

11. "Descriptions of new Genera and Species of New Zealand Coleoptera," by Francis P. Pascoe, F.L.S. (*Transactions*, p. 402.)
12. "On the Anthribidæ of New Zealand," by D. Sharp. (*Transactions*, p. 375.)
13. "On the Colydiidæ of New Zealand," by D. Sharp. (*Transactions*, p. 390.)
14. "On a New Trilobite, *Homalonotus expansus*," by Dr. Hector, C.M.G. (*Transactions*, p. 602.)
15. "Notes on New Zealand Crustacea," by Dr. Hector. (*Transactions*, p. 472.)
16. "On the proposed Introduction of the Polecat into New Zealand," by Dr. Buller, C.M.G., President.

The Legislature having rejected the proposed measure for prohibiting the introduction of Polecats and other noxious animals into this colony, nothing now remains for us but to sound the note of warning before it is too late, and, by directing public opinion to the subject, to mitigate the danger of our being overrun with one of the worst of predaceous vermin.

For this purpose, I beg to place before the Society the following extracts from a letter which I have lately received from Professor Newton, of Cambridge, an acknowledged authority on all zoological matters:—

"In *Land and Water* for 8th July, Mr. Frank Buckland wrote that he had been applied to, by Messrs. Maconie and Cuthbertson, of Invercargill, to send out weasels to New Zealand (five pairs, at £5 each), to be let loose to check the superabundance of rabbits. Buckland said he could not get weasels, but proposed sending 'polecat-ferrets'—30 or 40 pairs! I at once wrote to remonstrate with him, urging him to do nothing till he had communicated with New Zealand, and this he has promised to do, but does not give up the notion. Harting, Rowley, and some one else have also protested in terms like my own, as you will see by *Land and Water* for 15th and 22nd July. I suspect Buckland will eventually drop the matter; but, meanwhile, it seems quite possible that some sheep-farmer or other (for with them began the complaint) may on his own responsibility act on this mischievous hint without waiting for Buckland, and then good-bye at once and for ever to all your brevipennate birds, as well as to many other of your native species, which of course have no instincts whereby they may escape from such blood-thirsty enemies—to say nothing of pheasants and the like, which you have been introducing at so great a cost, and your poultry. Here, as I dare say you know, the polecat (and the ferret is only a tame polecat) is the most detested beast we have, and, in consequence, has nearly been extirpated. In New Zealand (if introduced), it will undoubtedly become master of the situation. \* \* \* I trust that, among you all, you will be able to keep off this threatened scourge. Colonists in general have not been slow to hinder unacceptable importations from the Mother Country, as witness the historic tea-chests at Boston, United States of America, and Australian convicts. I have always understood that the latter were selected for the mild nature of their crimes, but even this was not allowed. There cannot be a doubt of how you should behave when you have a ship-load of known murderers to be let loose on your peaceful shores; and I conceive my duty as an Honorary Member of your Institute compels me to give you this timely notice,"

The answer to this will naturally be that the bloodthirsty invader will do good service in ridding the country of rabbits ; but the grave question to be considered is, whether, in the attempt to put down one evil, you are not permitting a larger one to grow up in its place. The polecat once established in this country, it would be almost impossible to extirpate it ; and the disturbance to the existing conditions of animal life, by such an introduction as that proposed, would be incalculable. It will, no doubt, be argued on the other side, that sheep are of more practical account to the colony than kiwis and wekas, and that, from the sheep-farmer's point of view, anything almost is preferable to the "rabbit nuisance." But the real point raised by Professor Newton, and deserving of earnest consideration, is, whether the object in view cannot be attained by other equally efficacious means and without the introduction of the pestilent polecat. The issue is an important one to every lover of natural history, and the members of our Society ought not to be content to let it rest where it is.

Some ten years ago, the same correspondent warned us that the colonists would "some day rue their zeal in acclimatizing the house-sparrow." His voice was unheeded, and, at a cost of over £100, a shipment of *Passer domesticus* was turned loose in our midst. Under protection of a false public sentiment they rapidly increased and multiplied to tens of thousands ; and at the present time, the irrepressible "sparrow nuisance" appears to occasion almost as much anxiety among our agriculturists as the "rabbit nuisance" does among the runholders.

Common experience teaches us that it is a comparatively easy thing to introduce animals into a new country, and equally difficult to extirpate them when once fairly established. In such a case as the present, it will assuredly be found that "prevention is better than cure."

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. 24th February, 1877.

Thomas Kirk, F.L.S., Vice-president, in the chair.

Minutes of last annual general meeting read and confirmed.

ABSTRACT REPORT OF COUNCIL.

Eleven general meetings have taken place since the last report was presented, all of which have been held in the lecture-hall at the Colonial Museum, kindly placed at the disposal of the Society for this purpose by the Governors of the New Zealand Institute.

Twenty names have been added to the list of members since the last annual meeting, making a total number of 203 at the present time, and the proceedings of the Society have been fuller and more lengthy than in any previous year.

Sixty-five papers and communications have been read on the following subjects :— Geology 6, Zoology 17, Botany 16, Chemistry 6, and Miscellaneous 20.

The Society's Library has also been increased very considerably during the year, by the addition of 166 volumes purchased for the Society by Dr. Hector. Besides these, a large collection of pamphlets and scientific works of various kinds have been presented by Dr. Hooker, C.B., of Kew, through Dr. Hector. The Society has also obtained very complete sets of mounted natural science diagrams, as well as relievo maps of various countries.

The Statement of Accounts for the past year, prepared by the Treasurer, now submitted, shows that a sum of £65 16s. 2d. has been spent on books, and £19 10s. on printing and binding ; while, in compliance with the rules, £31 10s. (being one-sixth of the Society's income) has been handed to the New Zealand Institute. The total receipts