

Royal Society of Tasmania.

ABSTRACT OF PROCEEDINGS, MAY, 1900.

A meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania was held in the Art Gallery on Thursday, May 10, 1900, His Lordship the Bishop of Tasmania, Vice-President, presiding. An apology was received for the absence of the Hon. Sir James Agnew, K.C.M.G., M.D. (Senior Vice-President). This being the opening meeting of the present session of the Society, the Bishop gave a brief resume of the 1899 session's work.

At the commencement of a new session it may be as well if I put before the members of the society a few facts regarding the Royal Society and the Museum during the last 12 months, and then pass on to speak of our immediate hopes and intentions.

The Museum is constantly receiving valuable additions. Only the other day by the action of Mr. Morton a gift was received of English birds, some 173 specimens, beautifully set up.

We are met in the picture gallery, and it will interest you to know that one group of friends has given us pictures in the last year valued at £1,200. Others, too, have been given, making seven paintings in all.

Even these few facts will indicate how good a case we have when we ask the Government to fulfil their old promise to give us additional accommodation in the new wing, which has become absolutely necessary to us. The estimate of £4,000 was passed by both Houses in the year 1890, but in the time of financial depression it was impossible to claim it, and it lapsed. The Government has expressed itself entirely favourable, officially, to the estimate being once more passed. It will be fresh in your memories also that the Antarctic expedition was welcomed by an enthusiastic audience in the Town Hall under the auspices of the Royal Society. I think we may say that everything that could be done was done by our energetic secretary to re-

ceive the expedition fittingly. We are promised an Antarctic night by Mr. Morton as soon as the history of the expedition is made public, and I fancy we shall have to adjourn to the Town Hall if we are to find room for our audience.

I now turn to the future. Two sections will be at work, besides the central meetings of the society, the medical and historical sections, which, of course, feed the more important meetings. Who will take up the burning scientific question of the day? Shall it be the medical session or the whole society?

The most important subject I have kept to the last. It is known to most members that last January it was agreed in Melbourne that the next meeting of the Australasian Science Association should be held in Hobart. Our reputation for making such gatherings successful is, I regret to say, painfully high. All we can hope to do is to preserve our level. No effort will be spared to do this.

In the face of that coming meeting, would it not be possible to have the new wing of the Museum ready, or nearly ready. There is a work, too, which we may hope to present by that date. You are aware that we have one distinguished botanist among our members—Mr. Rodway—whose work is held in the highest esteem among his brother workers. Mr. Rodway has at length finished his great work on the "Botany of Tasmania," a work which is far ahead of anything that has yet appeared, and we are glad to be able to state that the Government will probably agree to publish it. It will be a noble gift to present to the association at its Hobart meeting in 1902. We have, however, another delightful prospect. It seems that the British Antarctic Expedition, which will, of course, be fitted out with the greatest care, and be as complete as human skill can make it, may be expected to visit Ho-

bart at the close of 1901, before proceeding south. Surely we ought to make every effort to hold the Association meeting at such a date as to enable all scientific men in Australasia to meet here to unite with us in sending off the expedition with the combined good wishes of all the scientific societies in this hemisphere. To compass this end we ought to be prepared, if necessary, to hold the association meeting in December, 1901, rather than in January, 1902.

We can depend upon Mr. Morton to watch events, and to inform us in good time what we should do.

We will now proceed to the business put down for this evening.

New Members.

Dr. D. H. E. Lines, Professor E. G. Hogg, M.A., and Mr. F. E. Burbury were elected members of the Society.

Paleontological Papers.

Mr. R. M. Johnston, F.S.S., read a paper "On the Further Notes on Permo-Carboniferous Fossil Cliffs at Darlington, Maria Island." "Observations regarding the discovery of a portion of a Fossil Reptile, found on the North-West Coast."

The papers were illustrated by lantern-slides, which the lecturer announced that he owed to the courtesy of the Sec-

retary, Mr. Alex. Morton, who recently visited Maria Island. The slides were prepared by Mr. Beattie.

Aerial Navigation.

Mr. E. O. Litchfield read an essay on the history and present position of aerial navigation, particularly with reference to a gas and screw vessel now in preparation. The lecturer explained that the invention he had to describe was a combination of the gas and screw principles. The field or aerostation had been highly attractive to experimental scientists for a long time, and particularly during the past century. The problem was—how to design vessels heavier than air which could be driven through the air? As concerned the lifting of heavy weights by gas, many satisfactory and convincing experiments had been made by aeronauts. The difficulty now lay in constructing a vessel so compact and substantial as to travel through the air. The vessel of which he had to speak would carry just sufficient hermetically-sealed gas to bear the weight of the structure. Ascent and descent would be accomplished by the upward or downward pressure of suspensory screws. Mr. Litchfield illustrated his paper with a number of interesting lantern pictures.

A vote of thanks to Messrs. Johnston and Litchfield brought the meeting to a close.