

## OCTOBER, 1880.

The monthly evening meeting of the society was held on Monday, the 11th October; His Honor Mr. Justice Dobson, vice-president, in the chair.

Robert Henry, jun., Esq., Superintendent of Telegraphs, who had been previously nominated by the Council, was balloted for, and declared duly elected a Fellow of the Society.

The hon. Secretary, Dr. AGNEW, drew attention to the following returns, received since last meeting, viz.:—

1. Number of visitors to Museum during September: On Sundays, 1,057; on week days, 907; total, 1,964.
2. Ditto to Gardens, 3,996.
3. Books and periodicals received.

*Meteorological Returns—*

1. From the Marine Board: Tables from Swan Island, for July and August; Mount Nelson, for September.
2. From R. L. J. Ellery, Esq., F.R.S.: Monthly records of observations made at the Melbourne Observatory during March and April.

Time of leafing, flowering, etc., of a few standard plants in the Botanic Gardens during September:—

- 18th. Moutan Peony commencing to flower.
- 20th. Horsechestnut ditto.
- 21st. *Quercus pedunculata* commencing to break.
- 27th. Ash commencing to break leaf.
- 28th. Sycamore ditto.
- 30th. *Robinia pseudo-acacia* commencing to leaf.
- 30th. *Platanus occidentalis* ditto.

F. ABBOTT, Jun.,  
Superintendent.

The SECRETARY reminded the meeting that Mr. Charles Gould, then a resident member, read a paper about eight years ago, before the society, "On the existence of large animals (probably seals) in the upland lakes of Tasmania," and connected the possible existence of such animals on the neighbouring continent with the traditions of the "bunyip." Mr. Gould having recently written to enquire if any further information on the subject had been obtained, he (the Secretary) had now to report that a mutual friend had brought the matter under the notice of Professor McCoy, probably the most competent authority to give an opinion; and he would read an extract from the learned Professor's reply, dated 22nd September, which would appear to confirm Mr. Gould's suggestion that the so-called bunyip had probably a real existence, and if so, that it was in fact a seal.

"I also think the 'Bunyip' is a seal of the group having external ears, which differ from the others in having the legs so developed and directed that they can walk well and far on the land, and from their gait are often called 'Sea Bears.' One of this group on our coast, *Euotaria cinerea*, frequently ascends the rivers for great distances; and as it is a matter of indifference to them whether the water be salt or fresh as long as it contains plenty of fish for food, I think this must be the creature, as all the accounts of appearance and voice agree. (There are no special freshwater seals.)

"The *Morelia varigata*, or 'Carpet Snake,' is, as you mention, the only snake in this colony approaching 10ft. in length.

"FREDERICK MCCOY."

Mr. JOHN SWAN exhibited a strange fish, obtained by him at George's Bay. In Mr. Johnston's opinion it was closely allied to *Dania ambigua*, Richardson, the latter being classified by Dr. Gunther within

the Perch family as *Dules ambiguus*.\* It is doubtful whether the fish now under notice may not have to be placed under a new genus. Its general characters are as follows:—B.6, D.  $\frac{9}{9-10}$ , A.3/8, P.13; L. tran. 7/16, L. lat. 52; V.1/5; and therefore, according to Dr. Gunther, it cannot be included within the genus *Dules*, because he has based his genera principally upon the number of spines in the dorsal fin. It may more properly belong to the genus *Gerres*, of the family *Pristipomatidae*. It is possible, however, that the spines of the dorsal, as in *Latris*, are not constant. It would therefore be necessary to examine more specimens before it could be properly classified.

Mr. R. M. JOHNSTON, F.L.S., read the two following papers:—The first, by himself, entitled "A description of two new species of fish" (*Trachichthys Macleayi*, and *Mendosoma Allporti*), caught in the estuary of the Derwent. The second, by the Rev. J. E. Tenison-Woods, F.L.S., F.G.S., etc., entitled "Introductory Notes to the Natural History of Tasmania."

The latter paper gave a most valuable synopsis of the leading features of the Tasmanian flora and fauna. Comparisons were made with corresponding features in the neighbouring colonies and elsewhere, which led to much interesting speculation. It was explained that this was the forerunner of a series of similar short papers or catalogues relating to the various specific branches of the natural history of Tasmania, to be undertaken by Mr. Woods in conjunction with several local naturalists, who are making the particular branches their special study.

Interesting discussion followed the reading of Mr. Wood's paper, in which His Honor Mr. Justice Dobson, Mr. C. H. Grant, Mr. Barnard, Mr. Johnston, and others took part. It was suggested that great care should be taken in drawing conclusions between two different provinces whose particular branches of natural history were unequally investigated. Unqualified comparisons between two districts, whose particular branches of natural history were imperfectly investigated, would be misleading. It would also lead to confusion if either of these districts was compared with one where any of those branches had been fully worked out.

The meeting closed with the usual vote of thanks to the authors of the papers read.

\*Dr. Gunther describes L. lat. 85. This is an error, as Dr. Richardson in the original description states it as L. lat. 52.