

UNIVERSAL OR COSMIC TIME.

Read before the Canadian Institute, 20th December, 1884.

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On the first day of the month the President of the United States, in his message at the opening of Congress, referred to the International Meridian Conference lately convened in Washington, in the following words:—"The conference concluded its labours on the first of November, having with substantial unanimity agreed upon the meridian of Greenwich as the starting point whence longitude is to be computed through one hundred and eighty degrees eastward and westward, and upon the adoption for all purposes for which it may be found convenient of a Universal Day, which shall begin at midnight on the initial meridian, and whose hours shall be counted from zero up to twenty-four."

The Canadian Institute is peculiarly interested in this announcement. No society, literary or scientific, has taken a more important part in the initiation of the movement to reform our Time-system, of which the success is, to some extent, indicated in the President's words. It therefore appears to me fit and proper that I should recall to your attention the various steps which from time to time have been taken, so that we may possess a record of the events which have led to the now almost general recognition of the necessity for a new notation.

Six years ago on several occasions the meetings of the Institute were engaged in discussing the subject of Time-reckoning and the selection of a Prime Meridian common to all nations. Papers were read and arguments were advanced, with the view of showing the necessity of establishing a cosmopolitan or universal time, by which the events of history might be more accurately recorded, and which would respond to the more precise demands of science, and generally satisfy the requirements of modern civilization. The proceedings of the Institute for January and February, 1879, give at considerable length the views submitted and the suggestions offered to meet the