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A National Museum.

The attention of our legislators has again been directed to the oft-mooted question of a new building for a Geological Museum, and as in former days when this subject came before the public it appears to have been favorably received by all parties. The editorials which have appeared in the daily papers, representing all shades of political opinion have been uniformly favorable to the scheme and every one interested apparently desires to see the present eminently unsatisfactory condition of things, as regards the housing and display of the magnificent collections of minerals, rocks, and specimens of natural history, which have been made by the staff of the Geological Survey of Canada during the last fifty years, changed for the better. The question is not in any sense a local one except in the matter of mere building, but concerns every portion of Canada: since within the Museum walls are gathered, not only the representative specimens, illustrative of every mining location from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but also the specimens illustrative of the rock formations as well as the type specimens of fossils by which the age of the several geological formations have been determined and these have been brought together from every corner of the Dominion. Many of these are of immense scientific value not only to Canada, but, they have been studied by the scientific men interested in the subject of geology from nearly every civilized country where geological surveys are carried on.

The subject of the new Museum was introduced by Mr. N. A. Belcourt, Q.C., M.P., one of the Members for the city of Ottawa, in a capital practical speech, in which the merits of the question were fairly and ably presented, and the reply of the Hon. Mr. Laurier would appear to indicate that at last the Government of the day is disposed to move in the matter and to take active steps in the direction which has been indicated for so many years by all those interested in the development of the mining industries of the Dominion.

From the remarks one hears on every hand relating to this subject it may be fairly presumed that the great majority of our legislators of all shades of politics are disposed to support any reasonable scheme that may be brought forward by the cabinet in voting a certain sum of money towards the erection of a commodious, suitable, and fire-proof museum building. The question has repeatedly been before the members of the Government, and but little opposition has ever been expressed towards the scheme, but for some unexplained reason the decisive step of voting the necessary funds has never been reached.

While the necessity of making a change in the Museum location has ever been acknowledged, the matter has moved slowly, while in

the meantime the risk of destruction, which has been repeatedly pointed out, continues, and the stability of the present building, under its great load of collections, becomes less year by year; so that from time to time the assistance of the Public Works Department has to be invoked and new relays of timber supports inserted to prevent a general collapse of the structure. This would inevitably have occurred long since had not such measures been promptly taken.

The history of the Survey, and the scope of its operations has already appeared in the pages of the REVIEW in a paper read before the Quebec Mining Association by Dr. Ellis several years ago. Originally located in small apartments in St. Gabriel street, Montreal, at the corner of St. James, in the year 1843, the collections grew so rapidly that the staff was at length obliged to secure additional accommodation in the block adjoining. Here the work of the Survey was carried on under the able management of its founder and first director, Sir W. E. Logan, until 1869, with a somewhat limited staff, most of whom have passed over to the great majority. In the autumn of that year the control of the department was assumed by Dr. Selwyn, and the offices remained in the same place, though the staff was greatly crowded through lack of proper space, until 1880-81. At that time the yearly number of visitors rarely exceeded 1,000 persons, and the interest taken by the citizens of Montreal as a whole, to judge from their familiarity with the work that there went on, was apparently not very great. Upon the decision of the Government to remove the staff and collections to Ottawa, presumably for centralization and better supervision in the interests of the Department, the citizens of Montreal were at once aroused to the advantages which accrued to the city from the presence of the Institution in their midst, and made strenuous efforts to prevent the carrying out of the Government's plan.

The scheme of removal was, however, successfully achieved, and the old offices and Museum building on St. Gabriel street were abandoned. The new quarters in Ottawa were supposed to be merely temporary or to be used until such time as the Government could decide upon some fitting place where the collections, then grown to large size, could be safely and suitably housed and placed on exhibition. The staff, which in Montreal was small, speedily increased in numbers in view of the great increase of work thrown upon it through the opening of the new territory in the west, and this increase in the number of the working parties soon made a marked increase in the size of the collections illustrative of the mineral wealth and the fossil remains, found at many points. The establishment of the sub-departments of Natural History, such as Botany, Ornithology, Ethnology, &c., also made calls for large additions to the Museum space so that the collections of the various branches speedily became so large that further