

JULY, 1873.

The monthly evening meeting of the Society was held on Tuesday, the 8th July, the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Tasmania in the chair.

The following returns for the month of June were brought under notice :—

1. Visitors to Museum, 1,243.
2. Ditto to Gardens, 2,599.
3. Plants, &c., received at and sent from Gardens :—
 - a. From Mr. W. Ball, London—83 packets seeds.
 - b. From Botanic Gardens, Christchurch, New Zealand—One case containing 70 plants.

Supplied for planting public places :—

- a. For Church of England grounds, Avoca—25 plants.
- b. For Cemetery, Cornelian Bay—373 plants.
- c. For Church of England grounds, Longford—123 plants.
- d. For ditto ditto, Bothwell—114 plants and 48 roses.
- e. For Launceston and Western Railway station—120 plants.
4. Times of leafing, &c., of a few standard plants in Botanic Gardens during June.
5. Books and periodicals received.
6. Presentations to Museum.
7. *Meteorological Returns*—
 - a. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq., table for June.
 - b. Westbury, from F. Belstead, Esq., ditto for May.
 - c. Port Arthur, from A. H. Boyd, Esq., ditto for June.
 - d. Swansea, from Dr. Story, ditto for April.
 - e. Sydney, from the Government observer, printed ditto for March.

The presentations to the Museum and Library were as follows :—

1. From Mr. J. Crooke, Ballochmyle—A young Wallaby from the pouch.
2. From Mr. D. McPherson—A young Kangaroo Rat from the pouch.
3. From Mr. Hissey—A white Rabbit, a Ferret, and a Bantam Hen from Mauritius.
4. From the Trustees of the British Museum, 64 volumes and parts of publications on Natural History.
5. From the Royal Academy of Sciences, Munich, 17 vols., and parts of the publications of that institution.

Presentation No. 4 was examined with great interest by the meeting, the volumes comprising it being of great value as works of reference, many being profusely illustrated by engravings and coloured drawings of admirable execution.

Presentation No. 5 was particularly noticed, being a prompt and liberal return from the Royal Academy of Sciences, Munich, for copies of the publications of the Royal Society of Tasmania, forwarded last year to that institution. The volumes comprising the presentation range over a period from 1857 to 1871.

In addition to the above an unusual number of books from various scientific bodies in England were laid before the meeting ; of these the Ray, the Royal Geographical, the Geological, the Linnean, the Zoological Societies, and the Society of Arts may be named.

The SECRETARY referring to the notice taken by the last meeting of the Society as to the nature of the implements made use of by our Aborigines, stated that he had received several communications on the subject. After reading extracts from letters from Mr. Robert Gatenby,

of the Macquarie River, and Mr. Rollings, of Forcett, the following from Mr. James Scott, M.H.A., of Launceston, was read :—

“Hobart Town,

“26th June, 1873.

“Sir,—In answer to your queries as to the stone implements used by the aborigines of this colony, viz., ‘Were tomahawks made by striking off flakes until the desired shape was obtained,’ &c., as in queries 1 to 5.

“By information from my late brother, Mr. Thomas Scott, assistant Surveyor-General, who was in this colony from 1820, and had many opportunities of observing the habits, &c., of the aborigines, I may state that I never learnt that they used the flint implements as tomahawks ; but invariably held them in their hands with the thumb resting on the flat surface, and turning the stone as found convenient to get the cutting edges where required. He had seen the men sitting for an hour or so at one time, chipping one flint with another so as to give them the peculiar cutting sharp edges. The flints were used principally for cutting and sharpening spears, waddies, and for making notches or rough edges on the end of the waddies, for the hand to grasp firmly, in order to prevent slipping when in the act of throwing, &c. They were also used for cutting notches in the bark of trees, to enable the natives to climb by placing the great toe of each foot alternately in the notches. The ends of the spears were hardened by being a short time in the fire. In addition to cutting holes in the bark for their toes the natives, when the trees were large and high, made use of a grass rope, which was passed round their body and the tree. To make such a rope some eight or ten men would all begin in a most expert way to pull the long wiry grass ; and when they had sufficient would all run together, and mix it ; then half of them would get small crooked sticks and twist the grass, whilst the others let it out into small fine ropes. Then all these ropes were twisted together into one strong one, sufficiently long to go round the tree and the man ascending.

“As to the flint implements, I have often found them in various parts of the colony, but chiefly in the midland districts, and as far north as Launceston, always in the shape used by holding in the hand, never in the shape of a tomahawk.

“A few years since I found above one hundred flints, all of the usual shape, at what I believe must have been a regular camping place of the Aborigines, as they were obtained on a space of about one acre on the east bank of the Macquarie River, at the foot of Mount Pringle, on the estate of Mount Morriston, at the head of a broad sheet of water about one mile in length, on the edge of the Salt Pan Plains and the hills rising to the east.

“Should the Royal Society of Tasmania undertake to keep the flints I found on the bank of the Macquarie River, and to designate them as ‘The Mount Morriston’ collection, I shall willingly hand them over by the first opportunity after I get to Launceston.

“The flints were said to be obtained by the aborigines somewhere between ‘The Split Rock’ and ‘The Great Lake.’ This I believe could be easily tested. I am informed a rock very similar is also found at ‘Stocker’s Bottom,’ forming part of ‘Mount Morriston,’ about five miles easterly from the spot where I found them. Another is also found at a spot about eight miles south, on the Macquarie River, known as ‘The Tea Gardens,’ but I cannot from personal knowledge affirm this.

“One custom of the aborigines was to plait strings from the bark of a yellow coloured shrub, equal to flax, both in strength and fineness, and found in abundance.

“Another custom was for females who had lost a child to wear an

arm, or thigh bone, of such child, fastened by a string (with perhaps eagle's talons added), round the head for a certain time after the death—such I have myself seen sent home as a curiosity.

"Some years ago I sent to England by Mr. Briton, late Police Magistrate at Launceston, a round stone chipped all round to a circle about 7 inches diameter, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick in the centre, to 1 inch thick at the edge. On this the females broke the bones of animals for the marrow, using another stone about six inches in diameter for striking. Both these stones were smooth and well worn, having evidently been long in use. I daresay, wherever Mr. Briton's collection is, these two stones could be identified from this description, and casts could be taken from them, as they were the only ones of the sort obtained. It may be also well to state that the Aborigines, in moving from camp to camp, if possible, carried a fire with them, to save the labour of getting it by friction of two pieces of wood—the use of which was known to them.

"I beg to remain,

"Yours very truly,

"JAMES SCOTT.

"J. W. Agnew, Esq.,

"Hon. Secretary, Royal Society of Tasmania."

All enquiries on the subject of the stone implements of the Tasmanian Aborigines tend to prove that no true tomahawks were known to, or fabricated by them. They merely used sharp-edged stones as knives. These were made sharp, not by grinding or polishing, but by striking off flakes by another stone till the required edge was obtained. As a very general, if not invariable, rule, one surface only was chipped in the process of sharpening. They were made from two different kinds of stone—the one apparently an indurated clay rock, the other containing a large proportion of silex.

A letter from Mr. Johnston, Railway-office, Launceston, enclosing photographs of leaf impressions and a fossil *Unio*, was read. The fossils were found on the bank of the Tamar, in a tertiary deposit, at high water level. The photograph was attentively examined, and a hope was expressed that Mr. Johnston would continue his explorations and favour the Society with specimens of such fossils as he might meet with.

Mr. Morton ALLPORT remarked that having noticed in the Annals and Magazine of Natural History for May, 1873 (No. 65) page 338, a paper by Professor Frederick McCoy "on a new Australian Species of *Thyrmites*," named by him *Thyrmites micropus*, he thought it right to mention that the species referred to (being the Tasmanian "Kingfish") was sent to England, in spirits, by him in 1870, and that Dr. Günther had recognised it as an already described form, viz., *Thyrmites solanderi*.

A good preparation in spirit of the nutmeg, showing the leaf, the entire fruit, and the mace, sent by Mr. R. R. Rex, was exhibited.

Specimens of the Kauri gum of New Zealand, in various stages of preparation for the market, from the Ven. Archdeacon Davies, were also shown.

Some ancient bronze drinking cups from Pompeii, engravings of old Dutch painters and political celebrities, &c., sent by Mr. J. Northcott, were brought forward for examination.

Mr. T. Stephens read a paper entitled "Notes on the Mersey Coal Measures, and their relation to the other members of the carboniferous series."

After some conversational discussion on the subject of the paper, in which the Bishop, Mr. Grant, Mr. M. Allport, Mr. Rule, and others took part, Mr. Grant remarked upon the great value of the presentation by the British Museum, and moved that a special vote of thanks should be forwarded to the trustees of that institution. This was carried, and

thanks having also been accorded to the other contributors, and to Mr. Stephens for the paper just read, the proceedings terminated.

The following is a list of the books, presented by the Trustees of the British Museum, above referred to :—

- Catalogue of Carnivorous Mammalia.
- Ditto Monkeys.
- Ditto Seals and Whales (and supplement.)
- Ditto Birds of Tropical Islands of Pacific.
- Ditto hand list of Birds.
- List of Birds, part III., sects. III., IV. Part V.
- Catalogue of Fishes (Günther's) vols. I. to VIII.
- Ditto Ruminant Mammalia.
- Ditto Shield Reptiles, Pt. I. (supplement) and appendix.
- Ditto ditto Pt. II.
- Ditto Bones of Mammalia.
- Ditto Coleopterous Insects of Canary Islands.
- Ditto Halticidæ.
- Ditto Orthopterous Insects, Pt. I.
- Ditto Blattariæ.
- Ditto Dermaptera, Saltatoria, &c. (supplement.)
- Ditto ditto, Pts. II. to V.
- Ditto Hemiptera, Heteroptera, Pts. I. V.
- Ditto Diurnal Lepidoptera.
- Ditto Lycænidæ (specimen).
- List of Lepidopterous Insects, Pts. XIX. to XXXV.
- Ditto Mollusca Pt. II.
- Catalogue of Amphibodous Crustacea.
- Ditto Sea Pens.
- Ditto Lithophytes, or Stony Corals.
- Ditto British Birds.
- List of British non-parasitical Worms.
- Ditto Diatomaceæ.
- Catalogue of Meteorites.
- Index to Minerals.
- Guide to Ditto.
- Ditto to Exhibition Rooms.