

assemblies and its hospitality those eminent strangers who come from foreign lands, rises almost above the sphere of private friendship, and partakes of the dignity of a compact between all the nations of the earth. But it is not merely in its magnitude and universality, and consequently higher power of stimulating intellect through sympathy, that this Association differs from others. It differs also from them in its constitution and details; in the migratory character of its meetings, which visit, for a week each year, place after place in succession, so as to indulge and stimulate all, without wearying or burdening any; in encouraging oral discussion, throughout its several sections, as the principal medium of making known among members the opinions, views and discoveries of each other, in calling upon eminent men to prepare reports upon the existing state of knowledge in the principal departments of science; and in publishing only abstracts or notices of all those other contributions which it has not, as a body, called for; in short, in attempting to induce men of science to work more together than they do elsewhere, to establish a system of more strict co-operation between the labourers in one common field, and thus to effect, more fully than other societies can do, the combination of intellectual exertions. The *discussions* in its sections are more animated, comprehensive and instructive, and make minds which were strangers more intimately acquainted with each other than can be supposed to be the case in any less general body; the *general meetings* bring together the cultivators of all different departments of science; and even the less formal *conversations* which take place in its halls of assembly during every pause of business, are themselves the working together of mind with mind, and not only excite but *are* co-operation.

It is this personal intercourse with the great scientific and learned men of the age, which in itself constitutes the principal charm of such meetings. How, for instance, would we have delighted to listen to a Newton, had he condescended to converse on the great truths of Astronomy; to a Jussieu, imparting to a circle of inmates in his own garden at Trianon, those glimpses with respect to the natural relations of plants, which he found it so difficult to reduce to writing; or to a Linnæus, discussing at Oxford his then novel views with respect to the vegetable kingdom, and winning from the reluctant Dillenius, a tardy acknowledgment of their merits? These great men have passed away; but we have others, in their own sphere and degree, who, when