

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
ASIATIC SOCIETY  
OF BENGAL, JANUARY TO  
DECEMBER 1900**

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Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, January to December 1900 by The Honorary Secretary

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**THE HONORARY SECRETARY**

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OF THE  
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

EDITED BY  
THE HONORARY SECRETARY.

JANUARY TO DECEMBER,  
1900.

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PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL,  
FOR JANUARY, 1900.

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The Monthly General Meeting of the Society, was held on Wednesday, the 3rd January, 1900, at 9 P.M.

T. H. HOLLAND, Esq., F.G.S., A. & C.S., in the chair.

The following members were present:—

Major A. Alcock, I.M.S., Mr. J. Bathgate, Mr. H. Beveridge, Dr. T. Bloch, Babu Nobinchand Bural, Mr. W. K. Dods, Mr. F. Finn, Mr. D. Hooper, Mr. G. W. Kitchler, Dr. S. C. Laharry, Mr. W. A. Lee, The Revd. H. O. Moore, Mr. R. N. Mookenjee, Mr. L. de Nicéville, Mr. F. E. Pargiter, Babu Yadunath Sen.

Visitor:—Mr. H. Ludlow.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

Twenty-one presentations were announced.

The proposed resumption by the Society of its original name of "The Asiatic Society" instead of "Asiatic Society of Bengal" of which intimation has already been given by circular to all members were brought up for final disposal.

The Council recommended the adoption of the proposal to revert to the original title, the proposal being fully justified by the fact that the Title-Deeds stood in the name of "The Asiatic Society."

The votes of the members were laid on the table and the Chairman requested any Resident Members who had not expressed their opinion to take the present opportunity of filling in voting papers. Seven such papers were filled in and with the 96 votes returned by members, were scrutinised, the Chairman appointing Messrs. D. Hooper and L. de Nicéville to be Scrutineers.

The Scrutineers reported as follows:—

69 For.

34 Against.

The Chairman read the following appeal from the Royal Asiatic Society regarding the establishment of a gold medal for the encouragement of Oriental learning.

In 1897 the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society established a Jubilee Gold Medal to be awarded every third year as an encouragement to Oriental learning amongst English-speaking people.

To meet the expenses incurred in preparing a design, engraving dies, and finding an amount to produce an income sufficient to defray the requisite charges a sum of about £ 400 will be necessary.

Subscriptions with interest of £ 300 have already been received and a balance of about £ 100 is therefore still needed.

Donations should be sent to the Chairman of the Medal Committee,

Royal Asiatic Society,

22, Abchurch Lane, London, W.

The Chairman announced that in accordance with Rule 37 of the Society's Rules, the names of seventeen members were to be suspended in the Society's rooms as defaulters for non-payment of dues.

The Chairman also announced that he had received two essays in competition for the Elliott Prize for Scientific Research for the year 1899.

Mr. T. H. Holland exhibited and described a new Indian Meteoric Iron.

This meteorite was found by a villager near Kodaikanal in the Palni Hills, Madras, and through the help of Mr. C. Michie Smith, Director of the Madras Observatories, it was secured in 1898 for the Geological Museum, Calcutta. It weighed about 35 lbs. when found, and was covered with a coat of rust due to its having, in all probability, been exposed for some time to the weather. There is no record of its fall, but a large meteor was seen eight years before to burst over the Pillar Rocks near Kodaikanal, and it is not unlikely that this "iron" fell at that time.

It is found to be composed almost entirely of nickeliferous iron, with included irregular mineral masses, measuring sometimes 10 m.m. across. Crystal structures—imperfect Widmanstätten figures—are developed by etching the polished surface of the iron with dilute acid; but beyond these tests, which satisfactorily establish the meteoric origin



of this iron, the specimen has not yet been examined in detail. The surface shows the "thumb-marks" characteristic of the holosiderites.

A certain amount of interest is attached to this "find" on account of the rarity of Indian meteoric irons.

Although stony meteorites have been found in great numbers, only one other iron has been obtained in India, and that was seen to fall near Nidigullam (lat.  $18^{\circ} 41' 20''$ ; long  $88^{\circ} 28' 30''$ ) in the Vizagapatam district on January 23rd, 1870. The Nidigullam meteorite\* weighed 10lbs. only; its model and a piece of the iron are preserved in the collection of the Geological Survey of India, Calcutta.

Major A. Alcock, I.M.S., exhibited and made the following remarks on some insects that possess special means of scaring their enemies.

The instances of natural protection here exhibited are all well known, and I claim no originality in speaking of them.

They consist of larvae of three species of *Lepidoptera* which possess special means—so far as one can judge—of scaring their enemies.

In two of these cases the protection afforded by the "scare" appears—at any rate in certain stages of existence—to be supplemented by at least one form of disguise, making security doubly sure.

The first exhibit includes enlarged drawings of the larvae of the *Lycænid* butterfly *Curstia thelys*. These larvae were common enough in my garden, during last rainy season, on young trees of *Pongamia glabra*.

In its youngest stage the larva very much resembles—both in form and colour, and also in the position that it usually takes up in or near the axil of a young leaf—a leaf-bud or a fleshy stipule.

In a later stage it has a large indefinite patch of white on either side of its body which give it a certain amount of resemblance to a bird's-dropping with the usual smear of uric acid.

In its latest stage the patches of white are well defined, and except that its prevailing colour is bright green, like the leaves on which it feeds, the larva has no special disguise-markings.

There now however comes in the scaring apparatus, though it, indeed, has been in existence from the first. This consists of a pair of brushes—much like bottle-brushes, or, perhaps, more like a thistle-head in seed—which can be suddenly shot out from two tall chimney-like excrescences on the dorsal surface of the last segment of the body, and when so extruded can be rapidly whirled round and round.

Whenever the animal is touched—in any of its larval stages—these brushes are ejected and worked with the greatest vigour.

\* Proc., Asiatic Socy. Beng., 1870, p. 64.

Mr. de Nicéville, who has made some observations on this subject (*vide* Journ. Bomb. Nat. Hist. Soc. Vol. III, 1888, pp. 164-168), considers that the use of these brushes is to sweep away louse-mites and parasitic *Diptera*. They are certainly capable of doing this very effectively, but I think they would also scare bigger enemies.

The second exhibit includes enlarged drawings of the well-known larvæ of the Papilionid butterfly *Propitio pammon*, which was common in my garden, at the close of last rainy-season, on shrubs of the Orange order.

In its early stages the larvæ of this butterfly is dull green smeared with white, and might easily be mistaken for a bird's-dropping.

As it grows older the markings become well defined, and the animal is an undoubted caterpillar, though two large eyalike markings on the second segment behind the head give it an ugly look.

But, like the caterpillar of *Cuscuta thelys*, it does not trust solely to its looks to deceive or frighten its enemies; but it has also the power, when it is irritated, of shooting out, from the crevice between the back of the head and the first thoracic segment, a pair of very alarming bright-red horns.

The effect is so startling, even to a man accustomed to handle animals of all sorts, that one can easily imagine that it would effectually scare a bird.

The third exhibit includes enlarged drawings of the well-known caterpillar of the Notodontid moth, *Stasopterus altermus*. These caterpillars, which can be found in Calcutta and its vicinity in the rainy season, are as extraordinary in look as they are in behaviour. When touched, they turn the hinder end of the body over on to the back, in the manner of an enraged scorpion, and then begin to tremble as if agitated by the most uncontrollable emotion. There are certain particularly irascible ants that behave somewhat in the same way, and there can be little doubt that the suggestion, which has been made, that the attitude of the alarmed *Stasopterus* caterpillar may be mistaken by its enemies for the offensive posture of an ant of enormous dimensions, is somewhere near the truth.

The insects that accompany these drawings are common enough, during the monsoon, in Calcutta, and I recommend them to your further notice. No observer can watch their behaviour without admiration. Of their power to terrify creatures like birds, whose high æsthetic and emotional development cannot but be accompanied by at least the germs of superstition, there can be no uncertainty.

Mr. de Nicéville, in criticising these remarks, considered that although perhaps the "scares" might frighten birds, their most

important function was to terrify ichneumon-flies and parasitic *Diptera*, which were far the most active enemies that caterpillars had to contend against. For this reason he thought that the more commonly received idea that the *Stenopus* caterpillar, when irritated, resembled a spider, was nearer to the truth.

The following papers were read:—

1. *Notes on the Sāri Dialect.*—By THE REV. T. GRAHAME BAILLY, B.D., M.A.

2. *Novelties in Muhamwadan Coins in India.*—By DR. W. VOST, I.M.S.

The papers will be published in the *Journal*, Part I.

3. *On the Anthropology of the Coorgs and Yeravas.*—By T. H. HOLLAND, F.G.S., A.R.C.S.

The paper will be published in the *Journal*, Part III.

The Chairman announced that it is proposed by the President and Council of the Society that a conversazione should be held in the Society's Rooms on the occasion of the Annual Meeting on February 7th, 1900.

Members who desire to invite visitors are requested to send the names and addresses of such visitors, ladies as well as gentlemen, in order that tickets of admission may be sent to them.

Members who desire to exhibit objects of Literary, Scientific or Aesthetic interest are requested to communicate with the Honorary Secretary as early as possible, in order that accommodation may be arranged for.

#### REPORT ON THE PROPOSED RESUMPTION BY THE SOCIETY OF ITS ORIGINAL NAME.

The Committee carefully examined the records of the institution and found that the Society was established on the 15th January, 1784, under the title of "The Asiatick Society," for the purpose of "enquiring into the History, civil and natural, the Antiquities, Arts, Science and Literature of Asia." At this historical meeting held at the Court House, Fort William, there were present, Sir Robert Chalmers, Knight, Chief Justice, Supreme Court, Fort William; Mr. Justice Hyde, Painsé Judge, Supreme Court; Sir William Jones, Knight, Painsé Judge, Supreme Court; General John Carnac; Lt.-Colonel Henry Watson; David Anderson, Esq., Henry Vansittart, Esq., Charles Croftes, Esq., William Chambers, Esq., Richard Johnson, Esq., John Shore, Esq. (afterwards Lord Teignmouth), Francis Gladwin, Esq., Charles Chapman,