

## SEPTEMBER, 1890.

The monthly meeting of this body was held on Monday, September 15. The President, His Excellency Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, took the chair. There was a good attendance of Fellows, and a large number of ladies were present, including Lady Hamilton.

## NEW MEMBER.

Major-General Tottenham was elected a Fellow of the Society.

## ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION.

Mr. MORTON reported that at a meeting of the Council of the Society the following resolution was agreed to:—"That this Society desires to express its sympathy with the proposal for the despatch of an expedition to the Antarctic regions, under the conduct of Baron Nordenskiöld, and resolves that active steps be taken to collect subscriptions in aid of so desirable an object, the Royal Society heading the list with a donation of £50."

Mr. THOS. STEPHENS moved the adoption of the resolution by the Society. Most of the members would agree that it was desirable that the little known country in the neighbourhood of the South Pole should be explored, and something more known of it. It was now something like 60 years since the last attempt was made to gain any information about these southern regions, and from various circumstances that experiment was practically abortive. Perhaps the most interesting discovery during the voyage of the Erebus and Terror was the two magnificent volcanoes named after the exploring ships, and which are, perhaps, without a parallel in the known world. He did not think that the expedition should be taken up in a commercial spirit, as was suggested by some friends in the other colonies, and with the almost certain project of re-establishing the whale fishing. If people started with a foregone conclusion of that kind, he was afraid that they would be disappointed. It was better that the expedition should rest on the ground that it was undertaken in that spirit of enterprise which was the peculiar property of the Anglo-Saxon race all over the world—(hear, hear)—and with a desire to get rid of that feeling of shame which they must have at knowing so little of a country which was comparatively close to us. Much would be gained in the cause of science and otherwise by a well equipped expedition. It was incumbent on all those who could do so to help in removing some portion of the veil which now hangs over the southern part of the world. He had pleasure in submitting the resolution for the approval and concurrence of the members of the Royal Society.

Mr. JAMES BARNARD seconded. Usually the Council possessed the power to transact all business of the Society, but when the resolution agreed to involved the expenditure of money, it was thought advisable that it should receive the concurrence of members. He did not propose to speak at length, as he considered that the subject had been thoroughly thrashed out, and it was like "painting the lily" to expatiate upon it. They were simply following the example of the Councils of the different societies of Australia in voting this sum, which was in proportion to their limited resources.

Mr. A. MAULT did not intend to propose an amendment, but desired to explain why he should vote in the negative. It was because he so heartily agreed with almost every word Mr. Stephens had said that he thought the course proposed was unfortunate. They all regarded with something like a sense of shame the fact that they knew so little of a locality that was nearer to us than any other part of the world, but he did not think that that sense of shame would be taken away by the consideration of the fact

that the work was proposed to be done, not by us, but at the instigation, and with the assistance of persons on the other side of the world who do not belong to our race or speak our language. He very heartily appreciated the motives which had induced Baron Nordenskiöld to make this noble offer, and would not say a word against it, but he still thought that in a matter of this sort it was a disgrace to the Australasian Colonies that the work should be in any way taken out of their hands, or conducted in a manner over which they could not exercise control. The Colonies were perfectly willing, as he was sure they were capable of doing the work, and if they took the matter in hand he was convinced that it would be much better than if done under what must be the divided counsels of people on the other side of the world and those now taking part in it from this side. The Australian Colonies were now beginning to found a Navy, and he hoped that it would gain as bright laurels in the South as the Navy of the Mother Country had gained in the North. He thought that it would be a great pity if the carrying out of such an expedition as that proposed should be in any other hands than that of the Australian Colonies.

HIS EXCELLENCY: It would be more in order if you propose an amendment.

Mr. MAULT said he would rather vote against the motion a direct negative.

Mr. J. B. WALKER suggested that voting on the question should be postponed until other matters relating to the subject were discussed, and this was agreed to.

Mr. A. MORTON read a satisfactory progress report of the Joint Committee of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Victorian Branch) and the Royal Society of Victoria, on the proposed Swedish expedition to the Antarctic regions. It stated that the Council of the Victorian branch of the Society had been authorised to head a subscription list in aid of the proposed expedition with a donation of £200 from the Society's funds. The starting point was altered from "Hobson's Bay" to "an Australasian port," and communication had been made with the various colonies in order to get the co-operation of the various Royal Societies in an appeal to the public for funds in aid of the proposed expedition.

Mr. J. B. WALKER read a short and interesting account of the last Antarctic expedition, taken from Sir James Ross's book on the Antarctic expedition of the Erebus and Terror. The paper was illustrated by a map of the discoveries made, and in conclusion he said that whales existed in great numbers, and valuable seals might be obtained; while Ross spoke of enormous beds of guano which were practically inexhaustible. The result altogether would not, he thought, be of much value commercially, but of very great advantage to science in such problems as whether the South Pole, like the Northern regions, had once enjoyed a temperate climate, and what effect those regions had on the Tasmanian and Australian climates. The Antarctic regions were within a week's steam of Melbourne or Hobart, and he made an earnest appeal to Australasia to undertake the important work of exploring that region.

Mr. A. MORTON read a paper entitled, "What Science and Commerce may gain from an Antarctic Expedition." He referred to the scientific results that had been obtained from expeditions to the North Pole in the way of the confirmation and correction of scientific theories relating to ocean currents, magnetic deviations, climatology, geographical distribution of plants, animals, etc. In respect to commerce, mention was made of the discoveries of the White Sea route to Russia and its consequent trade, the establishment of the Spitzbergen fisheries, and the opening up of new lucrative whaling grounds in Baffin's Bay. The

result of Captain Ross's trip to the South Polar regions gave magnetic researches of the highest value. Although Captain Cook had predicted that no man would venture further than he had done, viz., lat. 71deg. 10min. S., Captain Ross had penetrated 420 miles further south from the point at which Captain Cook turned back. While heartily in sympathy with the proposed expedition under Baron Nordenskiöld, he thought that £10,000, the amount proposed, would prove inadequate to obtain great results, or to win more information than had been already obtained. He suggested that England and Australia should unite in sending a properly equipped expedition to the Southern Polar Sea under naval auspices and naval discipline.

HIS EXCELLENCY said that the Society would now further consider the resolution before it.

Mr. A. J. TAYLOR thought that as it had been decided that the expedition should be a joint Swedish and Australian one, it would be a pity to throw difficulties in the way of carrying it out. At the same time everyone sympathised with Mr. Mault's objection, and he suggested that the motion should be amended to express regret that the expedition had not been taken in hand by the Australian colonies.

Major-General TOTTENHAM thought the Mother Country should also be asked to assist.

HIS EXCELLENCY asked Mr. Mault if the motion as amended by Mr. Taylor would be acceptable to him.

Mr. MAULT said he did not wish to oppose anything that the Council of the Society thought expedient, but he thought that everything said subsequently to his remarks had confirmed what he had said. The noble words of the *Argus* in regard to the glory that awaits Australasia in accepting this duty, and the equally noble words of Mr. Walker, should have actuated a little more the different learned societies that have taken up this matter. It was a descent from this noble incentive to think that they were doing their duty by sending £5,000 from Australasia to help the Swedes to carry out the expedition. He could not accept any modification of his views, as had been indicated, but thought the question had better be debated on its merits, and the question decided whether they should or should not assist in this movement.

Mr. J. B. WALKER supported the motion. He would have preferred that England and Australasia should have taken up this work, but he was afraid that years would elapse before they were stirred up to the point of enthusiasm under which they would undertake the work. He thought that when Baron Nordenskiöld, an experienced navigator, offered his services, and also to pay one-half of the expense, if Australasia would supply the other half, it would be ungenerous to say that they would not help. At the same time he hoped that this expedition would be the precursor of one of which Australasia might be proud. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was then put and carried.

Mr. JAMES ANDREW moved,—“That the Council of the Society carry out the work in connection with the proposed expedition.”

Mr. J. B. WALKER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

#### STRIKES AND REAL WAGES.

Mr. R. M. JOHNSTON read a paper entitled “Observations on the Influence of Strikes upon Real Wages.” He described himself as one who regarded combination or co-operation amongst wage-earners as of paramount necessity to them, and that when all better modes of appeal for reasonable concessions are unavailing, the last and terrible resort “to strike” may in certain cases not only be justifiable but imperative. But a strike could only succeed in raising real wages when it was partial or confined to industries that comprise a small proportion of the com-

munity. A strike might be the means of successfully raising the status of some branches of labour that are comparatively underpaid or overworked ; it might raise the real wages of a particular country or locality which formerly laboured under the average remuneration of other countries; it might temporarily be the means of forcing the capitalist or employer to give a fairer or larger share of the profits of capital and labour, *i.e.*, machinery, plant, skill, and labour—but from the very nature of the common source of all profit and wages, *viz.*—the current products created by the combined services of capital (instruments) and labour), strikes could not raise the real wages of all wage-earners. Strikes could not increase the real wages or the purchasing power of a day's labour of all wage-earners. In a word, they could not divide more than what has actually been created or produced, although the nominal rates of wages and nominal prices of commodities may both be raised to any extent without real benefit to anyone. To secure a general nominal rise of wages in all branches of labour would further have the immediate effect of lowering once more the real wages of those who already had effected for themselves an advantage by successful combination or strikes. Strikes might possibly raise the nominal wages of workers all round a hundred-fold, and yet result in the positive lowering of the real wages of all workmen who, by means of organisation, hitherto have succeeded in bettering their condition as compared with their less perfectly organised fellow-wage-earners. It was the failure to recognise the essential difference between real and nominal wages that rendered futile the many schemes of sentimentalists, which have for their object the laudable design to improve the condition of the people. In conclusion, he thought it would be well for capitalists and wage-earners, employer and employed—whose interests as producers and consumers are almost identical—that when matters requiring adjustment are proposed, there should be greater facilities afforded to the Councils of both interests for securing a friendly settlement. To the absence of these facilities, and the adoption of high-handed action, was mainly attributed the disastrous evils of strikes.

Major-General TOTTENHAM suggested, as a solution of the labour difficulty, that wages should be fixed for a year, and a month's notice given of any change.

HIS EXCELLENCY thought it would be better that the discussion be confined as much as possible to the statistical and scientific effect of strikes. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. MAULT said that if the discussion was to proceed on the lines suggested, an opportunity should be afforded of considering the paper read. He would move the adjournment of the debate.

This was agreed to.

THANKS.

HIS EXCELLENCY moved a vote of thanks to the gentlemen who had read papers, and a special vote of thanks to Dr. Agnew, who had presented the Society with three volumes giving a report of the scientific results of the exploring voyage of H.M.S. Challenger, 1873-76. The volumes are beautifully illustrated.

The votes of thanks were cordially passed, and the proceedings terminated.