

C. O. S.

SOME EARLY RECORDS OF THE MAGNETIC DECLINATION IN NORTH AMERICA.

By JOHN LANGTON, M.A., PRESIDENT.

(Read before the Society, 17th May, 1865.)

Mr. Fletcher having announced his intention of reading to the Society a paper upon the change in the variation in Canada, as deduced from the records of the Crown Lands Department, I thought it might not be uninteresting to call attention to some very much more ancient observations, which I have met with in the accounts of the earlier explorers of this part of North America. The attention which of late years has been given to all magnetic phenomena, and the care with which observations are made in almost all parts of the globe, bid fair to give us some insight into the causes which influence the change in the magnetism of the earth, and into the laws which regulate it. But as the secular change in the variation is very slow, and even if it is really periodic in its character, it has a cycle embracing some centuries, we must look back to the records of the past to obtain any accurate idea of its progress. With this view, collections have been made of all recorded observations for more than two hundred years, and maps have been published as deduced from them, shewing the isogonal lines as they existed at different dates during the interval. The earlier observations, however, are both few in number, and surrounded with much uncertainty, from the imperfection of the instruments in use, and from the doubt how far they may have been affected by local attraction, the influence of which seems hardly to have been appreciated till a much later period. Observations made on board ship, before the subject of the ship's compass error had been studied, and detached observations where no others have been recorded at nearly the same time