

JULY, 1899.

UNVEILING A PORTRAIT OF SIR
JAMES AGNEW.

THE WEST COAST MINING FIELDS.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE ADMINISTRATOR (Hon. J. S. Dodds, C.M.G., Chief Justice) presided on Monday evening, July 10, at the monthly meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania, and at which there was a large attendance, including Mrs. Dodds, His Honor Mr. Justice Clark, Mrs. and Miss Clark, Hon. Alfred Dobson, Hon. Ayle Douglas, P.L.C., Hon. C. H. Grant, M.L.C., Dr. and Mrs. Bright, and others.

Apologies were read by the Secretary (Mr. Alex. Morton) from the Senior Vice-President (Sir James Agnew, K.C.M.C.), the Bishop of Tasmania, and Colonel Legge, R.A.

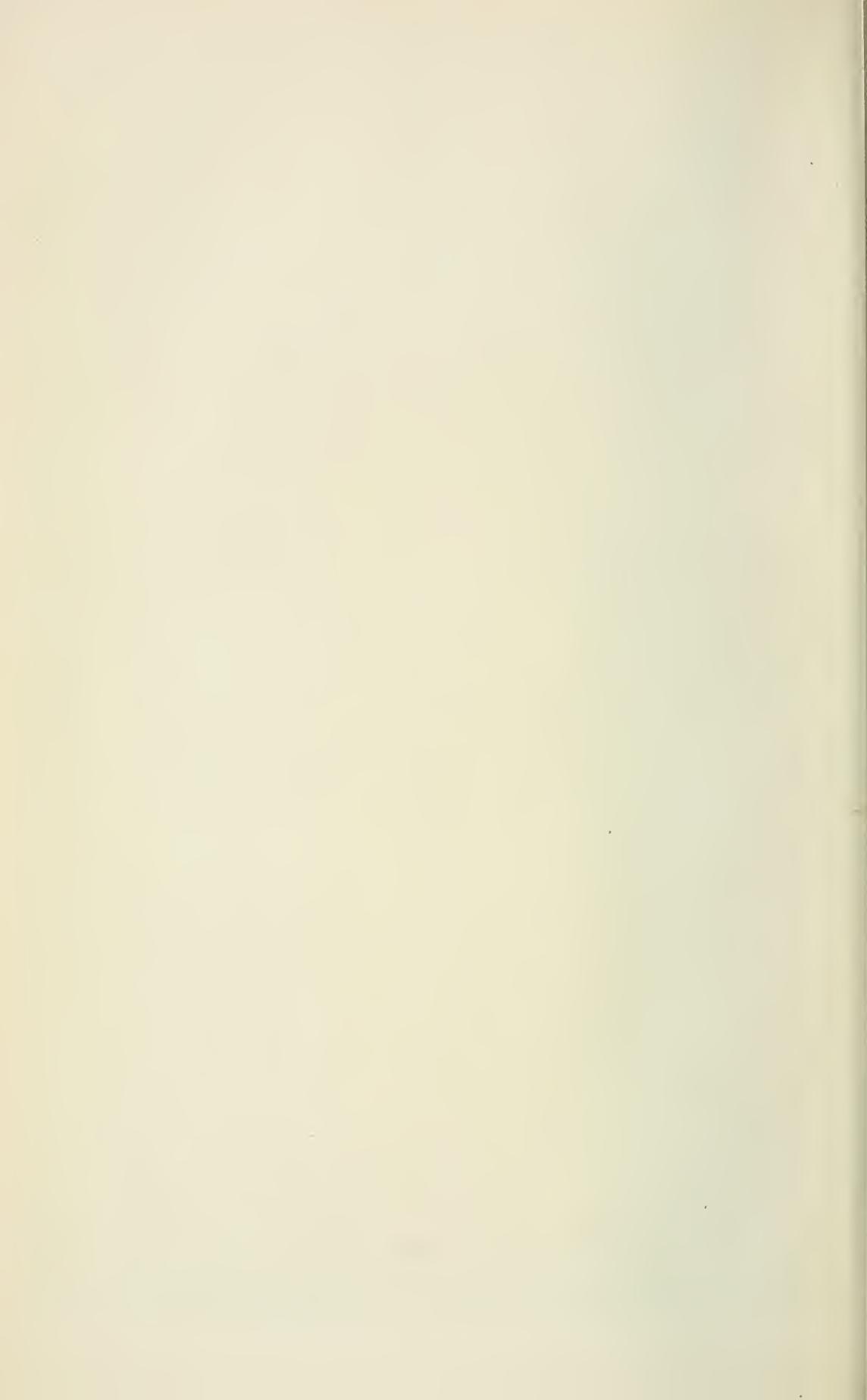
HIS EXCELLENCY said a very pleasing duty devolved upon him. He had been requested to present to the Society a large platinotype photograph of Sir James Agnew, the senior vice-president. He was glad to be entrusted with the duty, because it gave him the opportunity of paying his tribute of respect to a gentleman who had done so much for the Society. (Applause.) He did not know that anything he could say to them about Sir James Agnew would be new. They all knew how long he had lived amongst them, how great and valuable had been his services, and what an estimable colonist he had been in every respect. (Applause.) Probably it was in connection with the work of the Society that they knew him best. When he reminded them how much Sir James had done, how long he had been connected with the Society, how liberal he had been in giving of his wealth to do what was necessary in furthering the objects of the Society, and the many other works he had encouraged, he would be only repeating household words. Sir James had been a member of the Society nearly 60 years. He was a member of the old society, which, as they knew, was founded by Sir John Franklin in 1841. And when the present Society was founded by Sir E. Wilnot, in 1843, Dr. Agnew continued his membership, and in 1851 he was elected a member of the Council, and at that date his arduous work for the Society commenced. When they looked back to the year 1851 and remembered they were now in 1899, and that during all those years Sir James's

work had been untiring in every respect, they could form some idea of how much they owed him. (Applause.) In 1861, 10 years later, he accepted the position of honorary secretary, and from that time to 1893 continued to discharge his duties as such with unabated zeal and increasing interest. (Applause.) As regarded his public career, they were aware that for a certain time Sir James occupied the position of head of the Government of the colony, and for many years was a highly esteemed and respected member of the Legislature. During a short period of his (the speaker's) political career he had the honour of being associated with Sir James, and with another esteemed and respected colleague, the late Mr. Justice Giblin. They were together in the same Cabinet, and he could not imagine a more happy and harmonious Cabinet. At all events, he could not recall a more pleasurable time in connection with his public life than that. It would probably surprise a great many present to hear that in 1888 Sir James Agnew expended the large sum of £800 in importing salmon ova to stock the waters of this colony. (Applause.) This was, however, but one of the instances of the manner in which he had done good by stealth and how noble he had been in all his actions. During the long period of which he had spoken, Sir James had occupied the position of a most upright, honourable man in all relations of life, and had borne "without abuse the grand old name of gentleman." (Applause.) The Union Jack was then slipped off the elegantly-framed portrait.

HIS EXCELLENCY, in doing this, said he might add that Sir James wore on his breast the decoration which his Queen had conferred upon him for a life well spent. (Warm applause.) He moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Stephens and Mr. Beattie, which was passed amid applause, and the proceedings terminated.

Hon. AYLE DOUGLAS, President of the Legislative Council, who was received with applause, said His Excellency had eloquently spoken of a certain period in the life of their noble friend; but he (the speaker) had had the pleasure of knowing him long before that period. They met as far back as nearly 60 years ago, in Victoria, on an excursion to Mount Abrupt, one of the Grampians. From that period to the present time they had been friends, and he (Mr. Douglas) had





always cherished the highest esteem for him. (Applause.) If there ever was an honest and good man in any community Sir James Agnew was one—(applause)—and he was an honest man—an “honest man” has been described as the noblest work of God—and an ornament to the colony. (Renewed applause.) His Queen had decorated him, but he had never made a parade of it. They could not do better than show their respect for such a man, and the only pity was that there were not more such men in the community. (Applause.)

Mr. R. M. JOHNSTON, F.L.S., said he had been requested to say a few words from another point of view. He bore testimony to the aid and encouragement that Sir James Agnew had always given him and others in scientific studies. In his early studies as a naturalist 30 years ago, at Launceston, Sir James wrote to him most encouragingly. If he (Mr. Johnston) had done any good work for the Society it was to a very great extent due to the kind encouragement and friendship that Sir James had extended to him—(applause)—and Sir James had similarly encouraged others; he was himself one of the earliest observers in natural history in Tasmania. His attention had been called by their active secretary, Mr. A. Morton—who readily looked up everything of importance—to the minutes of the proceedings of the earlier days of the Society, which showed that Sir James in the year 1842 read a paper on the snakes of Tasmania. Upon looking it up he found that the paper was a most valuable contribution to science, and of no less importance to-day. The speaker referred to the encouragement Sir James Agnew had always given to art and art students in this colony, notably to Mr. W. C. Piquenit, who had now earned such an enviable reputation as an artist. Lastly, in speaking of the many valuable donations made by Sir James to the Library of the Royal Society, the speaker specially referred, amid applause, to the very valuable gift by Sir James to the Society of Gould’s “Birds of Australia and Asia.” (Applause.)

The portrait is the gift of Messrs. McGuffie & Co., of Elizabeth-street, to the Society, and is a striking likeness of Sir James in his court dress, wearing his K.C.M.G. honours, and is a platinotype photograph mounted and framed in rich gold.

CORAL REEFS.

Mr. T. STEPHENS, M.A., F.G.S., read

an interesting paper on coral reefs, with special reference to the Funafuti bore.

After giving an account of the reef-building coral polyps, their organic range, and the building up of coral islands, the author described the mode in which the calcareous and silicious remains of myriads of minute denizens of the surface waters of the ocean accumulated, under favourable conditions, to such an extent as to considerably raise, in the course of ages, certain portions of the sea floor. Darwin’s theory, which assigned subsidence of the land as the main cause of the growth of the coral reefs and islands rising from deep water, and the theory of Dr. Murray and others who regarded them as built up on banks which had been raised by oceanic sedimentation to within 25 fathoms of the surface, were explained by reference to coloured diagrams. Passages from one of Darwin’s latest letters summarising the arguments in favour of the subsidence theory were quoted, and a brief account was given of the three expeditions organised to test the matter by boring, with a result that old coral reef had been found at a depth of about 160 fathoms below the level at which it must have been originally constructed.

THE WEST COAST MINING FIELDS.

Mr. J. W. BEATTIE (hon. photographer to the Tasmanian Government) read a paper entitled “Notes on the country from Kelly’s Basin to Gormanston, *via* the North Mount Lyell Railway route.” The paper was elaborately illustrated by over 70 lantern slides, principally from negatives taken by Mr. Beattie, and from others kindly loaned by Mr. A. E. Edleston, locomotive superintendent North Mount Lyell Railway, which showed the railway construction works up to date. The lecturer dealt with the beautiful scenery of Macquarie Harbour, mentioning the different points of interest from Strahan to Kelly’s Basin, and contrasting the old days of the harbour with the present, views of Philip Island 1830, Settlement Island 1830, and Grummet Island 1830, being shown, with representations of the same localities as they appear now in 1899, Kelly’s Basin, with the great works of the North Mount Lyell Copper Co., their wharves, railway, and brickworks, were graphically described and illustrated. The Darwin and Jukes mining fields, and their fine scenery, were described and shown, along the railway, their immense future importance being specially emphasised, and, judging from the frequent applause which greeted these views, and also of the scenery of the railway route right through, evident satisfaction was

given. The lecturer, in concluding, considered that the North Lyell Railway would control nearly all the traffic of the Lyell field outside of the Mount Lyell Co. and Queenstown, and would also get the whole of the Jukes and Darwin country traffic, with that to the eastward, which has practically been unexplored, and when the company's smelters are erected at Thureau Hills (where a town rivalling Queenstown in size and importance would probably spring up) the traffic would be enormous. Both railways were considered most valuable from a tourist standpoint, the lecturer contending that they would open to the public our best type of West Coast scenery, hitherto closed except to the few, and that in

the near future they would become recognised tourist routes of great popularity.

Mr. Beattie, at the close, was accorded hearty and prolonged applause.

EXHIBITS.

Mr. T. Stephens exhibited a specimen from a very large block of pumice washed up in Sydney harbour recently; and presented for distribution a parcel of walnuts from a species (*Hickoria pccan*) indigenous to the Central and Southern States of North America. The fruit is greatly prized in the United States, and the annual export of pecans from Texas alone is valued at not less than £10,000.