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GENTLEMEN OF THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE:

In assuming the chair, your calling me to which is, I assure you, regarded by me as a very high honour, though some circumstances in my own position made me at first reluctant to accept it, I must follow the usual custom in offering you a few considerations, suggested by the occasion. But in my choice of topics, I have been led in a somewhat unusual direction; and I can only hope that matters which seem to me to have a strong claim on our attention, may not prove unacceptable, or try your patience too severely.

I propose to bring under your notice some thoughts on the nature, utility, proper aims and modes of operation of such Societies as this, in which many of us take so lively an interest. In pursuing the subject, I may possibly offer opinions in which you may by no means all agree with me, but you will do me the justice to believe that they are not laid down dictatorially. They are thrown out for consideration and discussion. I pretend only to give you my own ideas as they have occurred to me, in comparing our condition and aims with those of other similar Societies, and endeavouring to form rational and practical