

sorry he did not obtain from England the assistance he asked for. England had identified herself with Antarctic exploration, for Captain Cook had sailed as far south as 71deg. a century ago, and it would be derogatory to our credit to let Sweden or any other nationality take the work to a more successful issue. In Tasmania we occupied a vantage ground in respect to this exploration, and the colony would most probably form the base of operations. In this colony we lived in an atmosphere of discovery, and we should possess in vain the statue standing in Franklin-square if we did not feel the deepest interest in any future Antarctic discovery. As an offshoot of Great Britain we should be wanting in the national characteristics if we did not take the responsibilities as well as the advantages of the origin. Such responsibilities, in this part of the world, could not be better exercised than in voyaging over that unexplored portion of the earth nearest to us. If Ministers thought as he did, and if the Fellows of the Royal Society thought as he did, a public subscription should be initiated, and then the Government would be able to see what support they could ask Parliament to vote. At present Parliament was in recess, and any promise the Government could give would be subject to the reservation that Parliament would have to sanction it. He promised to submit their views to the Government, and thanked them for having taken the matter up.

Dr. AGNEW thanked the Premier for his reception of the deputation, and the tenor of his reply.

JUNE, 1887.

The monthly meeting of the Royal Society was held on June 14, the President, Sir Robert Hamilton, occupying the chair, and about 30 Fellows and several ladies being present. His Excellency was accompanied by Miss Hamilton, Miss Hervey, and Mr. H. W. B. Robinson, the Private Secretary.

NEW MEMBERS.

Messrs. N. E. Lewis, M.A., B.C.L., and Samuel Clemes, proposed as members of the society were balloted for, and declared elected.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY.

The secretary read the following list of additions made to the library during the month of May:—

Analele Institutulum Meteorological Romaniei. Tom. 1, 1885.—From the Institution.

Annals and Magazines of Natural History, 5th ser. No. 112.

Bollettino della Societa Geographica Italiana. Fasc. 3, 1887.—From the Society.

Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard College, February, 1887.—From Professor A. Agassiz.

Bulletin de la Société Imperiale des Naturalistes de Moscow, 1886.—From the Society.

Chemist and Druggist of Australasia, June, 1887.—From the Editor.

Die Scen der Deutschen Alpen line Geographische Monographie. Von Dr. Alois Geistbeck.

Acht Tafeln, Mit 128 Figuren, Geologischen und Geographischen.

Profilen Tiefenschichtenkarten und Dia grammien. Leipzig, 1885.—From the Society.

Draft of Prospectus of Selden Society.—From the Society.

Geological Magazine, April, 1887.

Hourly Readings, 1884. Meteor. Office, London. Part 1, January-March.—From the Department.

Imperial Federation, London, May, 1887.—From the Editor.

Journal of the Royal Microscopical Society, current Nos.—From the Society.

Journal of the Society of Arts, current Nos.

List of Members and Catalogue of Library of Geological Society of Australasia, 1886-7.—From the Society.

Machinery Market and Machinery Exported, London, 1887.—From the Editor.

Magnetical and Meteorological Observations, Bombay, 1885.—From the Department.

Meteorological Observations at six stations in India, 1886.—From the Department.

Mitteilungen des Vereins für Erdkunde Zu Leipzig, 1883-5.—From the Department.

Monthly Weather of the Meteorol Office, London, June and November, 1886.—From the Department.

Monthly Notices of the Royal Microscopical Society, London, March, 1887.—From the Society.

Nature, March, 1887.

Observations and Researches made at the Hong Kong Observatory Bombay, 1885.—From the Department.

ICELAND.

The Rev. J. B. WOOLLNOUGH read a long and interesting paper entitled, "Notes on Iceland." Mr. Woollnough prefaced his paper by calling attention to three books he had placed upon the table—two published by Icelanders in their own country, and the third published by an Englishman, containing a collection of the national songs, including a national anthem set to the same air as our own National Anthem, of which he gave a metrical translation. The paper opened by a reference to the eminence obtained in Iceland in literature, science, and art in comparatively early days, and the manner in which the people had solved, with no little success, the social and political problems, thereby influencing in no small degree their fellow-men in other parts of the world. Its literature, after 300 years of natural life, was one of the best in Europe, and formed one of the brightest gleams of light in the darkness of the middle ages. To Englishmen this country could not fail to be interesting. It had founded a colony in Greenland in the tenth and another in America in the eleventh century, which led to the later discovery of America by Columbus, who desired to test the Icelandic accounts of the lands towards the west. England was now testing a national system of education, about 50 years old, but Iceland with no schools at all had the best educated people in the world. With all this to be said about it the population was only half as great as Tasmania—a little over 60,000 people who lived and struggled against the most adverse circumstances. It appeared to have been first visited by Irish monks A.D. 800, but about the year 900 the change introduced in Norway by Harald Fairhair caused many nobles and others to emigrate to Iceland. These sea rovers when they landed on Iceland took up a definite area of land, prescribed by custom, and no more, allotting portions to their retainers by a rough sort of feudal tenure. In 929 the whole seaboard, the only habitable part of the island, was taken possession of, and in that year the general Legislative Assembly or Althing met for the first time, and adopted shortly afterwards a general code of laws. This national Parliament was composed of 144 members, being the chiefs of the various districts, and two other members nominated by each. They were lawyers by nature, and the whole of their early history is composed

of suits between chiefs, which frequently led to the final arbitrament of the sword. The young Icelanders of the early days, in the spirit of the sagas travelled to other parts of the world in the combined characters of traders, soldiers, lawyers, and, not unfrequently, poets. The closest parallel to the Icelanders of the tenth and twelfth centuries were the English adventurers of the sixteenth century, who were the terror of the Spanish main, and were warmly appreciated by Elizabeth. In the year 1,000 the Christian religion was first introduced into Iceland, and the Roman alphabet took the place of the old characters. After a warm debate in the Althing, the Christian religion was established as the national religion. It soon took root, and piracy disappeared, while the young Icelanders began to leave home for the purpose of visiting European universities. The national literature was then soon born, and the chief literary glory of the country was that it is the only European country that could boast of a prose literature dating from the twelfth century. The commerce of the country extended to many southern lands, and one of their ships returning from Dublin was driven over the western seas till a country was touched which they called Vinland. This was North America, where a colony was founded in 1007. A colony was also established by Eric the Red in Greenland, but it died out in 1418. In discovery and colonisation the Icelanders were before all other nations, and might be said to have been 300 years before their time. In 1262-4, after a series of warm political debates the Althing determined to unite with Norway, and bitter opposition was afterwards raised to this course. The reader of the paper knew that there were people in this colony who thought they should do as Iceland did by a union with Victoria. Victoria would gain by this, and the loss would be ours, and we would find, as the Icelanders had found, that without local self-government there would be nothing to foster local energy and interest in public affairs. From the date of this union Iceland fell into obscurity compared with the brilliancy of its past history. In the 14th century Iceland was transferred with Norway to Denmark, under which Government it remained. The Lutheran form of faith was adopted in 1578, and the first printing press set up. In the 16th century the people suffered much from the Algerine pirates, and subsequently was visited by smallpox, which carried off no less than 16,000 of the inhabitants. Since then it had suffered much from nature and from man, and the highest testimony of the great qualities of this people was that, though one-fourth, and afterwards one-third, of their numbers were suddenly carried off, and immense areas of pasture land burned under streams of lava, their indomitable perseverance kept them there. Towards the end of the last century the Althing considered the question of abandoning the colony, but patriotism and hope, and energy kept the people there. The writer advocated inducing the people of this interesting country to emigrate to Tasmania, as we would find in them people with some money, good education and a native power of struggling against difficulty which would make them admirable colonists. In 1874 Christian IX. visited his subjects in Iceland, and granted them a constitution, under which a Governor was appointed who received his orders from a Ministry for Iceland. The Parliament established was composed of two chambers elected for six years, and meeting for six weeks every second year. During the last few years the country had been passing through a political crisis, for a great meeting of all the male inhabitants over 21 years had commanded the Althing to sit and demand Home Rule. This was done, but the King would not consent, and it had again been demanded. The Danes were contemptuously kind to Iceland. They had set aside their wishes, crippled their trade, and established a national bank which had many evil results. There was practically no crime in Iceland, sheep

stealing and petty theft being the only offences known. The last murderer dated a long time back, and was carried to Norway for execution, while the prison had been turned into a museum. In the writer's opinion the sources of wealth in Iceland were not yet developed or not sufficiently developed. The land was not fully stocked, the fisheries were not attended to, and, until recently, when a Leith merchant paid in coin, the commerce had been carried on by barter. Since then money had been accumulating in Iceland. With a good banking institution, good boats for harvesting the fisheries, and taxation, a new development would ensue. Up to the present there was not any system of taxation, and, consequently, roads and bridges did not exist, while immense marshes were waiting to be drained. There were no very rich people, and no poor people, a greater equality existing than in any republic. Out of a population of 64,000 it was curious to observe that there were 57,000 freehold farmers, 523 labourers, 11 doctors, 27 dealers, 236 carpenters and joiners, 80 blacksmiths, 80 goldsmiths, two prisoners, and no record of any lawyers. There were only 63 surnames in the whole country, many people not having any. A very interesting description of the Valley of Kingvalla where the Althing met—a plain five miles wide depressed by sudden volcanic action—was given, and the paper concluded with some facts relating to the social nature of the people and their hospitality. As a proof of their courtesy and disinterestedness, he related that he had dropped a diamond ring and could not discover it again. Upon his return to Edinburgh he received a letter from his host enclosing the ring, which had been found by a farmer who refused to take any money for it, saying that he had already more than received his reward in the satisfaction he had in having been able to restore his ring to the "Walking Priest."

TASMANIAN FISHES.

Notes on the identity of certain Tasmanian fish by Mr. SAVILLE-KENT:—

Two species were referred to in Mr. Saville-Kent's notes, the first being the large species of parrot fish, commonly taken in Tasmanian waters, and known to the fishermen by the name of the "blue-head." Mr. Saville-Kent stated that he had failed hitherto in his endeavour to establish its identity with either of the several species of parrot fishes included in Mr. Johnston's catalogue. While recently in Sydney he submitted a coloured drawing of the fish to Mr. Douglas Ogilvy, of the Australian Museum, who recognised it as a previously unrecorded species which he had described in the proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, under the title of *Labrichthys ceruleus*. The second form referred to was the so-called "magpie perch" of the Hobart fish market, and which is included in Mr. Johnston's catalogue under the title of *Chilodactylus gibbosus*. At the Manly Aquarium in Sydney Mr. Saville-Kent had observed this technical name placarded against an entirely distinct fish, and on searching out the original figures a description of it given by Richardson ascertained that the Tasmanian type was a new and hitherto undescribed species, and for which he now proposed the technical title of *Chilodactylus viconarius*. With reference to the two broad black bands that encircle the fishes body, coloured drawings, from life, of the two species in question were exhibited by Mr. Saville-Kent. Mr. Saville-Kent also exhibited to the meeting examples of oyster-brood recently reared by him on the Government reserve at Spring Bay, and referred to them as an earnest of yet more substantial results that might be anticipated by a perseverance with the operations recently inaugurated. The specimens in question were the pine branches covered with oyster brood described in these columns a few weeks since. Mr. Saville-Kent regretted that Mr. John-

ston was not present, as he believed that gentleman would give an opinion, but probably Mr. Morton would have something to say on the subject.

Mr. A. MORTON stated that, owing to a previous engagement, Mr. Johnston was unable to be present, but that he (Mr. Morton) might say that the drawing of the fish submitted to the meeting by Mr. Kent was not identical with the one referred to in Mr. Johnston's catalogue as *Cossyphus Gouldii*, although *C. Gouldii* was enumerated in Mr. Johnston's catalogue. Mr. Johnston had stated that he had not seen a specimen himself, but that the late Mr. Morton Allport had recorded it as having been found in Tasmanian waters. With regard to the other drawing, *Chilodactylus vittatus*, Mr. Morton said that Mr. Johnston had informed him to-day that a fish answering the description of *C. vittatus* had been reported to him (Mr. Johnston) as having been captured in our waters.

Mr. SAVILLE-KENT also presented a specimen of the *Leipodus caudatus*, or frost fish, which he had secured after it had been found floating about in the Fisherman's Dock. He had frequently seen it caught in the North Atlantic, especially off the coast of Spain where it was caught like the fishermen caught barracoota. It had a beautiful silver flash as it was thrown up through the air. It took a bait similar to the barracoota, to which species it was allied, as would be seen by looking at its canine teeth.

Mr. A. MORTON said it was a strange coincidence that a fish of the same species was found floating in the water at the same time last year by Mr. Whitehouse, and as far as he had been able to discover it had never been found in a living state in New Zealand, but was there found washed up after a severe frost on the beaches, particularly between Wanganui and Wellington. It grew to 5ft. or 6ft. in length, and was highly prized for food, realising from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per lb.

Mr. MORTON read the following account of two rare fish by Mr. R. M. Johnston:—*Histiophorus Herschelli* (Gray). — A fine specimen 13ft. 6in. total length, was recently discovered by me stranded and half buried in the sand bank communicating with a large lagoon, immediately to the north of Cape Fredrick Henrick on Forester Peninsula. It answers in all characteristic points to the above species so far as could be observed. Unfortunately it was much decomposed internally, and the ventral and anterior portions of anal fin were destroyed. The anterior part of spinous dorsal was elevated into a crest composed of about 11 spines, curving between the occiput and a line passing through posterior of præoperculum; somewhat truncated at its point of junction with the rest of dorsal spines, which were uniformly only about 2in. high to junction with soft rays near peduncle, which are slightly higher than the posterior portion of spinous dorsal rays. The longest rays of first dorsal were about 12in. to 14in. The soft anal is developed similarly to the soft dorsal, each composed of seven rays. The characters and dimensions as observed were:—Length of head to extremity of upper jaw, 4ft.; broad expanse of tail forks, 4ft. 4in.; to greatest depth about 2ft.; D. 11·31/7, A. -/7, V.P. 14 falcate. Dermal productions, bifurcate or lozenge shaped; skin thick, hard, and bony. As Dr. Gunther states that specimens of this genus are few and imperfect in museums, and as it is desirable to make further observations on large individuals, it is of the greatest importance that this noble specimen should be secured for our Museum. The specimen was too large for me to carry to town, as I was at the time travelling on foot, but I have urged Mr. Frank Rush, to whom I have explained its nature and position, to bring it to town as perfectly as possible on his next trip to that locality. It would be desirable for the Museum authorities to assist in defraying the expense of its removal to Hobart. It would prove a most interesting

as well as valuable addition to their collection. The addition of the above species of swordfish to our catalogue of Tasmanian fishes will be of much interest to ichthyologists generally. I had heard of a swordfish having been seen prior to the publication of my catalogue and observations on Tasmanian fishes in 1880, but being in doubt, I omitted it from the list of fishes then given. *Lamna cornubica*. Gm. (Porbeagle shark.) Preœral portion of the snout longer than the longitudinal axis of the cleft of the mouth, conical pointed; angle of the mouth nearly midway between the gill opening and nostril; teeth 13-16—12-14 on each side, lanceolate with a small basal cusp on each side in adult specimens; in young specimens these cusps are absent; the third tooth on each side of the upper jaw is very small; the width of the first gill opening is nearly equal to its distance from the last; origin of the dorsal fin above the root of the pectorals, which are somewhat falciform, the length of their lower margin being nearly one-fourth of that of the upper. A fine specimen, about 3ft. long, was recently captured by Mr. Frank Rush in a graball net, and to him I am indebted for the opportunity of making these observations and for enabling me on his behalf to present to the Museum collection the valuable addition of so rare a species in our waters. Mr. Morton since has most skilfully stuffed the example, which may be seen in the Museum.

Mr. MORTON said he had tried to make arrangements to secure the specimen of the swordfish, but had failed up to the present, though he hoped to succeed eventually. So far as he could make out from the description it corresponded very closely with the specimen contained in the Sydney Museum, which had been secured in a rather curious manner. Two fishermen were off the coast there fishing for schnapper, and every second or third fish caught was taken off by a large fish swimming around the boat. The boat was anchored by a chain, and the large fish, which was found to be a swordfish, inserted his sword in a link of the chain, and made away with the boat. The fishermen, who fortunately had harpoons, secured the fish and sold it to the Museum for £10.

A NEW WATER PLANT.

Mr. R. A. BASTOW read a paper on a specimen of the *Riccia natans* (water plant). Mr. Bastow stated that this plant was new to Tasmania, and he had failed to find that it had been discovered anywhere in Australasia except in one locality in New Zealand. The specimen under review had been obtained by Miss Oakden, of Launceston, in a lagoon near the Tamar, and was much larger than the English plant. He also submitted a specimen *Nitella* of obtained from the pond in the Royal Society Gardens. Both specimens were exhibited under the microscope.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Mr. MORTON drew attention to specimen numbers of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia lying on the table, and referred to it as the most elaborate and artistic work ever published in Australia. He had brought back from Sydney with him a few of the sketches contained in the work, eleven parts of which had been already published in that city by an American company. He also drew attention to a portfolio containing about 50 sketches of Tasmanian scenery by Mr. J. S. Prout—an artist who was probably well known to some of the older members—which had been very generously presented to the society by the Hon. William Robertson, of Colac, Victoria.

THANKS FOR THE PAPERS.

The PRESIDENT, at the conclusion of the meeting, invited the Fellows to join with him in a hearty vote of thanks to the gentlemen who had read the papers there that night, and thereby contributed to a very

interesting and instructive evening. As regarded Mr. Woollnough's paper, he had listened to it himself with the greatest interest, for his home, the place where he was born, was only two day's sail from Iceland—the Shetland Islands. He had been accustomed to hear of Iceland in all his early days. Vessels going to Iceland very often called at the Shetland's on their way, and one from there came with a cargo of Iceland ponies, one of which was purchased for him and ridden by him when a boy. To him, therefore, it had been truly interesting to listen to Mr. Woollnough's paper, for although he had never been to Iceland himself, the members of his family used to go there constantly, and he became very familiar with what might be called the social matters as opposed to the historical affairs of that place. As far as his judgment went it entirely accorded with all Mr. Woollnough had said. To the other gentlemen—Messrs. Saville-Kent, Johnston, and Bastow—he thought they would certainly have great pleasure in giving them their hearty thanks for the papers they had read. (Cheers.)

The meeting then terminated, and the microscopes on an adjoining table were visited.

JULY, 1887.

The usual monthly meeting of the Royal Society was held on Monday, July 11th, when there was a good attendance of Fellows and visitors.

Mr. JAMES BARNARD said the President (His Excellency Sir Robert Hamilton, K.C.B.) would not be able to be present, as he was detained elsewhere by important business, so it devolved upon him as the senior vice-president to take the chair.

List of additions to the library during the month :—

American Museum of Natural History, Annual report of the Trustees, and list of members for the year 1886-7. From the Department.

Annual Report, Vol. I., 1885, Geological and Natural History, Survey of Canada, and maps to accompany report. From the Department.

Bollettino della Società Geographica Italiana, Serie II., Vol. XII. Fasc. 5. From the Society.

Bulletin de la Société Imperiale des Naturalistes de Moscow, No. 3. Moscow 1886. From the Society.

Catalogue of the Lizards in the British Museum, 2nd Edition, by Albert Boulenger, Vol. III.; Lacertidæ, Gerrhosauridæ, Scincidæ, Anelytropidæ, Dibamidæ, Chamelontidæ Catalogue of the Fossil Mammalia in the British Museum, Part IV., containing the order Ungulata sub-order Proboscidæ, by R. Lydekker, B.A., F.G.S. From the Trustees.

Den Norske Nordhav—Expedition 1876-8, XVII., Zoologi, Alcyonida, ved. D.C. Danielssen. From the Department.

Guide to the Galleries of Reptiles and Fishes of the Department of Zoology of the British Museum, General Guide to the British Museum. From the Trustees.

Monthly notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, Vol. XLV., No. 6, April 1887, from the Society.

Monthly weather review, M.S. of America, January and February, 1887. From the Department.

Proceedings and transactions of the Queensland branch of the Geographical Society of Australasia, second session, 1886-7. From the Society.