

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION MEETING.

— A feast
Of wonder out of west and east.

The meeting of the British Association at Montreal is one of the characteristic events of the age. The commercial John Bull has long since made the seas highways of transportation and travel. To-day the scientific John Bull takes advantage of his own inventions, and eight hundred members of the British Association cross and re-cross in magnificent steamships three thousand miles of stormy Atlantic to attend an annual meeting. It can hardly be said henceforth that Mr. Bull is wholly controlled by insular ideas. A few Canadians thought it would largely increase the interest in science in Canada, and at the same time make the great and varied resources of this country more widely known in Europe, were the Association to hold its assembly of 1884 within the boundaries of the Dominion. The Parliament of Canada placed \$25,000 at the disposal of the committee inviting the Association. Notwithstanding that all previous meetings in its history had been held in Great Britain or Ireland, the Canadian invitation was cordially accepted, and the latter days of August and the early days of September witnessed the extraordinary gathering of British scientists in Montreal.

The total enrolment of members, including Canadians, amounted to 1,773. It would be a mistake to suppose that the majority of these members have any but the most moderate claims to be considered scientific men, save that they pay the annual fee and share in the hospitalities extended to the Association. But it is to be borne in mind that a full treasury is essential to the performance of work through the year by the various scientific committees which after all constitute the brain of the society.

Lord Rayleigh presided at the meeting of the Association. He is 42 years old, and is Professor of experimental physics and of mathematics in Cambridge University. Sir William Thomson presided over the section devoted to mathematical and physical science, with Prof. J. B. Cherriman and J. W. L. Glaisher, the aeronautic celebrity, as vice-presidents; Prof. H. E. Roscoe over the section of chemical science, assisted by Prof. Dewar and B. J. Harrington; W. T. Blandford over that of geology, assisted by Prof. T. Rupert Jones and A. R. Selwyn of the Canadian Survey; Prof. H. N. Moseley over that of biology, with G. E. Dobson and Prof. R. G. Lawson assisting; the geographical section by Gen. J. H. Lefroy, assisted by Col. Rhodes and P. L. Selater; the section devote

to economic science and statistics was presided over by Sir Richard Temple assisted by J. B. Martin and Prof. J. Clark Murray; the mechanical science section by Sir F. J. Braunwell, assisted by Prof. H. T. Bovey and W. H. Preece; while the section of anthropology was presided over by Prof. E. B. Taylor, aided by Profs. W. Boyd Dawkins and Daniel Wilson.

A number of the fellows of the American Association were present by invitation, among whom were James Hall, Asa Gray, Dr. Youmans and Lieut. Greeley. It was a subject of regret that many distinguished British scientists were absent, of whom were Tyndall, Huxley, Joseph Dalton Hooker, and Sir John Lubbock. A writer in the *Week* notes the absence of Prof. Clifford! Poor Clifford passed over to the majority long since.

It would be idle to attempt in our limited space any special account of the transactions of the Association. The address of Lord Rayleigh, the President, was largely a popular exposition of recent progress in different great departments of physical science.

"It is remarkable," he said, "how many of the playthings of our childhood gives rise to questions of the deepest scientific interest. The top is or may be understood, but a complete comprehension of the kite and of the soap bubble would carry us far beyond our present state of knowledge."

Sir William Thomson read a paper on the "Kinetic Theory of matter," in which he said:—

"The well known kinetic theory of gases is a step so important in the way of explaining seemingly static properties of matter by motion that it is scarcely possible to help anticipating in idea the arrival at a complete theory of matter, in which all its properties will be seen to be merely attributes of motion. If we are to look for the origin of this idea we must go back to Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius."

Prof. H. E. Roscoe reviewed the progress of chemistry between 1848 and 1884; and Prof. H. N. Moseley addressed the biological section on the phenomena of pelagic and deep-sea life. Sir Richard Temple presented a most elaborate essay on the "General statistics of the British Empire," and Edward Atkinson, of Boston, a very complete and exhaustive paper on "What makes the rate of wages?" In the physics sub-section Mr. H. S. Poole contributed a note on the internal temperature of the earth at Wolfville, Nova Scotia,—information which may be of value to us all about February next. He was fittingly followed by Lieut. Greeley, who delivered an address on Arctic exploration. In the anthropological section Mr. R. G. Haliburton presented a paper on the ancient sacrificial stone of the North-West tribes of Canada. We