

White Island, belonging to the genus *Norbea*, hitherto only found in Borneo, and also a new species, *Mocou laxa*.

September 30.—Mr. Travers described the habits of the birds that frequent the lake in the interior of Nelson, mentioning that the blue duck (*Hymenolaimus*) does not exhibit solicitude for the safety of its young like other ducks. Captain Hutton showed that this supported the Darwinian theory, as the blue duck belongs to a genus peculiar to New Zealand when there were no destructive animals previous to the arrival of man, and in which genus, therefore, instinctive fear has not been developed. Dr. Hector showed that absence of fear is characteristic of most of the birds peculiar to New Zealand, but that the weka of the North Island is much more shy than the species in the South.—Dr. Hector described a portion of a wreck discovered on the west coast of the Middle Island, and pointed out that the coast line had advanced 300 yards since it was cast up.

October 14.—A communication by Dr. Wojeikof, of St. Petersburg, on the change of climate effected by clearing forests, led to much discussion, from which it appeared that this colony is now suffering in many districts from the sudden and severe floods that are due to this cause.—Captain Hutton read critical notes of the birds of New Zealand that accompany a descriptive catalogue he has published.

October 28.—Dr. Hector reported the result of Dr. Thomson's exploration of the cave in Otago in which the Moa's nest was found (see NATURE, vol. iv. pp. 184, 228). It is an irregular fissure in mica schist rock, about fifty feet deep, and with thin flat ledges or floors on which the bones rest. There are entrances, one from rocks on the mountain side, and the other by a funnel-shaped hollow in an alluvial flat. On the first floor Dr. Thomson found traces of a fire and charred bones. On the second floor, by scraping away the loose dust to the depth of two feet, leg bones, ribs, vertebrae, a pelvis, toe bones, tracheal rings, and pieces of skin and muscle were found. On the third floor were found fragments of egg-shell, and the bones of a bird with a keeled sternum. In Dr. Thomson's collection there are sixteen tibiae, so that he obtained remains of at least eight birds. A perfect skull with lower jaw and trachea attached, and a femur with well preserved muscular tissues attached, were found on the spot where the nest was obtained. From another locality in the same district Dr. Thomson sends twenty feathers. These were found by a gold digger eighteen feet below the surface. A report on these feathers by Capt. Hutton showed that they were of the form peculiar to struthious birds, but quite different from any known species. They are eight inches long, with soft yellow down on the lower half, and black above except the tip, which is white. The form of the feather is very peculiar, as it expands in width to the tip. He considers that the structure of these feathers shows that the bird to which they belonged was allied more to the American robin than to any of the struthious birds of the old world.

#### VIENNA

I. R. Geological Institution, Dec. 5, 1871.—M. Ernest Favre exhibited a geological map of the central part of the Caucasus Mountain chain, which he had surveyed last summer. The region which formed the object of his inquiries is limited to the east by the military road which leads to Georgia, to the west it ends with the Elbrus Mountain, to the north it is limited by the Steppe, and to the south by the Koura Valley, the mountains of Souram and the plain of Mingrelia. In this region the Caucasus rises to its greatest height; summits of 12,000 to 13,000 feet above the sea level being not rare. Granite and crystalline slates form large masses in the central part, further to the east and west they disappear beneath the younger sedimentary rocks. The lowest fossiliferous strata belong to the Liassic formation. The gigantic peaks of the Elbrus and the Kayhek on the north flank of the chain are formed by trachite.—Mr. F. Schröckenstein "On the Cypipka Balkan." The author has crossed the Balkan mountains in two lines, unvisited before by any geologist, once from Drawna by Selce to Kysanlik, and than back over the Cypipka to Grabowa. The series of rocks found there he enumerates as follows:—1. Crystalline schists; 2. Coal formation, the base of which is formed by quartzite, higher up follows calcareous slate, and finally sandstone and slate with coal measures; 3. Dyas; 4. Magnesian limestone; and 5. The Neocomian series covering the older rocks unconformably. The discovery of large coal seams in the coal formation near Radience is very important. German capitalists have got permission to work them, and have already traced a railway from the mine to the Danube.

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

ENGLISH.—Schellen's Spectrum Analysis: Translated by Jane and Caroline Lassell; Edited, with Notes, by W. Huggins (Longmans).—Deschanel's Natural Philosophy; Part III., Electricity and Magnetism: Translated by Prof. Everett (Blackie and Sons).—Zoological Record, Vol. vii.—Rudimentary Magnetism: Sir W. S. Harris and H. M. Noad (Lockwood).—Spiritualism Answered by Science: Serjt. Cox (Longmans).

AMERICAN.—Reports on Observations of the Total Solar Eclipse of Dec. 23, 1870, conducted under the direction of Rear-Admiral Sands, U.S.N.

#### DIARY

##### THURSDAY, JANUARY 11.

ROYAL SOCIETY, at 8.30.—Experiments made to determine Surface Conductivity in Absolute Measure: D. McFarlane.—On the Myology of the Cheiroptera: Prof. Macalister.

SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES, at 8.30.—Ballot for the Election of Fellows.

MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY, at 8.—On Surfaces: the loci of the vertices of cones which satisfy six conditions: Prof. Cayley.—On the Constants that occur in certain summations by Bernoulli's series: J. W. L. Glaisher.—On the Construction of large tables of divisors and of the factors of the first differences of prime powers: W. B. Davis.—On Parallel Surfaces of Conicoids and Conics: S. Roberts.

##### FRIDAY, JANUARY 12.

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, at 8.

QUEKETT MICROSCOPICAL CLUB, at 8.

##### MONDAY, JANUARY 15.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, at 8.

LONDON INSTITUTION, at 4.—Elementary Chemistry: Prof. Odling.

##### TUESDAY, JANUARY 16.

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY, at 9.—On a fourth collection of Birds from the Pelew and Mackenzie group of Islands: Dr. G. Hartlaub and Dr. O. Finsch.—Notes on the Myology of *Leiolepis bellii*: Alfred Sanders.

STATISTICAL SOCIETY, at 7.45.—On Licensing and Capital Invested in Alcoholic Drinks; Prof. Levi.

ROYAL INSTITUTION, at 3.—On the Circulatory and Nervous Systems: Dr. W. Rutherford.

##### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17.

SOCIETY OF ARTS, at 8.—On the Oral Education of the Deaf and Dumb: G. W. Dasent.

METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY, at 7.

##### THURSDAY, JANUARY 18.

ROYAL SOCIETY, at 8.30.

SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES, 8.30.

ROYAL INSTITUTION, at 3.—On the Chemistry of Alkalies and Alkali Manufacture; Prof. Odling, F.R.S.

LINNEAN SOCIETY, at 8.—On the Anatomy of the American King-Crab (*Limulus polyphemus*, Lat.): Prof. Owen, F.R.S. (Continued.)

CHEMICAL SOCIETY, at 8.

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