

APRIL, 1873.

The usual monthly meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Tuesday, the 8th April, J. Barnard, Esq., in the chair.

Among the Fellows present were Sir James M. Wilson, Dr. Agnew, Hon. Sec., Messrs. M. Allport, F. Abbott, T. Giblin, F. Butler, L. Susman, C. Belstead, F. Abbott, jun., J. M. Clarke, J. Swan, Justin Browne, A. G. Webster, H. J. Buckland, &c. The Registrar-General of Victoria (W. H. Archer, Esq.), and Commissary-General Horne, were present as visitors.

Mr. James Wilson, of Oatlands, who had previously been nominated by the Council, was after a ballot declared duly elected a Fellow of the Society.

The Secretary brought under notice the following returns, &c., for the past month :—

1. Visitors to Museum, 1,599.
2. Ditto to Gardens, 2,637.
3. Books and Periodicals received.
4. Time of flowering, &c., of a few standard plants in Botanic Gardens.
5. Presentations to Museum.

Meteorological Returns :—

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq. Table for March.
2. Swansea, from Dr. Story. Table for January.
3. Port Arthur, from A. H. Boyd, Esq. Table for March.
4. Sydney, from H. C. Russell, Esq. Printed ditto for January.

The presentations to the Museum were as follows :

1. From Mr. Edward Gates, Richmond. Specimen of the “ Kiwi ” (*Apteryx* sp.), and of the Owl Parrot or “ Kakapo ” (*Strygops habroptilus*), from New Zealand.

[The *Apteryx* was recognised by the meeting as a valuable addition to the Museum. It is becoming rare even in New Zealand.

An excellent coloured drawing of the Owl Parrot, in the “ Student ” for January, 1871, was exhibited.]

2. From Mr. J. Townsend, Forcett, curious stems of a climbing plant, from Bream Creek.
3. From Captain Harrison. A beautifully prepared skull of a large “ Killer ” (*Orca gladiator*), and the jaws of very large shark (*Squalus carcharius*.)

[The SECRETARY requested special attention to this presentation. The head of the “ Killer ” had been admirably prepared with considerable labour by Captain Harrison, and was in every respect perfect. The Shark jaws were the largest in the Museum. The size of the mouth was enormous, measuring in the fresh state 2 feet 6 inches vertically and the same laterally, being thus capable of grasping with ease the body of a full grown man. The teeth were quite perfect ; and the long rows of the reserves, at the base of the erect teeth, were well shewn.]

4. From Dr. W. Walker, F.R.C.S.E., of Kiama, New South Wales—A Specimen of *Meerschum* from that locality.
5. From A. McGregor, Esq.—Specimen of a large species of Dolphin (*Delphinus* sp.), known to whalers as the “ Cow fish.”

[For this valuable presentation the Society is much indebted to the donor. It could not, however, be exhibited, as it is in maceration under preparation for a skeleton.]

6. From Miss J. Buckland—Four Pairs Chinese Hooks and Eyes.
7. From Messrs. Hedberg and Harcourt—Specimens of Fire Clay, Bricks, and Tiles, from Seymour, East Coast.

8. From Mr. Blythe, Honeywood—Three Whip Snakes (*Hoplocephalus coronides*), &c.
9. From Mr. McCoy, Launceston—A Portuguese Copper Coin.
10. From Mr. A. Randall—A Rock Specimen from Guy Fawkes Rivulet, Cascades.
11. From Mr. Herbert Crowther—A Fijian Female Dress.
12. From Mr. C. Hanlon, River Styx—A curiously twisted root of Wattle.

The SECRETARY having reminded the meeting of a description of a huge cuttle fish found on the East coast of New Zealand, which he had read at the meeting held on the 12th November last, proceeded to read the following extract from a letter giving some further details of the monster :—

“Description of a monster cuttle seen on the East Coast, New Zealand, about 23 miles to the southward of Castle Point.

“The fish, which was of a reddish brown colour on the back, and white underneath, had eight arms, many of them broken off at different lengths, but the sound ones measuring, by step, 10 feet or thereabout, furnished on the under side with suckers measuring from 1 to 2½ inches in diameter, and getting gradually smaller towards the extremity, one long trunk, about 3 inches in diameter and (14) fourteen feet in length, terminating in a large sucker of the same diameter as the trunk. The body, which was rolling about in the surf, appeared about 6 feet in length by 2 or 2½ feet in diameter, and the fish would weigh at the lowest computation six cwt. The arms and trunk were severed from the body and measured by step as accurately as possible, and were afterwards washed away by the surf, the dimensions of the body we could only guess. The fish was seen by Mr. F. G. Moon, my brother F. Moore, &c.—JOHN MOORE.”

Mr. F. ABBOTT read a paper on the “Transit of Venus in 1874.”

Sir James M. WILSON said the Society was much indebted to Mr. Abbott for the interesting paper which he had just read, and for the pains he had taken to collect and transcribe the opinions entertained, by a number of scientific authorities, on the character of the phenomena resulting from the operation of the physical laws by which the earth is influenced in its connection with the sun and planets. The primary question which should engage the attention of the Royal Society at this moment is the great coming event of the transit of Venus over the sun's disc in 1874. The all-important question of ascertaining the sun's true parallax will, in all human probability, be accurately defined. The interest taken by the Governments and scientific bodies in Europe seems to warrant this conclusion. Tasmania, as one of the illuminated portions of the earth for the ingress and egress of the planet passing over the sun's disc, is, from climatic reasons, probably the most advantageous site for the observation of this most interesting event. Instead, however, of offering any observations on the paper to which the Fellows had just listened with so much interest he (Sir James Wilson) would now call their attention to the action taken by himself and colleagues in the late Government, in which they were strongly sustained by His Excellency the Governor, with a view to inducing the Home Government to make Hobart Town an official station for the observation of the transit of Venus. [The memorandum by Sir James M. Wilson, and despatches from Lord Kimberley, were here read.] From these documents it would be seen that the late Government had not lost sight of the importance of securing the selection of Hobart Town as a station for official observation of the transit, and had urged upon the Secretary of State considerations which were certainly deserving of

serious attention. This had been done well in advance of the event. But it would seem that the arrangements of the Home authorities had, even at that early date, been already made. The Astronomer Royal seems to prefer Christchurch, New Zealand, and the Lords of the Admiralty appear to have been influenced by financial considerations, and declined on those grounds to add another station to the five already selected for these observations. It was by no means improbable that climatic causes might interpose to prevent accurate observations being taken in the meridian of Christchurch, and it would be a misfortune to the cause of science if advantage were not taken of the perspicuous nature of the atmosphere of Tasmania—as ascertained by a long series of meteorological observations—to record this remarkable occurrence with all the accuracy which modern science could bring to bear upon such an event. He (Sir James Milne Wilson) thought that the Royal Society would be justified in applying to the Home authorities for the use of instruments requisite for the purpose. He could scarcely doubt that such an application would be favourably entertained.

The CHAIRMAN informed the meeting that the Society had had correspondence with the American Government on the subject. At the request of that Government a series of hourly observations from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. had been carried on by Mr. Abbott, at the instance of the Society, during the months of November and December, 1872, for the purpose of determining the percentage of sunshine. The information thus acquired was transmitted to the National Observatory at Washington.

Mr. M. ALLPORT proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. ABBOTT for his paper, and to the donors of presentations. He would be glad to propose a special vote to Captain Harrison for his very valuable donations. It was clear that a very great amount of trouble had been taken in these preparations—especially the large head of the “Killer”—and the Museum would soon be very rich indeed if others of our whaling Captains followed the example of Captains Harrison and George McArthur. The vote having been passed the meeting separated.