

### The Royal Society of Canada.\*

WE are glad to learn that the annual meeting of the Royal Society, held recently in Ottawa, was one of the most successful in the annals of the Society. This is a matter of sincere congratulation. It would be a national misfortune if that great Society which has already done so much valuable work for the country should fall into neglect. Yet there is some fear of this happening; and there is one fellow of the Society to whom we are all indebted—perhaps more than any of us are aware—for whatever of vigorous life it possesses; we refer, of course, to Dr. Bourinot. We sincerely congratulate him on the success of its latest meeting, distinguished, as we are informed, by the presence of an unusual number of members, by the excellence and interest of the papers read, by a popular and very successful meeting for the recitation of Canadian poems, mostly by their authors, and for attendant circumstances which added to the *eclat* of the meetings, among which a prominent place must be assigned to the entertainment of the Society and its friends by their Excellencies the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen.

The volume now before us is the twelfth, completing, we might say, the first series of the publications of the Society; since it has been resolved in future to put forth the reports in a large octavo form, instead of the quarto shape hitherto adopted. In this change the Society is not merely following in the wake of some of the great English Societies, but is making an alteration for the better. The volumes already published are undoubtedly handsome and imposing, but they are rather heavy and unwieldy and the form now proposed will be much more convenient.

The contents of the volume are of great variety and of permanent value. First, we have the "Proceedings" for 1894, by which is meant an account of what actually took place at the annual meeting, the names of the members present, the address to His Excellency the Governor-General and His Excellency's reply; the report of the Council, a document of very great interest, containing, among other matters of interest, a tribute to the memory of Parkman, the historian of Canada, and a section on the "Work of the Royal Society." Next come a series of reports from the various literary, scientific, and historical societies of Canada. We observe with interest that, in answer to the question of the Society in regard to the hours of the day being numbered from one to twenty-four, the astronomers of eighteen countries were in favour of the change, whilst only four were opposed to it.

After lists of officers and members and of the previous presidents of the society, there is a new feature of some interest, for which again we are indebted to Dr. Bourinot, a Bibliography of the members of the Royal Society. The list of the publications does not seem to proceed upon a quite uniform principle, since in some cases only volumes seem to be enumerated, in other cases magazine articles, and even less important publications than these. This is not the fault of the editor, and we only note the circumstance for the purpose of gaining a greater amount of uniformity in the future.

Passing from the Proceedings to the "Transactions"—that is to say, to the account of the papers read and addresses delivered at the meetings, we remark that, as our readers are probably aware, there are four sections of the Society. (1) French Literature, History, and allied subjects. (2) English Literature, etc. (3) Mathematical, Physical, and Chemical Sciences. (4) Geological and Biological Sciences.

It is not quite easy to select papers for comment where there is so much that is excellent. But we might mention as being of special interest, in the French section, the article of M. Royal on "Le Socialisme aux Etats-Unis et en Canada," and that by M. Le Moine, on "Le Comte d'Elgin." In the English department we have a valuable monograph on Sable Island, by Dr. George Patterson, the Voyage of the Cabots in 1497 and 1498, by Dr. S. E. Dawson, and Cartier's Course, illustrated, by Bishop Howley. In view of the proposed commemoration, in 1897, of Cabot's discoveries, these papers are of great interest. In the Mathematical and Physical sections we have work so scientific as "Notes on Errors in Meridian Transit Observations," by Mr. C. H. McLeod, and so practical, as "Observations on the Quality of the Air at Ottawa," by Messrs. Shutt and McGill.

In the Biological section we have papers on the Forests of Canada, on Sponges from the Western coast of North America, on the progress of experiments in cross-fertilizing at the experimental farms, etc.

It is out of our power to do more than draw attention to the very important and valuable contents of this fine volume. Canada has reason to be proud of her Royal Society, and of the good work it is doing. These volumes will remain as an evidence of the intellectual vitality of her sons, and as a storehouse from which future historians and men of science will draw with confidence.

\* \* \*

### Our Schools.

THE ground upon which the advocates of the entire secularization of our schools stand is, that it is impossible to have any religious exercises therein without injustice and sectarianism. We say that our Ontario schools are non-sectarian, that they are simply Christian. But this, in the last analysis, is sectarian. Ontario is a Christian land only in the sense that the majority of the people are, really or nominally, Christian. The non-Christian minority, moreover, is quite large, comprising Jews, secularists, agnostics, and others. Besides those who, by their own confession, are not Christians, there are also multitudes who call themselves by that name, but are not recognized as such by the churches in general. There are, *e.g.*, the Unitarians. But a Christian here has no political or other rights over a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, or a Confucian. The letters "F.D." on the coins mean that the Queen is the defender of their faith just as much as the defender of the Christian faith.

There are, no doubt, arguments in support of a State Church in certain countries. But we, in English-speaking Canada, are always boasting that we have gone beyond this, that we have no alliance between Church and State. When we come to analyse this boast, however, there is nothing in it. We find that we have a state religion, Christianity, and that we recognize it in our schools. This is unfair to the many persons who, either by their own confession or the judgment of the dominant churches, are non-Christian. It is unjust that they should be forced to support a religion in which they do not believe. It is contrary to the view we profess to hold of a complete severance of State and Church.

But further: our schools are Protestant, and Protestant of an orthodox type. The version of the Bible which is read is the Protestant version. It is not the Douay or any other Bible: it is the King James version or else the Revised. The prayers recited are Protestant prayers; they omit many things which a Roman Catholic considers necessary, and they contain references to belief in which many persons do not share. It is true that Roman Catholics have Separate Schools, when they are sufficiently numerous. But they are not always sufficiently numerous, and they have no separate high schools. Agnostics and others have no separate schools of any kind. It is true, further, that pupils may be excused from attendance upon religious exercises. But all this does not change the fact that our schools are Protestant, and Protestant of an orthodox type. This is unfair to those who do not share such views; and these persons have a perfect right to complain that they are called upon to support that in

\* Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, for the year 1894. Vol. XII. Ottawa: John Durie & Son. 1895.