton of a Ray (?).
22. From Mr. G. J. Smith—Piece of native box wood, with thorns embedded in its substance.
23. From Mr. Exton, Oatlands—A Rail (*Rallus Lewinii*).
24. From Mr. H. Nelson—Sample of Coal from Greymouth, New Zealand. The seam from which this coal is obtained is said to be 16 feet, in thickness.
25. From Mr. Plunkett, Sandy Bay—A Pair of Mittens made by Esquimaux of Behring's Strait.
26. From M. Allport, Esq.—A collection of Insects from Port Arthur.
27. From Mr. Gidley Lewis—A Russian Silver Coin of the Empress Catherine, 1796. Specimen of handwriting of General Moreau.
28. From Mr. R. Pybus, Bruni Island—A 5s. piece of Charles II, 1677.
29. From Mr. W. Cole, Cleveland—One Spanish silver coin, Carolus III., 1781. One United States ditto, $\frac{1}{2}$ dime, 1854. One brass ditto, Louis XVI. of France, 1792. One silver Coin unknown.
30. From H. Hopkins, jun., Esq., a foetal lamb (a monstrosity.) Two Dories.
31. From the Trustees, Australian Museum, Sydney, per the Hon. E. Deas Thomson, C.B.—Part of skull and upper jaw of fossil Sarcophilus (Devil) from Wellington Caves, N. S. Wales. Eight photographs of *Ceratodus Forsteri*, a fish inhabiting the Burnett River, N.S.W.

[This fish is admirably adapted to many of the streams of the colony, which although comparatively large rivers in the winter season, present only a chain of pools in the summer. The *Ceratodus* by means of its fins is enabled to travel considerable distances on land, and when a pool in which it may be present is dried up it can thus go in search of another.]

32. From M. Allport, Esq.—Part of skull of Tunny, washed on shore, North Coast of Tasmania.
33. From Baron F. Von. Müller—Skeleton of a White Swan.
34. From Mrs. Chapman, Macquarie-street—Seeds from Borneo.
35. From Mr. James, Collins-street—Jaw of species of Shark.
36. From Mr. Walter Paisley, Franklin, per Mr. Graves—A Cuttle Fish.

[This interesting Cephalopod belongs to the *Octopodidae*, and specimens

have several times been captured on our coasts. It is very rapacious, and swims with great rapidity by means of its powerful fluke-like tail. Any wounded fish in its neighbourhood are instantly attacked, and the rapidity with which its parrot-like beak cuts into and kills its prey is astonishing. A few years back one of these cuttle fish was exhibited in Hobart Town, and was described by an anonymous writer as belonging to the genus *Onychoteuthis*, but this was undoubtedly an error, as the hook-like processes on the long tentacles, which are the distinguishing mark of the *Onychoteuthidæ*, and from which the name is derived, are absent in this species.]

The only donation to the library was a work by Fleetwood Buckle, Esq., M.D., of H.M.S. Liverpool, on the "Vital and Economical Statistics of the Hospitals, Infirmarys, &c., of England and Wales," presented by the author, per Dr. E. S. Hall.

In reference to the nest of the Sparrow (Presentation No. 12), Mr. Allport remarked, that he was, at first, adverse to the introduction of these birds, but for some time back, he had reason for changing his mind. He found, so far as his observation had as yet extended, that wherever the Sparrow came, it drove away the White Eye (*Zosterops dorsalis*), a most destructive bird to fruit.

Mr. Graves had a better opinion of the White Eye than Mr. Allport, and had no doubt, that its good qualities were greater than the bad. The benefit which these, and many of our smaller, and comparatively unknown birds conferred on our farms and gardens, by destroying noxious insects, &c., was incalculable. As an addition to our insectivorous birds, he had himself liberated some Canaries, which already had progeny, and if spared by their enemy the cat, would, he thought, become thoroughly acclimatised.

Mr. M. Allport called attention to the presentation of the "Sea Hare" (No. 20), by Mr. Francis Smith (son of the Chief Justice), which is of peculiar interest, as being another example of the manner in which forms of animal life of the lower types are reproduced at opposite ends of the world. The present specimen is of the Genus *Aplysia*, and so closely resembles the English creature *Aplysia punctata*, as to be all but identical—the Tasmanian form being the larger. Its true position amongst the mollusca is beautifully exemplified by the rudimentary shield-like shell which is buried in the tissues of the back, and serves as a guard to the delicate branchial organs of the creature. (This shell, dissected out, was exhibited to the meeting.) Mr. Allport expressed a hope that others of our youth would follow the good example set by Mr. Smith in forwarding to the Museum that which struck him as being new or curious, instead of casting it aside without enquiry, or heed to its scientific value.

Presentation No. 31 is interesting, as proving the former existence on the main land of the larger carnivorous marsupials now found living in Tasmania. In his paper on Mr. Krefft's "Notes on the Fauna of Tasmania," read before a meeting of this Society, Mr. Allport pointed out the probability that the Dingo (*Canis dingo*) had usurped the position of the Tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) and the Devil (*Sarcophilus ursinus*) on the main land; and that the absence of the Dingo in Tasmania explained their continued existence in the latter colony.

The Secretary read a paper,* entitled "Contributions to the Phytography of Tasmania," by Baron F. Von Mueller, C.M.G., F.R.S., &c. The paper was accompanied by notices of upwards of a hundred plants, many of them hitherto undescribed, observed by the author in the region of Mount Field, &c.

* This paper is the second on the same subject contributed by Baron Von Mueller, for the first see Trans. Royal Soc. Tasmania for 1868, p. 7.

Mr. Stephens begged to mention in reference to a paper which he brought before the Society in October last, on "The occurrence of gold at Port Cygnet," that he had sent some specimens of the rocks he had found there, and described, to the Rev. W. B. Clarke of Sydney. He would read a few lines from Mr. Clarke's reply, as it was satisfactory to find the theory broached in his paper confirmed by so eminent an authority:—"I see so much in these specimens like rocks I have often found in the gold-fields, and especially like the porphyritic bands that traverse the gold-fields, of the Gilbert River and Gympie in Queensland, and I think there must be a relationship. It would be premature to designate the formation at Port Cygnet geologically, but I agree with you as to its probable great antiquity."

Mr. M. Allport proposed a special vote of thanks to Baron Von Müller. It was pleasant to find a savant of such world-wide fame, and whose scientific labours are so much greater than we are aware of, communicate so freely with this Society, when so many of our other corresponding members are silent. He would also include in the vote the name of Dr. Hall, to whom on this occasion, and formerly for a period of several years the Society was much indebted for the careful analysis he had given of the meteorological records, in connection with the vital statistics of the colony, which had so much enhanced the value and interest of these tables.

Mr. Davies, after some eulogistic remarks on Baron Von Müller's labours on behalf of Tasmanian botany, cordially seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried, and the usual vote having been accorded to the donors of presentations, the meeting terminated.