

NOVEMBER.

The monthly meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania was held in the large room of the Art Gallery on Monday, November 25th, Sir James Agnew presiding. There was a large attendance.

Mr. L. RODWAY read a paper "On some New Botanical Specimens."

A paper from Mr. WEYMOUTH on some New Mosses.

Mr. J. B. WALKER read a paper on "Abel Jansen Tasman: His Life and Times." He said that for long Tasman was neglected by his own countrymen, but at this late date a good deal of close attention was being given to the existing records of his work. About the time of Tasman the Dutch had become the carriers of the European peoples. Powerless before their enemies on land, the Dutch took to the sea. They cut off the wealth brought by Spain from the New World, and by that means found the wherewithal to carry on the conflict. The Hollanders swept the seas, and harried the Spaniards at their pleasure. Philip forbade Dutch ships to trade with any port of Spain. But the blow fell upon himself and crippled the trade of Spain. Various attempts were made to find a shorter route to India. Baffled in their search in the North, the Dutch turned their attention to the old route by the Cape of Good Hope, and along that line acquired the practical monopoly of the great trade of the East Indies, particularly of the Spice Islands. The Dutch also took possession of Japan and Ceylon. Sir Walter Raleigh gave some most interesting figures as to the extent of Dutch trade, and the effects of Dutch maritime enterprise. Such was the position of the Dutch nation at the time of Tasman. Amsterdam was the centre of the world's trade, and the richest city in Europe. In 1603 Tasman was born, in a small inland village in a remote province of Holland. The locality was inhabited by representatives of the fine Frisian race, who differed much from the typical Dutch. Tasman was probably a Frieslander. No information concerning Tasman's family was obtainable, and nothing was known of his youth. But after an apprenticeship in the fisheries of the North Sea it was natural that he should get to Amsterdam. The first authentic information concerning him showed him living as a widower with one young daughter in one of the poorest streets of Amsterdam. Tasman married again, and made his first voyage to the East at the age of 28. His promotion was rapid; from the rank of a simple sailor to that of a master, he rose in two years. On the acquisition of the monopoly of the valuable spice trade the Dutch concentrated all their energies. They succeeded—at the cost of much bloodshed and long-continued embitterment. Tasman's singular capacity soon made itself obvious to the colonial authorities, for he shortly had command of a small fleet in East Indian waters. Desiring thereafter to visit the old land, he accepted a subordinate position as mate of the ship *Banda*. On arrival he remained at Amsterdam for some months, when he returned to the Indies, taking his wife with him. In 1639, a year after his return to Batavia, Tasman was selected to assist in the work of discovery. Anthony Van Diemen was at that time Governor. Tasman was on service which took him to the coasts of China and Japan. Here reports again came of a golden island to the eastward. Tasman commanded one of the ships fitted out for the quest, being second in command. After long searching over a wide area the venture was abandoned, after the loss of 50 of the 90 men who made up the number of the expedition. The Dutch were very anxious at that time to discover the great south land, of which there had long been rumours. Already, before the expedition after the golden island, a Dutch ship found itself, by an error of longitude, off the coast of Western Australia. In a few years that coast was well known to Dutch mariners. Anthony Van Diemen at length fitted out an expedition

of two ships to discover the Great South Land, with Tasman in command, and Fischer, a famous pilot, second. The ships touched first at Mauritius, remaining there to refit and provision a month. They sailed, and got down to lat. 49deg. They fell off to lat. 42deg., and then struck the coast of Tasmania, somewhere near the entrance to Macquarie Harbour. Getting round to Bruny they tried to make Adventure Bay, but were driven out. Thereupon they named Frederick Henry Bay, now known as Blackman's Bay. Sailing from the coast they made New Zealand near Cook's Strait, and had an encounter with the natives. New Zealand Tasman held to be the veritable Great South Land. The Tonga Islands were next reached, and from there a homeward course was shaped past New Guinea. With the result of the expedition Van Diemen was not satisfied, but two years afterwards he again sent Tasman and Fischer out. Of that second voyage in 1644 no journal was kept. Tasman's services were recognised somewhat grudgingly by a small increase of salary. Of the rest of his life very meagre information was extant. There were no more great expeditions of discovery. Later, Tasman was suspended from his office as a punishment for executing a seaman without trial. Being reinstated after two years, he shortly afterwards left the service of the company. Of his last days little was known. He died in 1659.

Very admirable lantern illustrations were supplied by Mr. J. W. Beattie, and exhibited by Mr. N. Oldham.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the lecturer.

The Hon. ADYE DOUGLAS said the very admirable lecture they had just listened to was the last of the session. Their thanks were due to the vice-president, Sir James Agnew, and in moving that a vote of thanks be accorded him he would add the name of Mr. Barnard. Sir James Agnew and Mr. Barnard had belonged to the society for 54 years.

The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation, and the recipients briefly responded.

CLOSE OF THE SESSION.

The CHAIRMAN announced that the evening's meeting closed the session for 1895. He was sure all would agree that many valuable papers had been read and much exceedingly useful information had been gathered and ventilated during the session of 1895.

The meeting then terminated.