

APRIL, 1877.

The monthly meeting of the society was held on Tuesday, the 10th April. The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Tasmania in the chair. An unusually large number of Fellows attended, and the Rev. George Brown, Wesleyan Missionary to New Britain and New Ireland (lately returned from those islands), was present as a visitor.

Alfred Dobson, Esq., was elected a Fellow, and F. W. Hutton, Esq., Director of the Otago Museum, Dunedin, New Zealand, as a Corresponding Member of the Society.

The Hon. SECRETARY (Dr. Agnew) brought under notice the usual returns for the past month, viz. :—

1. Number of visitors to Museum, total 1592.
2. Ditto ditto to Gardens, total 4495.
3. Plants and seeds received at Gardens. From Messrs. Huber and Co., Hyeres, France, two packets of seeds. From M. Aug. van Geert, Ghent, 112 plants, comprising Rhododendrons, Magnolias, Lilies, Peonies, Clematis, etc. From Baron Ferd. von Müeller, seeds of *Festuca dives*.
4. Time of leafing, flowering, and fruiting of a few standard plants in the Botanic Gardens during March.
5. Books and Periodicals received.

Meteorological Returns—

1. Hobart Town, from F. Abbott, Esq.—Table for March.
2. New Norfolk, from W. E. Shoobridge, Esq.—Ditto.
3. From the Marine Board—Mount Nelson, table for March; Goose Island, tables for January and February.
4. Port Arthur, from Dr. Coverdale—Table for March.
5. Melbourne, from R. J. L. Ellery, Esq.—Printed records for August and September, 1876.

The presentations to the Museum were as follows :—

1. From W. K. Dixon, Esq., Ouse—A Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*), and an Emu Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).
2. From Captain W. Fisher—A Sawfish (*Pristiophorus cirratus*).
3. From Dr. Coverdale—Four hair balls from the paunch of a calf six weeks old. Concretions from paunch of a sheep.
4. From Owen Meredith, Esq.—Specimens of Stream Tin from Mount Heemskirk, Western Tasmania, found on land taken up and intended to be worked by the Emu Bay and Pieman's River Prospecting Company.
5. From Mr. C. Sandberg, per Mr. O. H. Hedberg—Stream Tin from the "All Nations" Co.'s mine, Main Creek, Thomas' Plains, Ringarooma.
6. From Master A. Maddock—Two insects (*Cyria imperialis*) from Mount Nelson.
7. From Mr. J. Lucas, Huon—A specimen of the Golden-bellied Beaver Rat (*Hydromys chrysogaster*). An Opossum Mouse (*Dromicia gliriformis*).
8. From Mrs. Maum, Senr., Clarence Plains—A curiously malformed Egg of domestic fowl.
9. From Mr. J. W. H. Clark—Two freshwater mussels (*Unio mor-tonicus*) from the Elizabeth River, Campbell Town.
10. From the Rev. James Thomas—A Basket made by the natives of Tonga. Two crab shells, ten specimens of Echinodermata, two species of Coral attached to a piece of rock, two specimens of *Lithodomus*, and seeds of *Abrus precatorius* from the Friendly Islands.

11. (Name of donor not sent). Specimens of Crayfish "found some two or three feet beneath the surface of the ground, chiefly in moist places at roots of trees, and from about 100 to 500 feet above running water, on North-west Coast of Tasmania,"
12. From Mr. O. H. Hedberg—A Crayfish, from the Hobart Town rivulet, Fern-tree Valley.
13. From Mr. Spencer—Sample of Coal from Jerusalem.
14. From Miss Knight—A Fish (*Capros australis*) caught at Sandy Bay.
15. From Mr. Harbroe—A Fish (*Scorpaena sp.*) caught at Risdon.
16. From Mr. S. Dove—Specimen of dendrites on Sandstone, from Knocklofty.
17. From F. W. Hutton, Esq., Director of Otago Museum, Dunedin—An Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*) from Iceland. A King Bird of Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*) from New Guinea.
18. From Lieutenant Langdon, R.N.—Two Notes (5 piasters and 25 centimes) of National Bank of Hayti.
19. From Master Hull—Specimens of a paper-like substance from the reservoir at Cascades.
20. From the Rev. G. Brown—A collection of Ornaments made by natives of New Britain and New Ireland, viz. :—Shell and tortoiseshell armlets, a nose ornament, a large neck ditto, shell money, a small basket, and a kind of Jew's-harp, from New Britain. (This instrument is remarkable from being constructed exactly on the principle of the common Jew's-harp—that is, two external arms with a small vibrating tongue between them. When touched by Mr. Brown the sound produced was almost identical with that of the Jew's-harp). Two neck ornaments, one head ditto, a rattle and a string of shell money, from New Ireland. A shell armlet, from the Solomon Islands. Also twelve prepared bird skins from Duke of York Island, New Britain, and Fiji. Specimens of Chalk from New Ireland.

The Rev. W. W. SPICER read some notes, and a communication from Baron Ferd. von Mueller, on the curious confervoid substance from the Cascades reservoir. (Presentation No. 19.)

The Rev. G. BROWN, C.M.Z.S., having been introduced by the Secretary, was kind enough, agreeably to request, to favor the meeting with some very interesting observations descriptive of the various islands he had recently visited, with remarks on the inhabitants, their language, manners, and customs. The islands referred to were New Britain, New Ireland, and the Duke of York Group. A description, in the Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, of many objects of Natural History collected in these islands was noticed and extracts from it read. As to the ethnology of the people, it was evident they were true Papuans. This was proved by colour, their thick curly matted hair, the grammatical construction of the language, and also by some of their manners and customs. Illustrative of some of these remarks, the speaker instanced the different construction of the words "my face," "your face," "his face," in the Samoan, Fijian, and Duke of York languages, showing the similarity of grammatical construction in the latter two, and its difference from the Samoan and other Malayo-Polynesian dialects. It was suggested that the peculiarly sacred relation sustained by the sister and sister's children to the brother's children (called by the name of Tamaha in Tonga, Tamafafine or Tama-Sa in Samoa, and Vasu in Fiji) would be found to be one of the distinguishing marks of connection between the Malayo-Polynesian races; whilst the custom of dividing all the people into two classes, called respectively "Pickalaba" and "Maramara" in the Duke of York dialect would probably be found to

indicate a Papuan origin, or previous connection of races in all the islands in which the custom exists. Each class had its own particular share of the land and of the cocoa-nut trees. Members of either were not permitted to intermarry, the rule being that the male of one class must marry a female of the other; and it was curious that in the event of death all property and children passed to the mother's class. Mr. Brown then exhibited some specimens of true chalk from New Ireland. These were interesting, because no chalk is found on the islands, but blocks of it are said to be thrown up occasionally on the shores by earthquakes and tidal waves. It was a very remarkable circumstance that the natives though accustomed to nothing but nudity, carved out of these blocks, or masses, figures clothed in a fashion somewhat similar to that of the Elizabethan age and suggestive, therefore, of a probable visit by Spanish explorers at that period. The tribe that carved these figures was an inland one.

Some remarks were then made on the geographical distribution of the Fauna, more especially as regards the Marsupials found on New Britain and New Ireland. The Cuscus was found in abundance on New Ireland, the most distant island from New Guinea, but was *not* found on New Britain. The Wallaby, which is described and named by Mr. Ramsay in the Proceedings already referred to, was found on New Ireland alone, but it was possible it might exist on New Britain, though no specimens were obtained from that locality. The only Marsupial found on New Britain was a small Flying Squirrel. A new *Perameles* (Bandicoot) was found on the Duke of York Island.

The curious custom of "Duk Duk" was explained. For this the natives gathered together in a large ring, within which two chiefs accompanied by a native fantastically dressed to represent a Cassowary took their stand. Suddenly from the bush another native, dressed like a Cassowary, would break into the ring, and, brandishing a spear, rush in a menacing manner towards the chiefs. After threatening them for some time, he would suddenly stop, and stooping down, present his back to them. Then one of the chiefs or their companion would take a strong cane and strike him a very severe blow (occasionally twice) with it across the shoulders. Having received the blow, the man would leave the circle and others would take his place and go through the same ceremony.

Another peculiar rite was that in which the elders of the tribe took the youths before they were admitted to manhood into the bush where they fed them for some weeks solely on shark's flesh, turtle, and pork. On their return to the tribe they never afterwards, during their entire life tasted any one of these articles of food.

Mr. BROWN then alluded to certain strange reports which had reached him of a race of men possessed of tails who were said to live in the interior of New Britain. These reports were almost incredible, yet they came from so many sources, and were so explicit in their descriptions, that at last he (Mr. Brown) organised a party and started for the locality where the tails were said to flourish. Most unfortunately soon after starting one of the party, a sailor, got access to a bottle of gin and thus was the cause of an accident of such a serious character, that the party had to return to the ship with the wounded man, and circumstances then prevented a renewal of the expedition.

Mr. M. ALLPORT, after moving a vote of thanks to the Rev. W. W. Spicer, and to the donors of presentations, proposed that a special vote should be accorded to the Rev. G. Brown for his highly interesting and instructive address.

The BISHOP OF TASMANIA said it was scarcely necessary for him to put this vote to the meeting as he was sure it would be carried by

acclamation. For himself he would say he had never spent a more pleasant evening at any of their meetings than he had just done in listening to the admirable address by the Rev. G. Brown. He was very glad to hear that Mr. Brown did not intend to sever his relations with the Society as he proposed on his return to the scene of his labours to favour us if possible with further information and specimens, all of which the Society would well know how to appreciate.

The vote having been carried Mr. BROWN returned thanks, when the proceeding terminated.