

AUGUST 10, 1908.

The General Monthly Meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Monday evening, August 10, 1908.

Mr. T. Stephens, M.A., F.G.S., in the chair.

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS WERE READ:—

(1) On the Native Quarry at Syndal, near Ross. By Fritz Noetling, M.A., Ph.D.

The author first mentioned a reported aboriginal quarry at Stocker's Bottom, near Ross. Some thought it was a myth, and so he found it; but on further exploration he found such a quarry at Syndal. Hundreds of thousands of fragments that had passed through the hands of aborigines were found lying about. He exhibited specimens. From this quarry stone for the implements used by the aborigines was obtained. A vast amount of time and labour must have been spent in vain by the aborigines whilst shaping their implements, and in connection with these operations they used fire. The other quarries of this character in Tasmania, the lecturer said, were at Cole Hill, near Melton-Mowbray; a small one near the railway station, Pontville; one at Shene Estate; at Charlie's Hope, Plenty; the Great Lake; on the road from Campbell Town to Swansea; on the South Esk, near Perth; at Pipeclay Lagoon; on the Tamar River; and on Mount Communication, near Salt-water River. Most of these might, at any rate, be considered as native quarries. He referred to the flints discovered in the tertiary formation at Thenay, in France, as to the origin of which there had been much controversy.

Mr. R. M. Johnston spoke of the kinds of rock from which the aborigines formed their stone implements and weapons. Among the natives of West Australia to-day there were to be found the same primitive stone implements as were found after the Tasmanian aborigines had disappeared; the West Australian natives preserved their ancient chip flints for sacred rites purposes.

(2) On a Native Burial Ground at Charlton, near Ross. By Fritz Noetling, M.A., Ph.D.

The author remarked that Ling Roth's book on the aborigines of Tasmania had fully dealt with the character of these burial places. The one under notice had been very carefully examined. It seemed certain that the natives on this island burnt their dead, but differences of opinion arose as to their disposal of the ashes. It was pretty certain that they used to smear their faces with the ashes. Some were said to have put dead bodies in hollow trees, fencing them round with bushes. They knew that the names of deceased persons were never mentioned again, as the race were very superstitious about the departed. He believed there were regular aboriginal burial grounds, and his discovery on the Charlton Estate seemed to settle the question. There were heaped up a number of little mounds, in which large stones were embedded. There were no

bones to be found. The Charlton burial ground must be of great age. It was a question whether the corpses were carried to the burial ground and burned there, or whether the ashes of the departed were subsequently carried to the burial ground. He favoured the latter idea, a pyre having been erected and a body cremated at the spot where death took place. It would be interesting to know whether other similar burial grounds existed in Tasmania. He was told that there was one at Pontville, and another at Darlington Park.

Mr. A. J. Taylor described a burial place of probably a Tasmanian aboriginal warrior. He quoted Backhouse's and Robinson's descriptions of the incinerating process which was resorted to. The natives were very jealous of Europeans witnessing their burial ceremonies.

Mr. Bernard Shaw said the late Mr. Jno. Lyne used to mention a case under his own observation of the burial of a native in a hollow tree, but the body was afterwards removed.

Mr. Henry Foster remarked on the very few skulls of natives having been found, which was, no doubt, due to their generally burning their dead.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1908.

The Monthly General Meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Wednesday evening, September 14, 1908.

Mr. T. Stephens, M.A., F.G.S., in the chair.

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS WERE READ:—

(1) Additions to the Tasmanian Molluscan Fauna. By W. L. May.

This paper, a portion of which was read by the Secretary to the Council, is of a technical character, and describes the results of dredging near the 100-fathom line off the south coast of Tasmania.

Mr. R. M. Johnston referred to the two species mentioned by Mr. May as belonging to a family of fissure-grooved shells of very ancient origin.

(2) On Solar Eclipses, illustrated by lantern slides. By H. C. Kingsmill, M.A.

The author referred to the total eclipse of the sun, to take place on May 9, 1910, and the proposed visit of an English expedition to observe it in Tasmania. Owing to the rarity of solar eclipses, expeditions have generally to be made to distant countries by those who require to investigate the phenomena of eclipses. It happens that Tasmania is the only land in the world from which the total phase of that eclipse will be observable, if we except the icy regions near the South Pole. The central line of the eclipse would pass a little to the south

of Tasmania, whilst the northern edge of the totality would hardly extend to Launceston. Tasmania would have, therefore, on the occasion a unique importance in the eyes of astronomers, who would be attracted from distant parts of the world. There had been one astronomical expedition to Tasmania which led to important results, namely, the American expedition for observing the transit of Venus in 1874. The object of that expedition was to obtain data for a more accurate determination of the distance of the sun from the earth, which is the largest base line we have for astronomical measurements. Incidental to that expedition was the accurate determination of the latitude and longitude of a station in the Hobart Barracks, which was done by means of simultaneous observations taken at the Melbourne Observatory and by the American astronomers at Hobart. The Agent-General had forwarded letters from General Tennant asking for information as to eligible sites for the observation of the eclipse. Mr. Kingsmill explained and illustrated by lantern slides total eclipses of the sun with the corona in each case extending far beyond the sun as obscured by the moon. But for this a total eclipse would mean for the time being absolute and total darkness. It was found that when a profuse crop of sun spots showed the sun to be in exuberant activity, the action of this exceptional excitement produced a corresponding influence on the magnetic state of the earth. There was a large and valuable body of evidence available to demonstrate that there did exist some sympathy between periods of solar agitation and periods of excited terrestrial magnetism.

The Chairman thought there were three places which stood out as eligible for the purposes Mr. Kingsmill had mentioned: 1. Near lighthouse on Bruni Head (South Bruni), 335ft. above high-water mark. Access from Great Taylor's Bay. 2. Southport Bluff, nearly opposite lighthouse. Access from a jetty on the south side of Southport, with deep water near at hand, and good anchorage; thence two or three miles' cartage to the Bluff. Depth of water at the entrance to Southport, 10 to 17 fathoms. 3. Between Point Arthur and second look-out on south side of Recherche Bay, and about six miles south of Southport Bluff. Entrance to Recherche Bay has depth of from 8 to 16 fathoms, with good anchorage inside.

Mr. R. M. Johnston referred to the importance of the expedition to Tasmania, and hoped institutions on the mainland would join in the reception of such an important body of visitors.

Dr. Noetling enlarged on the grandeur of the total eclipse of the sun, which he had witnessed in India, and said that scientists were very keen on observations at such a time to try to discover another planet believed to exist nearer to the sun than the planet Mercury. At the forthcoming observations in Tasmania he feared the sun would be rather low down in the heavens at the hour at which the total eclipse would take place, namely, 4 p.m. Would not the top of Mount Wellington be the most suitable situation for the observations?

Mr. Piesse thought that the South Bruni site was the best of those mentioned by Mr. Stephens. Maatsuyker Island or Port Davey might be suitable if helpers could be got, as the farther west the better. He also mentioned positions near Daniel's Bay and Mill's Reef. He was doubtful whether any real advantage would be gained in going south of Hobart. Mount Rumney would be an excellent situation, he thought. Mount Wellington was apt to be cloudy in the afternoon, whilst Mount Rumney was not so.

Mr. Bernard Shaw moved the following resolution:—"That in connection with the proposed expedition to observe the total eclipse of the sun on May 9, 1910, a letter be addressed to the Premier urging the necessity for a careful examination by an observer acquainted with astronomical requirements of sites which appear most likely to be suitable for the purposes of the expedition and the collection of information on the following points:—Climate; protection required for the instruments and observers at the chosen station; amount of cloud and rainfall; liability to fogs; accessibility for members of the expedition, and for any other purpose; natural harbour accommodation; facilities for obtaining material and labour for erection of temporary buildings, and facilities for commissariat."

Mr. R. M. Johnston seconded the motion, which was carried.

OCTOBER 12, 1908.

The Monthly General Meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Monday evening, October 12, 1908.

Mr. T. Stephens, M.A., F.G.S., in the chair.

Messrs. E. J. Roberts, M.B., B.S., and Leonard E. Hubbard were elected Fellows of the Society.

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS WERE READ:—

(1) The Aboriginal Designations for Stone Implements. By Fritz Noetling, M.A., Ph.D.

The author points out in great detail that the vocabulary of the aborigines was very limited in extent. Calder, whose compilation was probably the most comprehensive, enumerated only 1135 words, some of which were unquestionably adapted from European sources. The results of his investigation tended to show that the aborigines did not have different names for the different kinds of stone implements they used. He thought he had proved that the Tasmanian natives only had one word for their stone implements.

(2) On the conclusions of Dr. Noetling respecting the Aboriginal Designations for Stone Implements. By Hermann B. Ritz, M.A.