

MEETING OF BOTANICAL BRANCH.

Held at the residence of Prof. John Macoun, February 20th, at which were present, in addition to the host, Messrs. Attwood, Cameron, Whyte, Clark, Bond, Reid, Groh, Newman, Campbell, J. M. Macoun and W. T. Macoun.

The subject for the evening's discussion was "The Habitat of Plants and Its Relation to Cultivated Varieties."

In opening the meeting, Prof. Macoun described the development of a well informed botanist. In the colleges he was trained to learn plants from a biological standpoint, and even was given some lessons in systematic botany. The relationships of plants to one another was also now given considerable attention in the class-room, by means of the improved methods of studying the parts of plants which had been preserved in liquids. But while he could from books and microscopical examinations get some idea of the conditions under which the different species grew in Nature, it was necessary for him to go to the field and see and learn for himself if he were to become accurately informed and make the best use of his knowledge. Having become acquainted with the habits of the wild species he could then put his knowledge to practical use. In the examination of land, for instance, he would be able to tell fairly accurately from the wild plants which grew on it, the character of the soil and whether it was dry, moist or wet. In exploring or surveying unsettled districts it would be possible to tell by analogy what the climate was likely to be from the plants which grew there and which grew in some settled district. Prof. Macoun told of how he had used his knowledge in this respect when he explored the Northwest about thirty years ago. Finding wild species of grasses there which ripened well and knowing that the same species grew and ripened at Belleville, Ont., in about the same season as wheat, he used this knowledge in forming his conclusion that immense areas in the Northwest were suited for wheat growing. Considerable discussion followed bearing on the hardiness of plants, especially in regard to the cause of apple tree killing in the Northwest. The conclusion reached by a number of the members was that the trees were dried out owing to long continued, severe cold and drying winds. It was felt, however, that when the newer and hardier sorts were more widely tested, it would be found that abundance of apples could be grown in many sections. This part of the discussion brought out the fact that fruits from wild species in cold climates did better in cool soils than those from a comparatively warm climate, instances being on the one side the gooseberry, raspberry and currant, and on the other the peach.

W. T. M.