

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.

Further particulars of the subject are given in the paper. The author remarks that the records were very meagre, and that these were made by men who had no special knowledge of philology. The number of words in the aboriginal language was small, much smaller than the lists which had been drawn up would lead one to expect. Many of the words, apparently different, he believed to be really identical, and the apparent difference was due to the habit the Tasmanians possessed, in common with the South Sea Islanders, of interchanging members of various sound groups.

Mr. R. M. Johnston said their attention hitherto had been confined to the things themselves, instead of to the language applied to them. Both the Tasmanian and Australian races would afford a great field in the future to the philological student, and Dr. Noetling had opened up a question that would be pursued with great interest. It was the beginning of a very important study in connection with the aborigines. He pointed out that already an important work had been performed in getting phonographic records of some of the old aboriginal songs and speeches by the late Mrs. Fanny Smith. He hoped that permanent casts of these records would be made, so that they could be preserved indefinitely.

Dr. Noetling thought that Mr. R. M. Johnston's suggestion that the records of Mrs. Fanny Smith's songs and speeches should be preserved, was a most excellent one.

Mr. Bernard Shaw said that he would bring the question of getting permanent copies of the Fanny Smith records before the Council.

The Chairman said it was a matter of regret that so little was really known of the early history of the Tasmanian natives. No attempt had been made to record their language until it had become to some extent corrupted by contact with Europeans and others.

#### NOVEMBER 16, 1908.

The Monthly General Meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Monday evening, November 16, 1908.

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland, K.C.M.G., President, in the chair.

Mr. Bernard Shaw offered the President the hearty congratulations of the Royal Society on his safe return to Tasmania. He had received numerous congratulations from various public bodies since his return, but none more heartily joined in them than the Fellows and Associates of the Royal Society.

The President, in reply, thanked the Fellows present very heartily for their kind welcome, which reminded him of the welcome extended to him by Mr. Morton upon his arrival at

Colombo, when first on his way to Tasmania. He had then telegraphed to assure them of the interest he would always take in the proceedings of this Society, and he could further assure them that this interest would continue as long as he had the honour to serve His Majesty as his representative in Tasmania.

The Rev. E. H. Thompson, the Rev. A. H. Mitchell, and Lieut.-Colonel E. T. Watchorn were elected Fellows of the Society.

#### REPORT.

The report of a Committee appointed to consider the question of a possible reduction in the rate of subscription of Fellows was read by the Secretary to the Council. In this report the Committee trace the history of the Royal Society for the past sixty years as gathered from the records in the Library. In 1848 the number of members was 123, and the subscription £1 per annum. In 1853 the number of members was 236, with a corresponding increase in the amount of subscriptions paid. In 1854 the subscription was raised to £1 10s. per annum, and this at first considerably increased the income of the Society, but in the succeeding years the records show a gradual falling off, until in 1861 the number of members, now called Fellows, is reduced to 106, the amount realised being £159 10s. In this year, at the Annual Meeting, a motion is submitted for a return to the original rate of subscription, but this is negatived by the casting vote of the Chairman. The report traces in detail the gradual declension in the next twenty years, the minimum being reached in 1880, when the number of Fellows was 68, and the income from subscriptions £102. The subsequent records of number of Fellows and amount of subscriptions were too incomplete to enable the Committee to trace the financial history of the Society in detail, but the tables recently compiled by the Honorary Treasurer give the receipts and expenditure for the four years from 1904 to 1907. They came to the conclusion that the main cause of diminished membership and income was the increase of the subscription in 1854. The Committee report the receipt of remarks and suggestions from Fellows resident in Launceston and its vicinity, who point out that all they get in return for their subscriptions is the publication of volumes of the Proceedings of the Society at uncertain intervals, and that the long delay in the publication of original papers places all authors at a serious disadvantage. They would favour a general reduction in the amount of the annual subscription as soon as it could be safely done, and an immediate reduction in the case of country members. They also suggest that balance-sheets of receipts and expenditure should be published in an improved form, and that the get-up of the annual volumes should be greatly improved; but these suggestions had been anticipated by the Council, and are already taking effect.

The report concludes with the following recommendations:—

1. That the rate of subscription for all Fellows resident beyond a radius of 15 miles from Hobart be reduced from £1 10s. to £1 per annum.

2. That the utmost economy be observed in regulating the expenditure already authorised, and that no additional expenses be incurred without the sanction of the Society.

3. That any balance available out of the income of the current year be expended on the binding of the Library set of annual volumes for the last nine years, on the binding of other important publications now useless for purposes of reference, and on the purchase of recent works in various branches of science, so far as may be found practicable.

4. That Fellows be requested to use every effort to so far increase the membership of the Society as to make it possible to effect a general reduction in the rate of the annual subscription at the end of 1909.

Mr. T. Stephens, as Chairman of the Committee, moved the adoption of the Report, to give Fellows present an opportunity of expressing their opinions on the recommendations.

Mr. R. M. Johnston thought that original papers read should see the light of day as early as possible. He would like to have an opportunity of looking into the report at his leisure, and for that reason moved that it be laid on the table. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brettingham Moore, but was subsequently withdrawn.

Mr. Stephens said that the Council had now made ample provision for the publication of original papers, and no such trouble as had occurred in the past was likely to happen again.

The President said that the immediate question before the meeting was whether the Fellows and others interested in the Society should be given an opportunity of carefully considering the report and arriving at a decision thereon after deliberation. So far as he was concerned it would give him pleasure to be present at a special meeting at which this report might be fully considered. It was, no doubt, a very important decision that the Society was asked to give, and should, if possible, be unanimous. This Society had survived for two, and very nearly three generations. That was a great record for things Australian. It fulfilled a real need in the community, by offering a non-political, non-sectarian, and genuinely scientific centre where original thought could find a sympathetic atmosphere. They could not expect that original thought would be forthcoming with the regularity of blackberries in autumn, and there must be ups and downs in the volume of interest, both as regards the readers of scientific papers and those who wished to listen to them. It should be their object not only to keep the Society alive, but to keep it alive in accordance with the spirit and needs and claims of the times. The amount of subscription was certainly a factor in that co-ordination, and he observed

with great pleasure that the financial tone of the report now before them was on a plain and satisfactory basis as to the difficulties that were referred to when they last met to discuss financial questions. The position was very clear, and, he would venture to say, more hopeful. Although the annual income was very small, the difference between it and the annual expenditure was a negligible quantity. Although there was no reserve fund, they had not to deplore any funded or floating debt, and they might refer with satisfaction to their assets, which consisted not merely of the library; and the position they held in having the right to use these premises, but also in the good will and position which the Society enjoyed. It was merely a question of using these valuable assets to the best advantage.

The first recommendation was put to the vote:—"That the rate of subscription for all Fellows residing beyond a radius of 15 miles from Hobart be reduced to £1 per annum."

Mr. Bernard Shaw said that the Council of the Society was exercising the strictest economy. As Treasurer, he was able to express a hope that at the end of the year they would not find their accounts overdrawn.

Dr. Noetling said there were so few members outside the 15 miles radius that the total loss by the reduction proposed would not be more than £8. It was felt that if the subscription was reduced to £1 the probability was that the number of non-resident members would be largely increased.

Mr. Lyndhurst Giblin said that no previous notice had been given of a recommendation which proposed an alteration in one of the Rules of the Society. Was it competent for the meeting to agree to such a proposal without the previous notice prescribed by these Rules?

The President ruled that the objection was fatal, and, after discussion, the consideration of the report was deferred to a special meeting to be held on Wednesday, November 25.

#### THE FOLLOWING PAPER WAS READ:—

An Introduction to the study of the Aboriginal Speech of Tasmania. By Hermann B. Ritz, M.A.

The author says that the life of a population invariably assumed a form which largely depended on the climate and geographical features and the facility of intercourse with the denizens of other lands. To the observing ear of the scientist the remnants of the feasts of the aborigines, their implements, and the scanty records of their words and doings spoke in a language of their own of those whose places we had taken for good or ill. It was to the words, the records of the actual songs of the voice that was still, that he would confine their attention, and their present purpose was to clear the ground and mark out the foundation for constructing a scientific reproduction of the language of the aborigines of Tasmania. As far as he was aware, the work done in that direction had not hitherto



been extensive. After stating his attempt to simplify the spelling, Mr. Ritz compared three versions of an aboriginal song, accounting for every word, and explaining the meaning of the sentences. He said there was no sign of any accident. The words seemed invariable in form and widely applicable in meaning. The words were probably supplemented by gestures to define their exact meaning. In that respect a parallel was found in the sentences of the Chinese language. The fact that the song existed in different dialects made it most valuable. Quite probably the song was connected with some important tribal ceremonies.

The President asked if the half-castes on the Straits Islands retained any traces of the native language.

Mr. Ritz said that it was scarcely possible. Constant intercourse with the whites would cause them to neglect their own tongue, except as far as they wished to keep it for secret conversations.

Dr. Noetling and Mr. R. M. Johnston spoke in high terms of the value of the researches of Mr. Ritz, and hoped he would continue his studies.

#### NOTES AND EXHIBITS.

Mr. W. L. May presented to the Society a number of new species of shells, dredged by himself and Mr. Hedley from a depth of 100 fathoms off Cape Pillar. There were 80 species in all, many of which had been found at a depth of 100 fathoms off Sydney, and at a similar depth off the coast of South Australia. Amongst them were specimens of Pteropods, free swimming organisms, which lived on the surface, but whose shells fell to the bottom when they died.

Mr. R. M. Johnston said that Messrs. May and Hedley had performed a very notable feat in presenting to the Society one-eighth of its molluscan fauna at one time.

#### NOVEMBER 25, 1908.

A Special General Meeting of the Society was held at the Museum on Wednesday evening, November 25, 1908, for the purpose of considering a proposed modification of Rule 16, and for other business.

His Excellency Sir Gerald Strickland, K.C.M.G., President, in the chair.

Mr. T. Stephens said that a Committee had been appointed to consider the question of reducing the annual subscription, and other matters, and had brought up the following recommendations:—

1. That the rate of subscription for all Fellows resident beyond a radius of 15 miles from Hobart be reduced from £1 10s. to £1 per annum.

2. That the utmost economy be observed in regulating the expenditure already authorised, and that no additional expenses be incurred without the sanction of the Society.

3. That any balance available out of the income of the current year be expended on the binding of library set of annual volumes for the last nine years, on the binding of other important publications now useless for the purposes of reference, and on the purchase of recent works in various branches of science, so far as may be found practicable.

4. That Fellows be requested to use every effort to so far increase the membership of the Society as to make it possible to effect a general reduction in the rate of annual subscription at the end of 1909.

He moved that the recommendations of the Committee be adopted.

Mr. Bernard Shaw seconded the motion, which was agreed to.

Mr. R. M. Johnston said that the Fellows of the Society were indebted to His Excellency the Governor for giving up his time, which was so much taxed in every way, to attend the meeting. He wished His Excellency and the Lady Edeline Strickland and family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

His Excellency, in reply, said that it was always a great pleasure to him to attend the meetings of the Society, and he wished it continued prosperity and renewed vigour.

