

PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
OF LONDON.

SESSION 1859-60.

Eighth Meeting, March 12th, 1860.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, VICE-PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*John Ball and James Bright, M.D., Esqrs., were presented upon their Election.*

ELECTIONS.—*Sir John W. H. Anson, Bart. ; Professor Henry Attwell ; the Rev. A. J. Carver, M.A. ; Lieut.-Colonel J. A. Digby ; Lieut. the Hon. F. Fitzmaurice, R.N. ; Captain M. Petrie, R.E. ; the Hon. F. Walpole ; J. E. Anderdon ; C. J. Fox Bunbury ; William Coningham, M.P. ; J. B. Dasent ; J. A. Dickenson ; W. H. T. Huskisson ; R. F. Jermyn ; Samuel Knns, PHIL. DR. ; William Smith, C.E. ; and William Stirling, M.P., Esqrs., were elected Fellows.*

The Papers read were—

1. *South Australia: Exploring Expedition into the Interior of the Continent.* By J. MACDOUGALL STUART.

Communicated from the COLONIAL OFFICE by the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, F.R.G.S.

SIR R. MACDONNELL reports in his despatch of July, 1859, that Mr. Macdougall Stuart had just returned to Adelaide, having made another very extensive exploratory trip, aided solely by private means. His farthest point appears to have been about lat. 27° S., long. 135° E., a distance of about 90 miles beyond Major Warburton's farthest. The country improved as he proceeded, being formed of alluvial soil, and diversified by numerous small hills, varying from 100 to 150 feet in height, from the summits of which copious springs of clear water overflowed, while there was abundant and excellent pasture in every direction. He describes the dip of the country as being towards the north-west.

The CHAIRMAN said the discoveries were important, and redounded to the honour of the adventurous traveller, Mr. Macdougall Stuart, who had previously discovered an extensive tract of country, and had now extended his explorations still farther in a north-westerly direction. A former Governor of Australia,

Colonel Gawler, whom he was glad to see present, had always maintained that a line of communication might be found, through a well-watered and fertile country, from South Australia to Western Australia. The present discoveries tended in that direction, and seemed, to a certain extent, a confirmation of the views of Colonel Gawler. Sir Richard Macdonnell talked, indeed, of an expedition across the whole continent from Adelaide in a northerly direction; this, he confessed, rather startled him, for the most successful explorer of the interior, Captain Sturt, never arrived beyond a few degrees north, where he was completely beset in a saline and impassable desert. The present exploration, however, tended to the north-west, not towards the great saline interior, and so far it had been very successful.

COLONEL GAWLER, F.R.G.S., said that he could easily conceive that men of the highest science should be led to the conclusion that the whole interior of Australia was a waterless and impassable desert. He had had opportunities of forming an opinion from local observations, and he was gratified to find that they were being borne out by the present discoveries from the head of Spencer Gulf in the direction of the north-west coast. He quite agreed with the President as to the character of the country in a more northerly direction. Much consideration had led him to think that the surface-formation of Australia was something like a great crater; that the high lands all round the coast threw off but short watercourses to the sea, and had a drainage into the interior, forming a great inland sea, of which the wastepipe was, at some previous period, Lake Torrens and Spencer Gulf, by which the whole of the waters, or the greater part, found their way into the ocean. This opening formed the gate, he conceived, by which we must hope to penetrate into the interior, and by which the produce of the country must come down. It was satisfactory to know that in Spencer Gulf there were three good harbours: First, there was Port Augusta at the head of the Gulf; it could hardly be called a harbour, for it was really the head of the Gulf, but there was deep water close up to natural walls of rock, forming a very commodious haven for small vessels. Then, half-way down the western coast, there was what Flinders called "the lagoon seen from the masthead." It was a lake united to the sea by a beautiful little harbour, and when this last discovery was made he (Colonel Gawler) called the lake Lake Flinders, and the harbour Franklin Harbour, after the lamented Sir John Franklin, who was a midshipman at the time on board the ship from which the lagoon was seen. Then, below this, came that magnificent harbour Port Lincoln, in which the whole of the British navy might ride in deep water.

The account sent home by Mr. Stuart of the nature of the country, and of the probability of there being more good country, verified his own conclusions derived from the observation of atmospheric phenomena. His old hut at Adelaide, in which he lived for eighteen months, had a northerly aspect, and he observed, as an invariable effect, that when the wind ranged from north to west the sky was cloudy and the air moist and cool. Again, it was an invariable effect that when the wind ranged from north to east the sky became cloudless, the atmosphere lurid, parched, and dry. So much was he struck by these facts that long before Sturt penetrated into the desert to the east of Lake Torrens, he had marked the spot on the map as the centre of a burning sandy desert. Sturt found it so; his thermometers blew up with the heat, and his pork melted in the bran in which it was packed. This verification of his opinion as to the nature of the country eastward gave him increased confidence in his opinion of the country westward. And here again he was borne out by the report of the Port Lincoln settlers, that they never knew of a hot wind from the northward; and by the testimony of Mr. Eyre, in the very wonderful journey which he made from Spencer Gulf to Western Australia, that there was invariably a cool air and cloudy sky with winds from the north. All these concurrent reports necessarily led to the belief that there was in the

interior of Australia, in a north-westerly direction from Spencer Gulf, a large extent of well-watered country.

With regard to the rounded hillocks which Mr. Stuart discovered, he believed they were of volcanic origin, an offshoot of the great volcanic band which ran through the whole of the Indian Archipelago. Then, as to the existence of gold, he had much confidence that that would turn out to be a solid discovery. There was certainly gold in South Australia, as well as in Victoria. He brought home some specimens in 1841, and, reasoning from analogy, he thought it likely gold would be found stretching across the Australian continent to the Indian Archipelago, just as it had been discovered stretching along the whole length of the American continent. Therefore, he saw every reason to think well of the prospects of that portion of Australia, and he hoped it would not be long before telegraphic communication was established between the south-eastern colonies and the mother country by the line of the north-western coast, Java and Singapore.

The second Paper read was—

2. *Discovery of a New Harbour on the North-East Coast of Australia.*

Communicated by SIR G. F. BOWEN, F.R.G.S., Governor of Queensland, through the DUKE of NEWCASTLE, F.R.G.S.

A NEW and capacious harbour is stated to have been discovered in the new colony of Queensland, North-Eastern Australia, to the north of the FitzRoy. The party who made the discovery consisted of Captain Sinclair (the master of a little schooner of nine tons), accompanied by one seaman and two passengers. His exploratory cruise was planned mainly in the hope that a reward would be given for the discovery of a secure harbour north of Port Curtis.

Captain Sinclair started from Rockhampton in September, 1859, and followed the shore, anchoring each night and being continually pestered by the natives. On October 14th he had arrived at Glosster Island; the next day he sailed close up to Mount Edgumbe, and anchored for the night in a sheltered bay. The subsequent night he anchored inside an island, and when the morning broke found, to his astonishment, that the schooner was lying in a fine capacious harbour, sheltered from all winds. Within a cable-length of shore there is from 3 to 4 fathoms; in the middle of the bay, from 7 to 10. There is plenty of fresh water. The harbour is formed partly by islands and partly by sand-banks. One of the islands was between 5 and 6 miles in circumference. Beyond these facts no data of any sort have yet reached this Society. The harbour was named Port Denison.

The CHAIRMAN said he saw present an old friend of his, Mr. J. Beete Jukes, a distinguished geologist and traveller. Mr. Jukes took part in the survey made during some years by one of Her Majesty's ships round the coasts of Australia, and particularly examined the coral islands stretching away from