

UNIVERSITY GAZETTE

Vol. VII.]

MCGILL COLLEGE, MONTREAL, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1883.

[No. 2.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY GAZETTE.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

J. R. MURRAY, B.A., '86, Law.	H. S. MCLENNAN, '85, Arts.
W. H. TURNER, '84, Arts.	J. PORTER, B.A., '86, Med.
J. W. MOFFAT, '84, Ap. Sc.	S. FORTIER, '85, Ap. Sc.
F. MCLENNAN, B.A., '84, Law.	WYATT G. JOHNSTON, '84, Med.

THE UNIVERSITY GAZETTE is published fortnightly during the College Session.

Rejected Communications will not be returned, to which rule no exception can be made. The name of the writer must always accompany a communication.

SONG.

After Heine.

In the lovely month of May
When the forest wakes again,
When the green leaves hide the grey; —
Love within my heart doth reign.
In the lovely month of May
When the birds are singing clear,
Till I to my lady gay,
All my hope and all my fear.

— PHILIP HAY.

Editorials.

The British Association originated in a letter addressed by Sir David Brewster to Prof. Phillips, Secretary of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, proposing its formation on the model of a similar association in Germany. The Society took up the project warmly, and the first meeting was held on September 31st, 1831, at York, which has been thence called "the cradle of the Association." In revisiting the city on its fiftieth anniversary, the tickets bore the inscription, "*Antiquam expirite matrem.*" The officers of the Yorkshire Society were the first officers of the Association. Lord Milton (afterward Earl Fitzwilliam) being President, and the Rev. W. Vernon Harcourt, Vice-President. Sir D. Brewster had hoped that 100 members might be present; there were actually 353. There is a striking contrast between this number and the average attendance for the past fifteen years, which has been about 2,200; but not more so than between the estimates of distances then and now. Prof. Phillips, in reading the answers from different societies, to the circular issued, reported that the "great distance of the Plymouth Institution had prevented any of its members being present," yet next year, the whole Association will not only cross the Atlantic, but have a "run" to the Rocky Mountains. Perhaps some of its members will even see the Pacific before returning from their "excursion." To appreciate Prof. Phillips' remark, we must remember that not the first actual railway, viz., Stockton to Darlington, built in 1825, but the first truly passenger railway, that from Liverpool to Manchester, was opened only in 1830. How great the change in less than a single life time! Some of the members, who took part in the first meeting are, happily, still living.

Prof. Airy (now Sir George Airy), who resigned the office of Astronomer Royal about two years ago, presented the first

report made to the Association, that on the Progress of Astronomy, in which occurs a remark suggesting another remarkable contrast. Giving a list of all the public observatories in the world, he says, "I am not aware that there is any public observatory in America." The remark may be applied to Canada even yet, but if we make as much progress in the next fifty years, as our neighbours have done in the past fifty, there will be good reason to be satisfied. The objects of the Association were stated in the address of the Vice-President, the Rev. W. V. Harcourt, in almost the same words which are still used in the Annual Report, viz. :—

1. To give a stronger impulse and more systematic direction to scientific inquiry. 2. To obtain a greater degree of national attention to the objects of science. 3. To remove obstacles to its progress. 4. To promote the intercourse of the cultivators of science with one another and with foreign philosophers.

As examples of the third of these objects were mentioned the improvement of the Patent Laws; and the removal of the duty on glass, as adding largely to the cost of establishing museums. It was proposed that the annual meetings should be held at different places in rotation; "in order, by these *migratory* visits, to extend the sphere of the Association, to meet the convenience of distant districts in turn, and to animate the spirit of philosophy in all the places through which the meetings may move, without rendering them burthensome to any."

The founders took pleasure in keeping before them, as a model, the splendid vision of a philosophical academy, depicted by Bacon in his "New Atlantis," when "divers meetings and consults" of the united body of *Depravators, Compilers, Pioneers, &c.*, suggested new experiments of a higher light and more penetrating nature to the *Lamps*, and these at length yielded materials to the "*Interpreters of Nature.*" In this scheme the "circuits, or visits, of divers principal cities of the kingdom," took a prominent place.

But how does the Association strive to attain its objects? For three of these no explanation is needed. That it draws the public attention to the pursuits of Science by its annual meetings, and promotes the intercourse of scientific men in a most effective way is obvious; and that it has great influence in removing obstacles to progress cannot be doubted.

Its principal object, however, and that which is put first in order, it seeks to attain chiefly by procuring regularly from competent persons, or from sub-committees, reports on the recent progress, the actual state, and the deficiencies of every department of Science; and, further, by making, at every meeting, grants in aid of scientific investigation along definite lines of search. There are, of course, besides, papers read by the individual members.

Many of the reports thus furnished have obtained a permanent reputation, and have led to important results. One for example, led to the establishment of Magnetic Observatories all over the world, of which that at Toronto is one; although this is best known to the people of Canada as the headquarters of the Meteorological service, supplying our daily weather reports.