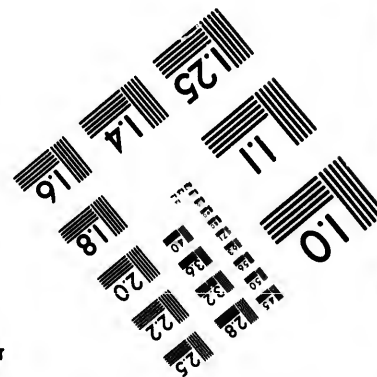
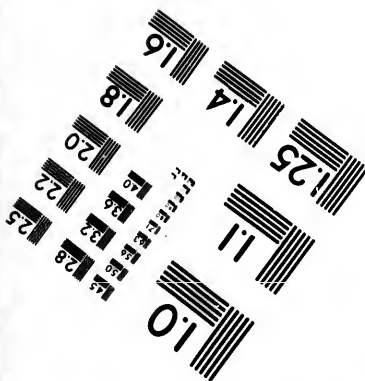
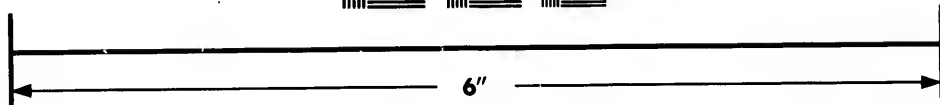
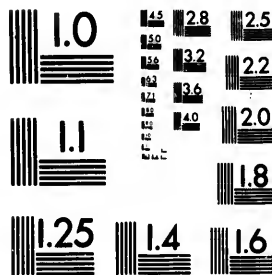


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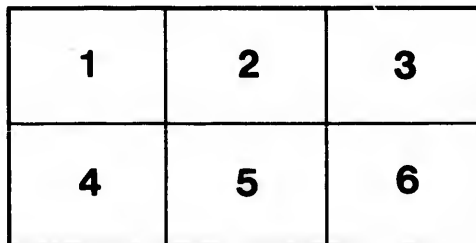
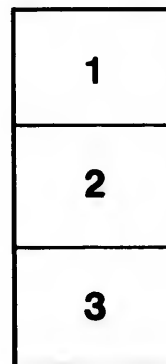
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ON THE
Literary and Historical Society
OF QUEBEC.

D. R. MacLEOD.

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Literary and Historical Society OF QUEBEC.

THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF QUEBEC, can claim the honor of being the first institution of the kind founded in the Dominion. Its founder, the Earl of Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of Canada, during the year 1823 called together at the Castle of St. Louis a number of persons favourable to the establishment of such an institution, at which meeting he stated that its advantages were indisputable, that independently of other subjects of research the early history of Canada and the language and customs of the aborigines were prominent subjects for enquiry, and concluded by offering for himself an ardent and most anxious desire to promote the success of the society by every means in his power.

The first meeting of the society was held at the Castle of St. Lewis, on Thursday, the 6th January, 1824, Earl Dalhousie in the Chair, and after some discussion, a Committee, with several Officers, were chosen. (*Mercury*, 10th January, 1824). At a meeting held on the 15th March, at the Castle, the laws and by-laws of the society were agreed to, and the address to the Public drawn up. As this address to the Public is virtually the *prospectus* of the society, and

does not appear to have been printed in the Transactions or Reports, it would be well to have it done now. It is printed at length in the *Mercury* of the 10th March, 1824, and the following are the concluding paragraphs :

“ Whether we regard the prosperity of this institution in
“ a National or in a Literary point of view, its advantages
“ are equally apparent and must come home to every bosom.
“ It will raise us in the moral and intellectual scale of
“ Nations. It will cherish our noblest feelings of honor
“ and patriotism, by showing that the more men become
“ acquainted with the History of their Country, the more
“ they prize and respect both their Country and themselves.
“ In a literary point of view it is fair to expect that the
“ formation of the society will introduce a lasting bond of
“ union and correspondence between men, eminent for
“ rank, erudition and genius, from one extremity of the
“ British Province to the other ; with these views, then,
“ we invite men of learning and taste to join us, and con-
“ clude by soliciting the assistance and co-operation of a
“ liberal and enlightened public, in the prosecution of a cause
“ which may in so many ways conduce to the advancement
“ of historical knowledge, and consequently to the honor
“ and ornament of this Province.”

The first officers of the society were :

Founder and Patron,—George, Earl of Dalhousie, Gov.-
General.

President,—Sir Francis N. Barton, Lieutenant-Governor.

Vice-Presidents, { The Honorable Chief Justice Sewell, and
 { Valliers de St. Real, Esq.

Recording Secretary,—William Green, Esq.

Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary,—John Charlton
Fisher, Esq., L. L. D.

This latter gentleman had the previous year received the appointment of King's Printer or publisher of the *Official Gazette*, an office until then held by Mr. John Nelson, proprietor of the *Quebec Gazette*, who conceived that he was unconstitutionally deprived of his office by the Governor-General. At any rate, Mr. Nelson's *Gazette*, (for there were two Quebec Gazettes printed then,) quite ignores the birth and infancy of the Society, but the *Mercury* appears from the very first to have given a cordial support to the young institution. It also received very substantial support from its founder and patron, out of his own resources, in the shape of an annual grant of £100 during the period of his stay in the Country, so that the society was born with a silver spoon in its mouth, and which enabled it to enter upon the collection of a museum and apparatus with a rapidity which would have been impossible with its otherwise scanty resources, and the paucity of its members at that period, which paucity may partly be accounted for by the high entrance £5, and annual subscription £3, being together £8 for the first year; and for life members, £20 was the price fixed by the by-law, but the funds of the society were not much increased by the contributors from this class of members, as there appears to have been even fewer life members then than now.

The Hon. W. Sheppard, an original member of the society, in an address before the Natural History Society of Montreal, gives to the Secretary, Dr. Fisher, the credit of originating the idea of such a society here, yet A. Stuart, Esq., the president for 1838, states in his obituary notice of Earl Dalhousie :

" The establishment of a Literary Society in Lower Canada appears to have occupied his thoughts from his first arrival."

Another society was shortly afterwards founded by the "Society for encouraging the Arts and Sciences," under the presidency of Col. Joseph Bouchette. The membership of this new society was much more numerous and obtained the support of as many French as English, which the original society lacked. The two societies were joined together in the year 1829. His Excellency Sir James Kempt, who at this time became the Patron of both societies, and to whom in their separate and united states they were indebted for liberal support, suggested the advantage that must accrue by bringing together whatever talent and resources either possessed—and thus the union was effected—still retaining the name of the Lit. and His. Society.

In 1831 the Society received its charter, and it went on prospering until the rebellion, after which there appears to have been a gradual falling off, until in 1849 it was found necessary to have the charter amended reducing the quorum at the monthly general meetings from eighteen to three members exclusive of the President and one of the Vice-Presidents, and in the following year only fourteen members paid their subscription.

The society relied much for support on the presence of the Government here, and its fortunes appear to have ebbed or risen accordingly.

The society suffered twice from fire, first, in 1854 in the Parliament House, and again in 1862 in the Savings Bank Buildings, St. John Street, to which providential calamities Professor Douglas ascribed in no small measure the prosperity of the society; indeed the society appears to possess the virtues of Charybdis and the Phœnix combined, first having swallowed whole the Society for encouraging the Arts and Sciences, then lunched on all that remained digestible of

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the Quebec Library, besides having risen twice from its ashes. Professor Douglas evidently draws satisfaction from seeing the remains of the apparatus sold for old brass, as he considered that the money expended on apparatus a misappropriation of funds.

The society has since its foundation received grants from Government varying in amount, but some years ago reduced from \$1200 to \$750.

For much of the foregoing information I am indebted to Professor Douglas's address read before the society in 1865, in which he traces the history of the Society from its foundation down to that year.

Following the fortunes of the society from where Professor Douglas left them in 1865, we find that in 1867 an arrangement having been made with Morrin College favorable to both institutions the society removed to its classical quarters on Jail Hill, (might not the name be changed to College Hill with profit to the proprietors and the Corporation?) and has completely upset the popular belief in the relative value of fires and flittings, as the number of associate members has more than doubled since 1867. Some however ascribed this unwonted prosperity to the guiding spirits of the society, whilst others think that it has prospered in spite of them. With all due respect to both of these opinions, I incline to the belief that the success of the society is largely due to the very nice Brussels' carpet that covers the floor of

THE LIBRARY,

which gives a tone to the apartment, and quite removes from one's mind the former unpleasant associations of the building, and whenever it begins to get shabby the

council will be wanting in the best interests of the society if they do not replace it with a new one ; for, as it is necessary to cover the shelves of all modern Libraries with the best literature, so is it judicious to cover their floors with the best tapestry. From the floor let us turn to the tables, and we find them covered with the leading Literary and Scientific Reviews and Magazines of the day, besides the Illustrated London News, and other illustrated papers ; from these, if we turn to the shelves, we will find a collection that Quebecers can well be proud of. I cannot do better than give a classified statement of the books.

In 1870 the 8974 volumes were classed, as follows :

	Vols.
Mathematics.....	314
Natural and Physical Sciences.....	328
Natural and Physical History of Animals.....	215
Natural History of America.....	64
Natural and Physical History of Man.....	28
Engineering and the useful Arts.....	138
Fine Arts.....	70
Domestic Economy.....	10
Encyclopædia.....	96
Geography and Travels.....	819
History.....	375
Modern History.....	1311
American History and Antiquities.....	118
Canadian History.....	602
Biography.....	657
Political Economy and Social Sciences.....	371
Languages.....	176
Greek and Roman Literature... ..	115
Modern Literature.....	1376
Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics.....	315

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... 176
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... 1376
... 315

Theology	349
Polygraphy	399
Catalogue of books.....	24

And from the additions since made by purchase and donation, the library cannot now contain less than 10,000 volumes; although the collection is not very large, yet the guiding spirits of the society deserve great praise for their judicious selection. In this connection, John Langton, M.A, a former President, and Professor Douglas, deserve special mention, having visited Washington, New York and Boston in 1863, for the purpose of buying books for the library—indeed any one acquainted with the affairs of the society for the last 15 years must be aware that the time and labour given by Professor Douglas in the interests of the society, and more particularly of the library is beyond computation, and that nothing short of devotion to the cause of literature could have induced him to sacrifice so much without the hope of reward.

A recommendation Book lies on the table, and any member requiring a book of merit, the society will purchase it.

The circulation of the Library in 1865 was 873 vols., and in 1874 2653 vols., of these 2653 vols., more than three-fourths will be found classed as modern Literature; and though light reading now and then is relished by the wisest men, yet it is not desirable to dine altogether on puddings and pastry, to the exclusion of beef and mutton; and as it is not hard to acquire a taste for roast beef or boiled mutton, neither is it difficult to acquire a taste for scientific study, or historical research, if only properly served with the horseradish and the caper sauce. It is a peculiar province of the council of the Literary and Historical Society to

furnish us with such literary feasts, and if these were given as often as they used to be, the circulation would be more equally distributed amongst the different shelves of the Library.

In 1856 stated meetings for literary and scientific purposes were held at 7 30 P. M. on the first and third Wednesday of every month in the year, and at one period I believe weekly meetings were held for the same purpose. Occasionally a regular course of lectures was given, drawing the members of the society and their families in large numbers to the rooms of the society. The present council would act wisely, by adopting the suggestion of their predecessors of 1862, to provide a regular course of lectures on any of the popular sciences, such a Chemistry, Geology or Botany; indeed arrangements might have been made to have secured the advantages of the lectures given on Chemistry last winter to the members of the society. If the society secured the services of the learned professors, the numerous members and the public would be attracted to the rooms of the society. I believe I am under the mark when I state that not half of the members of the society entered the rooms last year. The funds of the society are abundant, and if more were wanted for a good cause, the money would be forth-coming if Quebecers saw the society make an effort to establish a course of Public scientific lectures in the City, and the Government would doubtless increase its grant to \$1200, were that needed.

The council have taken one step in the right direction in opening the library in the evening; it now remains to it to give a large majority of the members an opportunity of attending the monthly general meetings of the society, by holding these meetings at least every alternate month, in the evenings. The average attendance of an ordinary monthly

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general meet-ings, exclusive of the members of the council, does not exceed two or three, and even these probably are there by accident. Now, if it is desirable to hold such meetings, it is desirable to have them well attended. A motion was recently brought before the society, to have these meetings held alternately in the evenings; this motion was unfortunately allowed to drop; several members of the late council were strongly opposed to such a change, as being unheard of and altogether too inconvenient. Instead however of being unheard of, these meetings were originally held in the evenings until 1846, when, to suit the convenience of some of the most zealous members residing some distance from town, the hour of meeting was changed to 3.30 P.M. The only apparent effect of the change is the absence of any of the society's Annual Reports from 1846 till 1852, when in the latter year we find the council recommending to the society, a return to the evening meetings, they say :

“ In 1846 the hour of meeting was changed from 7 P.M. to 3.30 P.M., but this alteration does not appear to have been productive of any good effect, and the council throw out the suggestion, whether it would not be advisable to return to the former hour of meeting. A motion to that effect is now before the society. At the same time it must be borne in mind that the alteration will entail some additional expense in the lighting and warming of the apartments in which the meetings are held.”

The motion appears to have been carried, for in the next year's report, the following allusion is made to the subject :

“ The evening meetings which the society had resolved should be resumed, could not conveniently be continued in consequence of the changes in the parliamentary build-

ings; but stated meetings once every fortnight, were lately appointed to take place; and the use of a room was procured for this purpose in the Hotel-de-Ville."

These stated meetings have ever since been held with more or less frequency, about half-a-dozen of them being held last year, and these are the only meetings the members attend in any numbers, the attraction being a paper or lecture on a literary or scientific subject. Thus it has happened that members whose time is occupied during the day hear nothing of the government or well-being of the society, and cannot partake in its deliberations, thereby throwing the burden of management on a few gentlemen whose time is entirely at their own disposal in the afternoon. If the suggestion to have the meetings alternately in the afternoons and evenings was adopted, those attending the evening meeting would have brought under their notice what transpired at the afternoon meeting, and *vice versa*. Prizes were at one time offered for the best essays in any branch of science, literature, and the fine arts, but after several years' trial, the practice was abandoned as a failure.

THE MUSEUM.

Next to the library in importance of the society's belongings comes the museum, on entering which one is immediately struck by the absence of the gigantic moose, the fleet caribou and the affectionate bear. Some years ago an appeal was made by the curator to the sporting members of the society to contribute specimens of these, but without success, and according to the latest reports there is now no room for them in the museum—although by causing the birds to roost more closely together, temporary space could be found without serious inconvenience to any of the specimens; additional space will doubtless soon be pro-

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vided, when it will be better to rely more on the crooked six-pence than on sporting members to supply specimens that this society above any other in the country should possess. These animals, particularly the moose, are getting scarcer every year, and in view of a recently established fishery in the Lower St. Lawrence, a white porpoise stuffed with straw (hung from the roof of the museum) would not be a bad investment, whilst a North Shore salmon, and a few specimens of that comical member of the *Genius Gadus*, the tommy cod, would doubtless be objects of interest to strangers, and the attention of visitors from the Old Country would be attracted had we a few specimens of the aborigines of the country, squatting on the floor of the library waiting to get into the museum—even in the style of the figure at the door of the snuff shop in Fabrique Street would be better than nothing, but as doubtless something more artistic would be desired, the Madame Taussaud type could be adopted with great advantage, shewing not only the hue of the skin but the garb of the "period Jacques Cartier," down to the latest Lorette fashions, and the historical document fund could fairly be drawn upon, to pay at least the tailor's bill.

Future curators will find it difficult to prevent the crowding of gifts in the museum to the exclusion of specimens of the natural history of this country, the collection of which is one of the primary objects of the society. Ornithology and Oology appear to have had Mr. Lemoine's special attention, and the society is indebted to that gentleman for his enthusiastic efforts during the many years he acted as curator, on one occasion resigning the presidency to take charge of the museum when it was unexpectedly left without a curator; the society will be fortunate if it secure the services of curators who in the future will

take an equal interest in the other branches of Zoology, and in Geology, Botany, and Mineralogy.

The museum contains a very fine collection of Canadian woods, also numerous coins, medals, and relics of historic interest. Some ten or twelve years ago, an Entomological society was formed in connection with the society, Abbé Brunet being its first president; this society however, insect like, was short lived, and its remains can be seen in two glass cases in the museum. The council might revive this interesting and attractive study, with profit alike to the members and the museum, and if the curator of the museum were expected to read a short paper on assuming office on the particular branch of natural history, to which he intended to devote himself in the improvement of the museum, the collection would increase with some sort of system, and the curator at same time feel that his office was more than an honorary one.

APPARATUS.

The present curator of apparatus has nothing to do but navigate the solitary globe the whole year round, and for that reason a nautical gentleman is usually put in charge, but sometimes he is promoted to be vice-admiral or admiral of the fleet, and on these occasions the globe is navigated just the same; but as we have no report from the curator for a number of years back, it is presumed that no discovery has been made worthy of mention. In the early history of the society, however, the office of curator of apparatus was no sinecure, and indeed judging from some of the old reports, the apparatus was one of the chief attractions of the society, and there is far less reason that it should not be so to-day.

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In the olden times the society possessed 2 globes 21 inches in diameter, a transit instrument, an electrical machine, a chemical cabinet, a magnetic apparatus, a solar microscope, a universal microscope, an air pump with a barometer gauge, Leslie's experimental apparatus for gauging, with all articles that usually accompany the above, besides a variety of other instruments detailed in the curator's report. A chemical cabinet, a powerful microscope and a spectroscope should be added to the present collection, as well as the most approved telegraphic instruments, the use of all which it would be the pleasing duty of the curator of apparatus to teach to associate members, and give lectures once a fortnight, using the instruments by way of illustration, as they used to do in the old times.

I take from the society's reports the long lists of its presidents and the number of years they held office—with the dates of their first installation—the list is however incomplete.

1824. Sir Francis Burton,	Governor.
1829. Frederick Baddeley,	3 years.
1830. Chief Justice Sewell,	3 "
1833. Hon. W. Sheppard,	3 "
1835. Joseph Skey, M. D.,	
1836. Revd. D. Wilkie, A. M.,	
1837. Andrew Stuart,	2 "
1839. W. Kelly, M. D. R. N.,	2 "
1842. Hon. A. W. Cochran,	3 "
1844. G. B. Fairbault,	5 "
1846. J. Charlton Fisher, L. L. D.,	
1855. E. A. Meredith, L. L. D.,	
1856. W. Andrew, M. A.,	
1862. John Langton, M. A.,	4 "

1866. Commander Ashe, R. N.,	2 years.
1869. Jas. Douglas, jr.,	3 "
1870. Dr. Anderson,	2 "
1871. J. M. Lemoine,	

all of whom have read papers before the society.

The several volumes of the printed transactions of the society contain papers of great merit, showing since its birth, that the society had its original thinkers; and its members of high classical attainments, its votaries of science and its "littérateurs," its travellers, and its lovers of historical research, its antiquarians, and its lovers of the fine arts, its financiers, and its statisticians, its pioneers and its navigators.—The church and the ladies, the army and navy, the bench and the bar, statesmen and scholars, the chemist, the surveyor, bankers and merchants, the civil service and the press, M.D's and L.L.D's, B.A's and M.A's, C.E's and N.P's, English and French, Irish and Scotch, have all contributed to embellish the pages of the Society's transactions

And as all religious discussion is excluded, the conservative Catholic, and the liberal Dissenter, the English Episcopalian, and the Scotch Presbyterian, alike help to swell the Republican role of the Society's associate members

The honour of first addressing the society fell to the lot of the late Chief Justice Sewell, who, on the 31st May, 1824, read the inaugural address, choosing as the subject for his Essay, the early juridical History of France, down to 1663, and as the subject was in fact the Common Law of Lower Canada, this Essay must have been of great value to the Profession, and can be read at the present day with advantage by the Student-at-Law, and with interest by the general reader.

Prominent amongst the many recent workers for the society, stand the names of John Langton, Esq., M. A., Professor Douglas, the late Dr. Anderson, J. M. Lemoine (the Douglas of the Museum), Wm. Hossack as Treasurer, and Commander Ashe, who has read more papers before the society than any other living member

Of the early contributors and active members of the society, many names will be found that occur in the Quebec Directory of to-day, amongst these will be found Sheppard, Wilkie, Stuart, Bowen, Sewell, Demers, Campbell, Geggie, Meredith, Cary, Andrew, Fletcher, Bouchette, Roy, Douglas, Wurtele, Légaré and many others, so that the society should have a peculiar interest for, and receive the support of all Quebecers. Strangers, if they may be so called, also took a large share in building up the society, and such names as Baddeley, Bayfield, Boxer, Cochran, Daintry Fisher, Fairbault, Kelly, McDougall and Skey, must be remembered by old Quebecers, as enthusiastic workers in behalf of the society, and amongst its most honoured members.

To mention as they deserve, in detail, all that the society has given to the world in its transactions, would take me quite beyond my present limits; they could well be the subject of a special paper, and I would only say in conclusion, that the volumes will be found as entertaining and instructive as many of the books on the shelves of the Library, and express a regret that the council has not been able to give us any very recent additions to this valuable collection.

