

JUNE.

The monthly meeting of this Society was held on June 9, the President, His Excellency Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, K.C.B., presiding.

PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS.

The SECRETARY laid on the table the published papers and proceedings of the Society for the year 1890.

ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

His EXCELLENCY said that at the last meeting of the Royal Society a resolution was passed asking the Council to wait on Ministers to ascertain whether they would be prepared to recommend Parliament to vote a certain sum towards the expenses of the Antarctic expedition under Baron Nordenskiöld. Before, however, any action was taken by the Council, an intimation was received from Ministers that they had determined to ask Parliament for £300 towards the proposed expedition. He telegraphed that fact to Baron Von Mueller, and received the following telegram in reply:—"Grateful for support Tasmanian Government to Nordenskiöld expedition. This greatly strengthens the whole cause." He did not know how far the matter had progressed since, but thought it satisfactory that in Tasmania everything had been done that could be expected in this matter.

AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

His EXCELLENCY thought it desirable that a progress report should be made by Mr. Morton in reference to the arrangements for the approaching meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.

Mr. MORTON said that he had sent out 950 circulars to members of the Association and others throughout Australia requesting them to notify whether they intended to be present, although he had not received one quarter of the replies expected, already 150 had notified their intention of being present at the meeting to be held in Hobart on January 7 next. Papers had been promised by able contributors in the following sections:—Astronomy, chemistry, geology, biology, geography, economic and social science, anthropology, literature, and fine arts. He regretted to intimate that Sir Wm. McGregor, Governor of British New Guinea, had written stating that it was impossible for him to leave his work there early next year in order to attend and occupy the position of president of the geographical section. Mr. Morton further stated that liberal concessions in the matter of travelling rates had been granted to members, and he had no doubt that the result would be a large influx of visitors. At the meetings of the Association in New Zealand last year, large numbers of local residents became members of the Association, and he hoped a similar result would take place here, as by becoming members they would have the privilege of attending the different sections.

His EXCELLENCY said: I think we may be satisfied with the progress made as detailed by Mr. Morton. I may say that I also had a letter from Sir William McGregor similar to that received by Mr. Morton, but I thought the matter of so great importance, that I wrote to him again. I am sure it will be very agreeable to this Society to learn that I have succeeded in getting Mr. Giffen, the eminent

statistician and political economist, to agree to pay me a visit during the session of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science to be held here in January next, and to read a paper before the Association. Mr. Giffen, as many of you know, is one of the highest living authorities on economic science, and I am sure that his presence on this occasion will be greatly appreciated by the members of the Association, and that it will give an impetus to the study of this science, which will bear fruit throughout all the Australasian colonies. (Applause.)

The SECRETARY apologised for the absence of Mr. R. M. Johnston, owing to indisposition, and read the following remarks, prepared by that gentleman in connection with this subject:—It is pleasing to observe with what enthusiasm His Excellency Sir Robert Hamilton, the president-elect of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, is endeavouring to make this, the fourth meeting, taking place in Hobart in January next, one of the most successful of the series yet held. The Association, mainly owing to the instrumentality of its present permanent general secretary, Prof. Liversidge, was founded in the year 1886, and has since held three very successful meetings; the first in Sydney, in January, 1888; the second in Melbourne, in January, 1890; the third in Christchurch, New Zealand, in January of the present year. The Association follows exactly the lines of the British Association, and like that Association its objects are—To give a stronger impulse and a more systematic direction to scientific enquiry; to promote the intercourse of those who cultivate science in different parts of the Australasian colonies with one another and with foreign philosophers; to obtain a more general attention to the objects of science and a removal of any disadvantages of a public kind which may impede its progress. Science in Australasia has already received a great impulse from these yearly gatherings, the direct and indirect results of which will have a most important bearing upon the intellectual, social, and material progress of these colonies. It is evident from what has been disclosed at the last meeting of the Royal Society that His Excellency Sir Robert Hamilton does not intend that one of the express objects of the Association should remain a barren phrase, viz.:—“To promote the intercourse of those who cultivate science in different parts of the Australasian colonies with one another and with foreign philosophers.” Already he has, through the energetic General Secretary (Mr. A. Morton, F.L.S.), received the assurance that at its next meeting in Hobart will be assembled one of the largest gatherings of scientific men of Australasia which has yet been brought together, including nearly all the most prominent names in various branches of science, art, and philosophy; and he has also endeavoured to throw additional lustre upon this gathering by cordially inviting as his guests for the occasion several of the most illustrious men of science in the Mother Country. One of these, Professor Huxley, has written a most cordial letter regretting that the state of his health alone prevents him from accepting His Excellency’s hospitality and denying himself the pleasure it would afford him to re-visit Tasmania, of which he has still many pleasant recollections. It is gratifying, however, to know that he has received the assurance that Dr. Giffen, LL.D., now created a C.B., one of the most illustrious economists and statisticians of Europe, is to become his guest, and will be present to take part in the work of the Association. In economic science the name of Dr. Robert Giffen stands in the very first rank of the most illustrious names in Europe, and there is no authority in Europe who at the present moment is held in greater respect, and whose writings exert a deeper and wider influence on the great political and social economic problems which at present disturb the industrial relations of nearly all civilised countries.

Of the many distinguished Presidents of the Royal Statistical Society of England it is certain that he ranks among the foremost, while his numerous contributions to the journal of that Society, in connection with important questions of the day, reveal what a marvellously wide and thorough grasp he possesses of the facts which bear upon the subjects which he discusses, and of the still more remarkable power displayed by him in the manner in which he brings his facts into logical array, and in drawing important conclusions therefrom. Perhaps in this respect he has no living equal in his own branch of science. The following is a list of the more important papers on statistical and economic subjects contributed by Dr. Giffen to the Royal Statistical Society since the year 1879:—(1) "On the fall in prices in recent years."—(Journ. S.S., Mar. 1879). (2) "The progress of the working classes in the last half century (presidential address).—(Journ. S.S., Dec. 1883.) (3) "Further Notes on the progress of the working classes in the last half century."—(Journ. S.S., Mar. 1886). (4) "Recent rate of material progress in England" (presidential address, Brit. Assoc. 1887).—(Journ. S.S., Dec. 1887). (5) "Recent changes in prices and incomes compared."—(Journ. S.S., Dec. 1888.) (6) "Accumulation of capital in the United Kingdom in 1875-85."—(Journ. S.S., Mar. 1890). Dr. Giffen's presidential address to the Royal Statistical Society in 1883, "The progress of the working classes in the last half-century" was a most remarkable one, and created a profound impression throughout Europe, America, and these colonies, and the effect on the minds of the leading statesmen of the United Kingdom is best indicated by the fact that at Mr. Gladstone's special request the address was reprinted, and widely circulated throughout the United Kingdom. Dr. Giffen is also widely known as the author of several important works on financial matters. The presence of such an illustrious economist will add great lustre to the coming meeting of the Association, and will be especially welcomed by Section F.—Economic and Social Science and Statistics—where his active support and influence will undoubtedly increase the interest and usefulness of its proceedings.

SOUTHPORT CAVES.

HIS EXCELLENCY said that there had recently appeared in the Press an account of some caves recently discovered at Southport. Mr. Morton formed one of the party who visited the caves, and brought away some specimens, and he thought it would be interesting to hear from him an account of that visit.

MR. MORTON said that an opportunity having been afforded to visit the caves in the vicinity of Ida Bay, near Southport, he took advantage of it, and notwithstanding the short time at his disposal he thought that what he saw was sufficient to justify writing to the Minister of Lands, drawing his attention to the very urgent necessity of having these caves thoroughly examined and a report furnished, with a view of having them protected, under similar conditions to the well-known Jenolan and Fish River Caves in New South Wales. As these caves were of easy access from Hobart, excursionists being able to reach them within five or six hours, they should undoubtedly prove a favourite resort to tourists and visitors to the colony. They were situated about four miles from Ida Bay, and a fairly good road led to them. On reaching the mouth of the caves it was seen that the entrance was through a limestone formation. There was a very strong stream flowing along the floor of the cave. The first chamber reached showed some fine stalactites, and along the floor some fine stalagmites were seen. On extinguishing the lights carried by the party the ceiling and sides of the caves seemed studded with diamonds, millions of glow-worms hanging to the sides of the walls and from the ceilings causing this phenomenon. Proceeding further, several chambers were explored, each

revealing grander sights. The time at disposal being limited, the party had to return after traversing a distance of about three-quarters of a mile, but from what was observed the caves evidently extended a distance of three or four miles. The only life met with in the caves were the glow worms previously mentioned. These caves, under proper supervision, should become one of the great attractions of the South.

Mr. BERNARD SHAW concurred in the recommendation made by Mr. Morton, and hoped it would be adopted by the Minister of Lands. He thought that there would be very little trouble in having those caves protected, as there was a station with resident police at Southport.

NEW ZEALAND EXHIBITS.

Mr. MORTON, as Curator of the Museum, drew attention to specimens of greenstone from New Zealand, also of axes and knives used by the Maoris, the latter being made out of obsidian, the gift of Messrs. A. Hamilton and F. R. Chapman, of Dunedin, New Zealand, to the Tasmanian Museum.

The Secretary read, in the absence of the author, the following papers:—1. "Results of observations of the transit of Mercury on May 10, 1891." 2. "The total eclipse of the moon on May 24, 1891." By A. B. Biggs.

JULY.

No meeting held.
