

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

By B. C. ASTON, F.I.C., F.N.Z. Inst.

Gentlemen of the Board of Governors:—

My first sad duty is to refer to those of our members who have died during the year.

Governor.—Richard Francis Bollard, M.P., born 1863. Minister of Internal Affairs since 1923. He sat in Parliament continuously since 1911. He was one of the most beloved members in the House, and was always sympathetic towards the applications of the New Zealand Institute. He was especially interested in bird-protection.

Honorary Members:—

Georg Ossian Sars, born 1837, for many years Professor of Zoology in Oslo (Christiania). He was eminent as a marine biologist, was an authority on Crustacea, and did much work on the New Zealand species. He corresponded freely with the workers in that group in New Zealand. He was elected an honorary member in 1902, and died 9th April, 1927.

A. Liversidge, F.R.S., born 1847. He was a student of Frankland, Tyndall and Ramsay. He was in 1873 elected to the Chair of Chemistry at Sydney University, a position which he held until 1908. He excelled as an organizer, originating the Faculty of Science at Sydney University and the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. His research work was in the domain of descriptive and experimental mineralogy. Few men have done more to advance science as a whole in Australia and New Zealand than Liversidge. He was elected honorary member in 1890, and died 26th September, 1927.

Fellow:

Percy Gates Morgan, M.A., born in 1867. He was Director of the New Zealand Geological Survey; was at one time a member of this Board, and was elected a Fellow in 1922. He was an indefatigable worker, and in spite of much administrative and editorial duty in the Department, found time to write many papers, covering a wide range of subjects, all of which are characterised by an unusual thoroughness and attention to detail. He died in December, 1927.

Members:—

Joseph William Poynton, born 1861. He was a magistrate who took a keen interest in scientific matters, especially those relating to geology and botany. He was successively Public Trustee and Secretary to the Treasury.

Sir Henry Brett, born 1843. He was a successful Auckland publisher, not only of newspapers, but of educational books and periodicals, exhibiting a high quality in the workmanship.

David Goldie, born 1842. He was a successful contractor who will be remembered from his gift to the City of Auckland of the beautiful kauri forest which bears his name, and a bequest of a thousand pounds to the Auckland Institute.

Peter Goyen, born 1845. He was a busy Inspector of Schools, but found time to study the natural history of Otago, and particularly the New Zealand spiders, upon which he contributed several papers to the *Transactions*.

Charles William Purnell, born 1843. He was an Ashburton lawyer and journalist; he wrote two books on law, and contributed several papers to the *Transactions*.

John Hardcastle, Timaru, contributed papers to the *Transactions* on Geological subjects in the early volumes, and published a booklet on the Geology of South Canterbury.

T. V. Hodgson, of the Plymouth (England) Science and Art Museum; he was a member of the "Discovery" expedition.

Charles Oliver Mules, D.D., born 1837. He was Bishop of Nelson, and took a keen interest in the Nelson Institute.

Publications.

The event of the year has been the successful issue of the *Transactions* as a quarterly journal. It was not to be expected that the change-over from the Government Printer, with his highly trained staff and exceptional facilities, to a private firm could be effected without considerable trouble and some deterioration in the quality of the workmanship. Difficulties now appear, however, to have been successfully surmounted, and it is confidently expected that the quality will rise to a high level, and the speediness with which the papers are published will make the *Transactions* the best medium for publishing original, purely scientific matter in Australasia. If authors will only take more care in the preparation of their papers it will greatly facilitate the publication, lighten the heavy duties of the Honorary Editor, and decrease the cost of publishing, which is the heaviest charge the Institute has to face. The cost of typewriting is so small that there is no reason why authors should not have their manuscripts retyped until a perfectly clean copy is available for the Honorary Editor.

As an example of what can be done where the author does his best to assist, there is a fifty page paper on *Polyporaceae*, the last manuscript of which was received on 21st August by the Editor, and the finished paper was issued separately with eleven pages of process blocks containing 20 figures on 18th October in the same year. There are other instances of shorter papers being published within six weeks of their receipt by the Editor. I notice some blank pages inside the covers of parts 1, 2, and 3 of Volume 56. These might well be used for enumerating the standard works on New Zealand science, such as the publications of the Board of Science and Art, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and the Lands Department.

In connection with publications, one must record satisfaction at the successful publication of the Canterbury Philosophical Institute's *Natural History of Canterbury*. It is hoped that this example will stimulate other incorporated societies to undertake similar work.

Suggested Amendment to the New Zealand Institute Act, 1908.

There are several directions in which the New Zealand Institute Act could be amended with great advantage to the working of the Institute.

The date of the Annual Meeting must, by Section 8, be held in the month of January. This often means that Members of the Board must break their holidays to journey to Wellington, or some distant centre, in order to be present at the meeting. It also throws on the officers' shoulders the extra work of bringing the books up to date, compiling, typing reports, and auditing accounts at a time when the staff and officers are struggling to get the ordinary work finished before the holidays. The result is that the quality of the work suffers. Another disadvantage is that the financial reports of the chief incorporated society (Auckland) are nearly a year old when received at the meeting. By having the financial year terminated on 31st March of each year this would bring the Institute's financial year into line with that of the Government and of the Auckland Institute. The Annual Meeting could then be held in May, or some time during the New Zealand University midwinter (short) vacation—a time which would probably suit professors.

Another amendment which should be made is the addition of provision for the appointment of a Vice-President, who should be eligible for reappointment year by year, and should be resident in Wellington. This would enable the high honour of President to be distributed without regard to the locality of his residence. The Vice-President could be left to act as the President's deputy on occasions when it is inconvenient for the President to act in person.

Section 2, which incorporates the societies forming the New Zealand Institute, requires redrafting, eliminating such societies as have become defunct, and I think making provision on the increase in active membership for any society now only sending one representative governor to send two.

I consider an effort should be made when opportunity offers to meet Sir Frank Heath's objection that the medical and engineering professions are not adequately represented on the board. Dr. Chilton, who is a Government appointee, might be said to represent medicine, and when a vacancy occurs the Government might consider the propriety of appointing someone who would represent the engineering professions.

Papers of a distinct interest for the medical profession are published from time to time in the *Transactions*, and one notices of late an increase in the number of published papers on chemistry and physics.

Now that the New Zealand Institute matters are attended to in the Government by the Prime Minister, as Minister in Charge of the Scientific and Industrial Research Department, it might be as well to amend the New Zealand Institute Act to make the Prime Minister a member of the Board of Governors.

I must again call attention to the desirableness of consolidating the statutory enactments regarding the New Zealand Institute, and incorporating the Clause 7 (1) of the Finance Act, 1925, under which authority the main income of the Institute is derived.

Finance.

The year has been such a busy one that the Finance Committee appointed at the last Annual Meeting has not been called together, but I would ask for its reappointment in the hope that it may evolve some method of augmenting the yearly income of the Institute. Provision should be made for the publishing of a decennial index of the *Transactions* on the completion of Volume 60, and the work of indexing should be begun next year.

Publication expenses are growing, the Library is growing, and the responsibilities of the Institute are growing. All call for provision for the future. One may look for a flood of original matter for publication, due to the increased sums being spent on research by the Government, and by educational institutions. The Institute must put itself in a position to accept for prompt publication any really worthy matter whether in the form of a paper in the *Transactions*, or as a Bulletin, or as a Memoir. If such matter is refused owing to lack of funds, the Institute will lose the high reputation it at present holds as a publishing medium. The Editor should certainly call upon such of the members who are in the habit of publishing in English or foreign journals to exhibit their loyalty to the Institute by publishing in the New Zealand *Transactions* concise abstract and reference of their work. The publication of abstracts of all work on New Zealand subjects published beyond New Zealand should be the work of a Committee of Abstractors. I think it would be well if abstractors for, say, Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, Geology, and Physics could be appointed at this meeting.

I should like to acknowledge the generosity of the Cawthron Institute and the Geological Survey Department for contributions to the cost of printing articles from members of the staffs of these institutions. Such action might be followed by other Departments, the members of which contribute papers costly to print.

Wealthy individuals of this comparatively small community might be asked to help the Institute financially. Their comfort and amusement is largely catered for by modern inventions, made possible by scientific research—motor-cars, gramophones, telephones, wireless sets, and electrical services. Their very wealth is possibly due to the physicist who first studied the phenomena attending the expansion and contraction of gases, and the chemist who first made superphos-

phate. I make bold to say that there are hundreds of cultured and wealthy citizens of this country who not only never make a donation to the Institute, but are not even members of any incorporated society. Perhaps they have never been approached. The creation of a body of patrons of the New Zealand Institute, each of which might pay according to his inclination, but everyone something, might be a means of increasing the income of the Institute. Such patrons contributing more than 21s. would, of course, be entitled to the annual volume.

Preservation of Natural Monuments.

The desirableness of recreating the position of Superintendent of Scenic Reserves has been the subject of a motion by this Board in the past, and the necessity for such an office must be apparent to all who have the preservation of typical areas of New Zealand primitive vegetation at heart. Some broader outlook than the mere preservation of vegetation is, however, desirable. I consider that some office or duty should be instituted, not necessarily entailing the appointment of new officers, but rather the creating of new duties to be appropriately laid on the shoulders of resident local officers, whose duty it should be to safeguard for posterity what are called in other countries natural monuments.

Some instances may make my meaning clearer. Near Fortrose, Southland, in Waikawa Bay, is a fossil forest which is washed by the sea at high tides. Similarly at Moeraki Beach, Otago, are the most perfect concretions in the world, known as Moeraki Boulders. Hundreds of these smaller boulders have been taken away to ornament Dunedin gardens. The Sandymount basaltic pillars are perhaps the finest in New Zealand. These three southern instances are geological features which it should be sought to preserve. Being on the sea frontage and Crown property, there is not the same difficulty in preserving the sites that there would be if they were on privately owned land, although in England recently a large area of valuable building-site land on the South Coast Downs has been preserved by public subscription. An instance near Wellington are the truly wonderful raised beaches at Turakirae. Another instance may be noted in the lava fields and volcanic cones at Auckland city. Such geological monuments as these stand in danger of being converted into stone quarries, or at any rate of being seriously damaged by the careless or thoughtless.

The vegetation features are, of course, more numerous, but suitable areas near all the chief towns or cities of typical primitive vegetation should be preserved. One need only to look at the beautiful town of Taihape to realise what a great asset its readily accessible reserve of black pine forest is to the citizens.

I consider that in default of a Government Department seriously taking up such a work of the preservation of natural monuments, a Committee of this Institute might be set up to report on the whole matter.

One must express satisfaction at the efficient administration of the Kapiti Island sanctuary, the Advisory Committee of which includes Professor Kirk. A visit to other sanctuaries and reserves by a representative of this Board might be productive of much good.

It is now my duty and regret to vacate the office of President, and in so doing I take this opportunity of placing on record my thanks to the Governors, and especially to those members of the Standing Committee who have helped me with the aid of their great knowledge and experience to carry on the business during the past two years.

To the officers, and especially to Miss Wood, I have been truly indebted for much painstaking work cheerfully performed.