

*L. A. August-Latour, M.*

8

TWENTY-SEVENTH  
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Natural History Society

OF MONTREAL,

DELIVERED BY THE LATE COUNCIL,

AND

READ AT THE MEETING OF THE SOCIETY,  
18TH MAY, 1855.

---

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY H. & G. M. ROSE, GREAT ST. JAMES STREET.

1855.

## OFFICE BEARERS AND COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR 1855-6.

---

*President*.....THE LORD BISHOP OF MONTREAL.

*First Vice-President*.....~~PROFESSOR W. ANDREW.~~ *removed to London*

*Second Vice-President*.....L. A. H. LATOUR, ESQ.

+ *Third Vice-President*.....W. H. A. DAVIES, ESQ.

*Corresponding Secretary*...DR. D. C. M'CALLUM.

*Recording Secretary*.....A. N. RENNIE, ESQ.

*Treasurer*.....DR. BENJAMIN WORKMAN.

*Cabinet Keeper & Librarian*....DR. WM. WRIGHT,

DR. FRASER, DR. SCOTT, DR. BARNSTON,

DR. HINGSTON, GEORGE BROWN, ESQ.

+ *Third Vice-President; Rev. A. J. Langhull -*

## REPORT.

---

### TO THE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF MONTREAL.

THE period when, according to custom, a sketch of the proceedings of the Natural History Society, for the last twelve months, should be submitted to the members, having again arrived, your Council proceed to discharge the duty imposed upon them.

If they cannot congratulate the members upon any great increase in the prosperity or influence of the Society, they can at least say that its sphere of usefulness has not been diminished, and that the number of its members continues to increase. The great object for which it was established, that of extending and preserving in the public mind the importance and utility of the study of Natural History, has been steadily persevered in; and if the laborers have been few, and the discouragements met with many, it is hoped that the efforts made have not been entirely fruitless, and that in the wide field embraced within the operations of the Society, additional help will be received, and more energetic action entered upon, during the course of the present year.

In accordance with the recommendation contained in the last report of the Council, the Society resolved that from the first of January last the annual subscription should be raised to *four dollars*. The Treasurer has shewn that heretofore the higher rate of subscription worked well; the present effect of this measure yet remains to be tested; the accounts for the present year at the increased rate, not being yet issued, your Council having deemed it expedient, in view of the general monetary depression, and the additional calls thereby occasioned, to defer collecting the subscriptions until the business season had fairly commenced. They recommend to their successors that this work should now be immediately undertaken, and they trust when members reflect how much the prosperity and usefulness of a Society depend upon the manner in which the annual contributions to its funds are paid up, that they will not be backward in performing this part of their duty, by discharging the arrears which are now outstanding, as well as paying up the subscription for the current year.

The Council, on the departure of Lord Elgin, late Governor-General of this Province, the then Patron of the Society, hailed with satisfaction the arrival of His Excellency Sir Edmund Head, his successor. His classical and literary reputation had preceded

him to this Colony, and his attachment to pursuits of a kindred nature to their own, pointed him out as one whose acceptance of the office his predecessor's return to England had left vacant, would reflect honor on the Society. His Excellency's late visit to Montreal afforded a desirable opportunity of ascertaining his wishes on this point. The council, headed by the President, and accompanied by several members of the Society, accordingly waited on His Excellency with a congratulatory address, at the same time respectfully praying him to become their Patron. They are happy to inform the Society that their reception was a most cordial one, and that Sir Edmund Head most readily and in the kindest manner consented thus to honor them. The Council would respectfully recommend that His Excellency be elected an Honorary Member of the Society.

The Librarian and Cabinet Keeper's Report, annexed, will shew the state of the Museum and Library, and the additions made thereto during the past year. The Council cannot but join in the regret expressed in this report at the paucity of the Donations, especially to the Museum, the increase of which must always be an object of paramount interest to the Society. With respect to the Library the Council cannot refrain from saying, that, with the present imperfect accommodation, there is little inducement for members either to give to, or consult, the Library of the Society; they earnestly recommend this subject to the consideration of their successors in office, with a view to giving greater accommodation to this portion of the Society's property. During the course of the year the Society passed a Resolution abolishing the small fee which had previously been exacted from Visitors to the Museum, thus doing away with the last restriction to the free admission of the public to their collections. The Council have much pleasure in stating that this measure has been followed by no ill effects to the safety of the Museum. It is an earnest of the willingness of the Society to do their part in making their collection what it ought to be, a national one.

The council have not lost sight of the recommendation of their predecessors, as to the propriety of establishing Literary Soirees as soon as the difficulties that have hitherto operated to prevent their organization could be overcome; the council, however, regret to say that the same difficulties still militate against the introduction of so desirable a measure, and that consequently nothing has been done during the past year in this matter.

The council have to express their regret that the services of so few of the members have been obtained as Lecturers during the last session. In this respect, however, they have been more fortunate than some other Literary Societies, who were unable to find sufficient assistance to form a course. The following are

the lectures that have been delivered with the names of the Lecturers and their subjects :

1. The introductory Lecture, by Dr. Workman. Subject—The importance of the study of Natural History.
2. By Dr. Barnston. Subject—The Flora of Montreal Mountain.
3. By J. T. Dutton, Esq. Subject—The utility and importance of the Science of Chemistry to Commerce and Manufactures.
4. By Dr. Hingston. Subject—Animalculæ.
5. By A. N. Rennie, Esq. Subject—Prose Fiction.
6. By J. T. Dutton, Esq. Subject—A continuation of his first Lecture.

The Council acknowledge the debt of gratitude due to the gentlemen who so kindly came to their assistance when required, and delivered this series of lectures. They hope a regular course will be entered upon next session, and are happy to say that already four names have been obtained, who promise to be prepared as soon as called upon to open the course.

Besides these Lectures forming the Society's regular course, at one of the ordinary meetings Dr. Barnston read an excellent Memoir on the Chimpanzee or Black Orang of Africa, and at another meeting Mr. Dutton read a paper on "*Geology*." Both subjects excited some discussion, and the council cannot help expressing a hope that contributions in this shape will, for the future, become more general from the members, and that the ordinary meetings will not always be simply for the transaction of routine business, but may also be for receiving and imparting of information in this very agreeable manner.

The Treasurer's Report contains a statement of the Society's financial affairs, which deserves the particular attention of the members. Only 68 of their number have contributed by their annual subscriptions to the funds of the Society during the past year.\* The amount thus received, together with the Government Grant of £150, has barely sufficed to keep the Society in working order, and to pay off a small portion of the debt on the premises. While the council would speak with respect of the aid afforded to the Society by the Legislature, they cannot refrain from contrasting the liberality shewn by that body during the last few sessions to other institutions of a similar description, with the aid afforded to this Society. Towards promoting the study of Natural History, and affording the public the means whereby they may gratify it, and for an extensive and general collection, both animal and mineral, no other Society in this Province has done so much, or laboured so long, and yet the assistance furnished to

\* This does not include of course the subscriptions for 1854, collected from 40 members previous to the Annual Meeting on 18th May, 1854, as those were included in the Treasurer's Report for 1853-4.

us by the Legislature is in the proportion of rather less than one fourth of that afforded to the Canadian Institute in Toronto,—the grants made to the Natural History Society during the last three years amounting to £400, while those to the Canadian Institute have reached £1750. It is hardly necessary for the Council to state that in making these remarks it is very far indeed from their intention to disparage the exertions or the utility of that Institution, whose greater good fortune they have instanced, nor would they for a moment imagine that the grants they have received are too much. Far from it; fellow laborers with ourselves in the field of science, we hail with pleasure and satisfaction the aid granted to them by the liberality of the Legislature, while at the same time it is permitted to us to bring the precedent thus afforded, as a reason why aid to a similar amount should also be afforded to us, an older institution. Your Council would therefore recommend that a representation to this effect be made to the Executive, and that additional assistance be prayed for, so as to enable the Society to carry out more effectually the design for which it was established.

The Society during the past year have had to regret the death of one of their oldest and most energetic members, and one whose exertions in promoting the cause that the Society has at heart, were beyond all praise. It is to the liberality and kindness of the late Dr. McCulloch that the Society is indebted for many of the finest specimens that now enrich its museum. A vote of condolence with his widow and family, in their deep affliction, has already been passed, but the Council feel assured that these few passing words, "*in memoria*," will be responded to and appreciated by every member of the Society. With this exception, and the loss of Sir James Alexander who, having left this country, has been put on the list of Corresponding Members, there has been nothing in the shape of loss to chronicle. The number of Ordinary Members at present on the list is 148, twelve having been admitted during the year; to the list of Corresponding Members four additions have been made, while only two members have withdrawn from the Society.

Having now traced the leading features of the Society's history during the past year, it only remains for the Council to make a few remarks on its present position and future prospects. While it would be useless to deny that the state and position of the Society are not satisfactory, and that its career of usefulness has not, of late years, been such as the friends of science could have wished, the Council would yet fain hope that it has in some degree been progressive; but the Society must ever bear in mind that the rate of progress which would, in the earlier stages of its history, have been satisfactory, will now no longer be considered so, in view of its increased means as exemplified

in its collections ; nor must it be forgotten that, in the scientific as in the moral world, the possession of wealth entails with it the responsibility of making a proper use of it, under the inexorable penalty of disgrace and ruin. Possessed of an extensive museum, enriched through the means of Legislative grants, to some extent, it is not, it cannot be, permitted to the Society to rest satisfied with being the mere custodians of the treasures they hold,—something more is expected from them,—these treasures must be increased, and the knowledge of nature they are calculated to impart must be made available by every possible means. Nor are the expectations of those who look for something more from the Natural History Society than being mere cabinet-keepers unreasonable. We have taken an honorable title upon us, and the public have a right to demand that we should act up to the duties entailed upon us by such an assumption, nor while we bear the name can we rid ourselves of the duties implied by such a name. Fortunately the duties so assumed, and the opportunities for carrying them out, are neither difficult in the one case nor unfrequent in the other ; the one consists in doing everything in our power to aid and assist in the extension of the study and of the science of Natural History, by lectures and by the publication of such facts as are of interest in that science, as well as by the collection of all such objects as illustrate it—and the other consists in the wide field opened for our exertions ; for placed in a new and almost unexplored country, every fact or specimen we can collect is sure to be of interest either as confirmatory of something known before, or as illustrative of something till then unknown.

It ought to be the honorable ambition of every society that its fame should not be confined to the locality where it is placed, but that it should be favorably known abroad, and this object can only be attained by means of the press. The Council would therefore suggest the expediency of establishing a quarterly or semi-annual publication by the society, of papers connected with scientific subjects, more particularly those of Natural History. They cannot but think that the society must possess among its records many papers of value, that might be published to advantage, and that among the members of the society there is a sufficient amount of talent and scientific knowledge to insure the continuation of such a publication when once begun. It is the opinion of this Council that no means the society could take to arouse its dormant energies or awaken a taste for the study of nature would be so efficacious as this ; they therefore earnestly recommend it to the consideration of the Society.

Before concluding, the Council would bring under the notice of the society the state of their property. The house is far from being in the state of repair it ought to be ; they would therefore

recommend that an immediate survey of it should be made, for the purpose of ascertaining the extent and amount of the deterioration, and the sum required to put it in thorough repair.

It now only remains for your Council to reiterate the urgent recommendations of their predecessors, as to the necessity of persevering and sedulous attention to the interests of the society, and of zealous exertions during the coming year. Every motive that can animate the lover of science calls for them, and success must as a matter of course crown their efforts, if made in such a spirit; while, on the contrary, apathy and neglect must entail a languid and useless existence on the part of the society. For the members may be assured that it is only by sparing no exertions on their part that they can make the society a useful one, or derive practical and permanent advantage from the important and interesting study the Natural History Society professes to encourage.

W. H. A. DAVIES,  
*Chairman of Council.*

Natural History Society's Rooms,  
Montreal, 18th May, 1855.

## REPORT

OF

### THE LIBRARIAN & CABINET KEEPER FOR 1854-5.

---

THE accessions that have been made to the Library and Museum during the twelve months now elapsed are detailed in the subscribed statements. From a comparison of them with those presented at the last anniversary meeting, it will be observed that recently the augmentation in donations to the Library exceeded in number the specimens that had been given to the Museum, while on the previous year the increase was chiefly experienced by the latter department of the Society.

The list of new books has been so arranged as to dispose them into two groups. 1stly, Transactions of Public Bodies; 2ndly, Monographs. The more important of the works under the former division will be found to be the Statutes of Canada, Transactions of the American Institute for 8 years, and the volumes containing the Bombay and Madras Magnetical Observations. Under the latter head, one in particular may be signalized, viz., Cassin's Illustrations of the Birds of California, Texas, Oregon, British and Russian America.

Regret cannot but be felt at the paucity of additions made to the Museum, and that notwithstanding repeated solicitations, members especially, the corresponding are rather more remiss than formerly in their responses to enrich the Cabinet with objects of Natural History.

Of the alterations made in the internal arrangements of the Museum, it is only necessary to particularize one: the coins which had hitherto been in the custody of one of our members have been collected and deposited in the Mineralogical Apartment in suitable cases, expressly manufactured for their safe keeping.

The present Report may not be inaptly concluded with an extract from its predecessor. "The want of funds to meet the necessary expenses has delayed further improvements, some of which are much needed, as the purchase of cases for a number of specimens, chiefly ornithological, which are unprotected from accident and destruction." To this it may be added, that the glass cases now in the Library are insufficiently commodious for its purposes, and that many valuable books have consequently to be temporarily stowed away in obscurity.

WM. WRIGHT, M.D.,

*Librarian & Cabinet Keeper.*

## DONATIONS, &c., TO THE LIBRARY, 1854-5.

---

- Statutes of Canada, 1854-5, 2 parts.  
Edit's Ordonnances Royaux, 1854.  
Transactions of American Institute, 8 vols, 1847 to 1853, inclusive, from the American Institute of New York.  
Transactions of Literary and Historical Society, Quebec, January 1855, from the Society.  
Bombay Magnetical and Meteorological Observations, 1850, from the Court of Directors.  
Proceedings of Boston Society of Natural History, Vols. 1, 2 and 3, and Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Vol. 4, from L. A. H. Latour, Esq.  
Seventh Annual Report of the Regents of the University of the State of New York of the Cabinet of Natural History, January, 1854.  
New York State Register, 1845-6, by O. S. Holley, Esq., from Editor.  
City Inspectors Report, New York, from J. B. Sabine, Esq.  
Disturnell's Railway and Steamboat Guide, from the Editor.  
Disturnell's American and European Guide, from the Editor.  
Annual Announcement of Medical Faculty of McGill College.  
Notes sur les registres de Notre Dame de Quebec, from J. B. A. Ferland, Esq.  
Notes of a Half-pay in Search of Health, from H. E. Scott, Esq.  
Neglect of Chemistry by Practical Farmers, by E. J. Hemming, from Author.  
Advantages of Study of Natural History Society, a Lecture, by E. Crisp.  
Illustrations of the Birds of California, Texas, Oregon, British and Russian America, by John Cassin, 1853, 6 parts, from the Author.  
Exploration Geologique du Canada, from Dr. Workman.  
Description of and Remarks on a Chimpanzee, by J. Barnston, M.D., from the Writer.  
The following publications have been received during the year 1854-5:—  
Medical Chronicle, monthly, Montreal.  
Canadian Journal, monthly, Toronto.  
Canada Gazette, weekly, Quebec.  
Law Reporter, Montreal.  
Canadian Literary News Letter, 2 numbers, Montreal.

## DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM, 1854-5.

---

- Young Crabs taken out of Oysters, from W. E. Isaacson, Esq.  
Stone taken from Bed of River St. Lawrence, from A. N. Rennie, Esq.  
Three Specimens of Ore from Valparaiso, (2 gold, 1 native silver) from Captain Fraser.  
Petrified Wood taken from Swift Creek, L. Ca., from Captain Fraser.  
Petrified Deer's Antler, from S. Ducharun, Esq., Lachine.  
Three sets of Copper Coins, 6, 4 and 7 in number, respectively, from L. A. H. Latour, Esq.

Dr. *Natural History Society in Account with Benjamin Workman, Treasurer.* Cr.

<p>1854</p> <p>May 17, To balance due Treasurer - - - - - £3 0 4</p> <p>paid T. Broome, 12 months' salary, - - - - - 30 0 0</p> <p>paid for Firewood, - - - - - 31 1 3½</p> <p>paid Candles and Gas - - - - - 2 14 4</p> <p>paid Freight and Postages - - - - - 0 12 2½</p> <p>paid Collectors' Commissions - - - - - 1 15 0</p> <p>paid on Mortgage and Interest - - - - - 59 0 0</p> <p>paid Repairs of House and Incidentals - - - - - 57 10 7</p> <p>1855.</p> <p>May 17, To balance on hand - - - - - 1 3 9</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>£186 17 6</p>	<p>1854-5.</p> <p>By cash received from 68 members - - - - - £34 0 0</p> <p>cash for a Diploma - - - - - 0 5 0</p> <p>cash subscription for Gas Fixtures - - - - - 2 12 6</p> <p>cash Government Grants - - - - - 150 0 0</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>£186 17 6</p>
<p>1855.</p> <p>May 17, By balance to new account - - - - - 1 3 9</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/> <p>£186 17 6</p>	

E. and O. E.                      B. WORKMAN,  
*Treasurer.*

Examined and found correct,  
ALEX. DIGBY CAMPBELL.  
GEORGE BROWNE.