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SOCIETY. VOL. I., 1886**

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R. A. STERNDALE & E. H. AITKEN

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EDITED BY
R. A. STERNDALE
and
E. H. AITKEN.



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JOURNAL
OF THE
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No. 1.] BOMBAY, JANUARY 1886. [Vol. 1.

INTRODUCTION.

In issuing the first number of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, it seems appropriate to give some account of the origin of the Society and of its position at the present time. It was founded on the 15th of September 1883, by seven gentlemen interested in natural history, who proposed to meet monthly and exchange notes, exhibit interesting specimens, and otherwise encourage one another. The subscription was purposely made little more than nominal, and the possibility of forming or maintaining a museum was scarcely contemplated at that time. For several months meetings were held in the Victoria and Albert Museum; but in January 1884, Mr. H. M. Phipson kindly offered the use of a room in his office in the Fort. This removal to a central situation gave an astonishing impulse to the Society. The meetings were better attended, the membership increased, and collections began to be made, so that in a very short time the necessity for more ample accommodation was pressingly felt. A committee appointed to seek for suitable rooms, having failed elsewhere, recommended the Society to ask Mr. Phipson to let one half of his office premises, including the room, of which they had up to this time had the gratuitous use. He consented to this, and so the Society continued to hold its meetings and keep its collections at 18, Forbes Street. Its progress was so rapid, however, that these premises were soon felt to be too small, and last month the collections were removed to larger and in every way more suitable rooms at 6, Apollo Street.

In the month of May last, a very important change was made in the constitution of the Society. The monthly meetings, being largely attended by members who took only a general interest in natural history, had naturally acquired a very popular character, and it was found impossible to introduce much strictly scientific matter on these occasions. It was decided, therefore, while continuing the good work already done in popularising the subject of natural history, to make better provision for the study and advancement of the science by the formation of sections as follows:—

1. Mammals and Birds.
2. Reptiles and Fishes.
3. Insects.
4. Other Invertebrata.
5. Botany.

Those members specially interested in any branch of natural history were invited to join the corresponding section, elect a President and Secretary, take charge of that portion of the collections which appertained to their division, and hold their own meetings, thus forming practically a separate Society affiliated to the general Society. All the sections have now organised themselves and made their own arrangements for carrying on the work of their respective branches.

This has prepared the way for another important and necessary step—the publication of a journal in which whatever of value or interest is transacted at the sectional meetings may be permanently put on record. Till now there has been no publication in the Bombay Presidency devoted to natural history or any of its branches, and, perhaps as a consequence of this, there is scarcely any Presidency or Province the fauna of which has received so little attention. It is hoped that the introduction of this journal will stimulate lovers of Nature, especially in all parts of this Presidency, to record and communicate their observations. In accordance with the character which this Society has assumed from the beginning, the aim of its journal will be, as far as possible, to interest all students of Nature, ever remembering that there are many Naturalists, in the highest sense of the term, who have not such a technical knowledge of any particular branch of the science as to be able to enter with interest into questions of nomenclature and the discrimination of closely allied species. The Secretaries of the Sections would therefore invite sportsmen

and others to communicate anything interesting or worthy of note, which comes under their observation, bearing on the nature and habits of animals or plants.

One other matter remains to be noticed. No public library in Bombay affords much assistance to the naturalist, and the absolute necessity of having a good library of their own early forced itself on the attention of the members of this Society. Unfortunately it is impossible to set aside any adequate sum out of the ordinary income of the Society for the purpose; but on two occasions special subscriptions have been collected and a number of valuable and necessary works secured, while several members have at different times contributed useful books. The Bombay Government has also been so good as to present the Society with all the parts of Sir J. Hooker's Indian Flora already issued and to promise the rest. With all this, however, it is impossible to say more than that a beginning has been made, but as the usefulness of the Society continues to be day by day more widely appreciated, the committee look confidently forward to the time when an adequate Library Fund will be formed and maintained by spontaneous donations.

LIST OF MEMBERS.

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