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RE: [Illegible Title]

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REPORT

OF THE COUNCIL of the LITERARY AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF QUEBEC, at the
Anniversary Meeting for the election of offi-
cers, January 11th, 1837.

IN surrendering into the Society's hands, the charge which, during the past year, has been entrusted to them, the Members of Council beg to make a few observations ;—First, on the history and external form of the Society during that time, and the changes favourable or unfavourable, which, as a Corporate body, it has undergone ;—Secondly, on the progress it has made in the great objects for which it exists,—the advancement and diffusion of knowledge.

I. History of the external form of the Society.

The Members of your Council, upon entering on their respective offices, immediately perceived, that, however humble the collection, which, in something more than ten years, the Society had succeeded in forming in Natural History, Apparatus, and Books ; that collection was still too valuable to be left exposed to the accidents to which all such property is liable. The sum, therefore, of £800 was ensured upon the different descriptions of property owned by the Society.

The Members of Council have much regret in stating, almost in the outset, that the hopes so ardently and so reasonably entertained by their predecessors, of the Society's sharing, along with other Literary Institutions, the bounty of the Legislature, were entirely disappointed. No grant was obtained, either for the purchase of Audubon's great work on Ornithology, which was applied for as calculated to be peculiarly beneficial in this country, or for the general objects of extending our collections, and increasing the sphere of our usefulness.

While your officers submit to you, the necessity under which you are laid of acquiescing in the decision of the Honorable House of Assembly, they conceive that justice to the Society itself, as well as to the public at large, for whose benefit it exists, requires a particular and formal dissent from the acknowledged principle on which this refusal is grounded.—*Such Societies*, it is said, *ought to be supported by voluntary contributions*. In acceding to this position, advanced by one of its Committees, the Honorable House must surely for the moment have forgotten, that a large portion of its grants in the same Session, were made to other similar establishments formed for very similar purposes, and differing from this, only in being more local and limited in their objects.—These establishments, namely for Education, are of the very highest importance, and cannot but receive the complete sympathy of this Society. Still they are limited to particular places, to persons of one age, and mostly of one sex.—But this Society, like other Societies constituted on the same principles, exists for the benefit of all ages and conditions, being intended to develop the resources of the country, to lay open its capabilities, and to enable all its inhabitants to profit by its inherent riches,—its hitherto untouched productions. The Society

exists further, for the information of men of other nations, and other languages, to give them that knowledge which they seek respecting that portion of the Globe which Canada covers. Its intention is to uphold the intellectual honour of the country in the Parent State, and in that State from which the Colony derived its origin, and in every region of the Globe to which Science has found its way. It anticipates, that justice will be done to it not only in the present age, but also by a grateful posterity, for whom it labours to open up the path of enquiry, and to whose use it bequeathes its collections.

On these, and other grounds not less strong, your Council cannot divest itself of the hope, that more favourable times will yet arrive, when the Legislature of this country, like the Legislatures of most other countries, will see it and continue to regard it as one of its indispensable duties, to foster with a less sparing hand, a Society formed for public, universal, and perpetual interests.

Leaving this subject, the Members of your Council have further to notice, that the departure to Europe of the Revd. JOHN HOLMES, of the Quebec Seminary, and a zealous Member of the Society, afforded them an opportunity of endeavouring to draw closer the ties which united the Society with Literary Associations in other parts of the world, and of prosecuting, both in London and Paris, the historical researches which are more immediately suited to its character; namely, those relating to the history of this country. The expectations of the Council with respect to the former object, have, as will hereafter be seen, been amply realized; the latter object, though it has not yet been materially advanced, may still be expected to be beneficially prosecuted by our indefatigable associate.

The Society has continued to receive proofs of the friendly co-operation of similar Institutions in other parts of the world, and of their desire to favour us with their transactions or other publications in return for copies of ours. Contributions of this kind, in continuation of former ones, have, in the course of the year, been received from the Royal Society of Literature, La Société Géologique de France, The Albany Institute, and the Botanical Society of Boston. The Council has been informed of a donation being on its way, intended for the Society, from the Royal Academy of Lisbon.

The departure to other parts of the world, of several officers, all of them remarkably assiduous in the discharge of their duties, has occasioned no less than three re-appointments in the course of the year. The Curator of Apparatus, and the Recording and Corresponding Secretaries, have all left the Province, at least for some time; and have received, after serving the Society with the utmost fidelity, such marks of its confidence as it has in its power to bestow. The same duties have, it is pleasing to state, been ably and zealously performed by the Gentlemen who have since filled their places. It is humbly conceived, that the Council in its anxiety for the welfare of the Society, cannot too strongly recommend it to Members, to elect such Gentlemen to office as are likely to perform their several duties with punctuality, care and ability.

Letters received during autumn, from the Revd. Mr. HOLMES, then at Paris, recommended the adoption of measures for drawing closer our relations with the Members of Learned Societies in Europe. The Council has, therefore, the pleasure of stating that a considerable assortment of the volumes of the Society's transactions has been forwarded to M^r HOLMES, for distribution in France and Britain. With

the same view, a number of eminent Members of Learned Societies in those Countries have been elected Honorary Members of this. And an arrangement has been made for transmitting to London in the Spring, such specimens in Natural History as it may be then found convenient to spare, so as to enable the European enquirers into this department of science, to form a better judgment than they have yet been able to do, of the natural products of Canada. The Members of Council earnestly recommend to their successors, to complete an arrangement which must ultimately lead to the happiest results.

In the course of the year, the number of Elections, as appears by the statement of the Recording Secretary, now on the Table, has been, of Associate Members, 24; of Honorary, 20; of Corresponding, 12. There has been only one resignation. But the loss to the Society in point of numbers, in consequence of Members leaving the country, has been unusually great, not less it should seem than 26.

The Society must regret the death of one Member, Mr. HAMILTON, in circumstances peculiarly melancholy. He was a useful Associate in our labours, and such the Society can ill spare. The number of Members now actually on our lists, is as follows :

Honorary, in Europe and America,.....	61
Corresponding, do. do.	96
Ordinary and Associate.....	154
Actual resident Members, supporting the Society,.....	127

The Finances, of the Society, considering that it is now entirely dependent on its own resources, must be regarded as favourable, though far inferior to the attainment of the high objects, at which, in more fortunate circumstances, we should aim. The Society continues to derive essential

benefits from the accuracy and perseverance of its Treasurer, whose duties are of a very onerous nature. From his statement on the Table, it appears that the Society possesses the disposal of at least £180 per annum. The Council can say with confidence, that the most rigid economy has been practised in every department of expenditure. The state of our affairs is such as to render the same economy still indispensable.

II. Progress of the Society in its proper objects.

In the boundless prospect which this part of the subject opens up to us, it is to be feared that still less must be announced as having been done than even in the former department. Something, however, has been accomplished, and thence we may fairly anticipate that more will yet be done, that a fairer harvest will yet arise to crown the efforts that have every year been making to sow the seeds of science.

Among the few successful endeavours that have been made among us, to diffuse a greater taste for knowledge and improvement, may very fairly be reckoned the experiments performed by the Revd. Mr. HOLMES, in illustration of the powerful effects of the compound Blow-pipe. It is most devoutly to be wished, that more could be done in this way to promote a taste for the study of nature. Our chemical apparatus has hitherto remained a dead weight on our hands, or at least has yielded no advantage commensurate with the opportunities which it affords. At present, indeed, our Apparatus are by no means fitted for a regular exhibition of Chemical Experiments, and the want of a Laboratory is a great drawback upon any exertions of this kind. We most respectfully recommend it to our successors in office, to keep in view the procuring, if it can by any means

be done, of a suitable place for the safe and convenient performance of experiments in Chemistry.—It appears, further, to be the opinion of many officers, as well as other members, that the room now appropriated to the Society's sittings, serving at the same time for a Library, an Apparatus room, and even for the keeping of part of our Museum, is rather unsuitable to serve the purpose of a Lecture room, into which large numbers of persons must necessarily be assembled.

The papers read at the stated meetings, have not, it is believed, diminished either in number or value. At the head of these, the Council does not hesitate to place those read by Dr. WILLIAM KELLY, R. N. on the temperature of the waters of the St. Lawrence, and additional illustrations of the nature of mirage. These papers, three in number, have been regularly reported by the proper class to be suitable for publication in the Society's Transactions, and may be very soon expected to come from the Press. Experiments and observations of this kind, are particularly valuable as illustrating the physical state of the country, its waters, climate and atmosphere; and have the effect of recommending our proceedings to the attention of scientific foreigners. An interesting paper was furnished by Dr. BRYANT on the climate, soil and present situation of Van Dieman's Land; and it is to be regretted, that want of information on some particular points, renders it not advisable at present to print this communication. Other papers that have occupied the readings of the Society, have had relation to the Gladiatorial Shows among the Romans, Austin's Province of Jurisprudence determined, Objections to Phrenology and the Defence of it. A Geographical Memoir was read, evidencing not a little research, in relation to the

relative position of the various nations of Italy at the period of the foundation of Rome.

The proposal to carry on a course of Lectures in connexion with the Society, during the present winter, has been seriously made, and there is still a hope that it may be successful. One Member has obligingly offered his services, and others have expressed their willingness to give their aid. Only a few more seem necessary to carry the scheme into effect. As this part of our system, if carried into effect, would be particularly useful to the families of Members, as well as to the public, the Members of Council earnestly but respectfully recommend it to the attention of their successors in office.

Of the improvement which the Museum has received during the year just elapsed, the best judgment may be formed by attending to the regular reports of the Curator, who has been assiduous in making them from time to time, and especially from the annual report just furnished by him, and now laid on the Table. Amongst the additions we may first mention those made by purchase, being chiefly the specimens sent down from the Upper Country by Mr. WILLIAM SMITH, our former Assistant Secretary. They are, indeed, rather scanty ; but they are as extensive as the means placed at the disposal of the Council, enabled it to procure. Some other Zoological specimens have been presented by individual Members. In the Geological Department, an uncommonly rich and liberal donation has been received from S. WRIGHT, Esquire, of Cork, consisting of rocks, fossils and shells. Captain BAYFIELD, of the Royal Navy, has added to his former invaluable donations, an extensive collection of rocks, chiefly from the Bay des Chaleurs. G. JOLY, Esquire, of Lotbinière, has laid the Society under great obligations, by an interesting donation of Bronze

Medallions of distinguished Frenchmen. It is to be regretted, that no addition has been made to our Botanical collections, and none of any value to our collection of Coins. Attention is recommended to a suggestion in the Curator's Report both of last year and of this, of the means by which, at a very small expense, large additions might be made by individuals to our Zoological specimens.

No addition has been made to the Apparatus, during the year, besides the valuable Orrery, presented to the Society by Lord AYLMER, its former Patron. But though no other addition than this has actually been made to the Apparatus, yet a very important improvement has been effected in it, by fitting up the solar microscope, which has been accomplished by the laudable exertions of the present Curator. It is to be regretted that the interest of the microscopic objects in the Society's possession, is much impaired by the want of a proper list and description of them. The instrument, however, is now ready for the examination of any minute objects which it may be desirable to inspect with the aid of its powerful magnifiers. The advantages to be derived from the use of the Orrery, are amply detailed in the elaborate report of the Curator, now on the Table, whose remarks on the further improvements that seem necessary to be made in our Meteorological, Chemical, and Astronomical Apparatus, in order to employ them with advantage, justly merit attention.

Some additions have been made to the Library by purchase, but their amount is not considerable. Some interesting donations, however, have been made to its contents. The first of these that deserves to be mentioned, is a present of ten volumes by the Honorable JOSIAH QUINCY, of Boston. Another donation of highly interesting works, was

made by the Right Honble. Sir CHARLES GREY. Among others that might be mentioned, are donations by E. MONTIZAMBERT, Esquire, by your Recording Secretary, your present Assistant Secretary, and the former Recording Secretary, now absent from the Province, to whom the Library is indebted for many donations. The actual addition by purchase consists of 43 volumes, and that by donations, 34 do. An important addition to the deposit formerly entrusted so us by Lord AYLMER, for the benefit of the public, has been contributed by the Record Commission, consisting of thirteen folio volumes, and four octavo, of that valuable publication. The Society is indebted to the liberality of its preceding President, for the loan, during a series of years, of an extensive work entitled, "Histoire Naturelle," in thirty-six volumes. The recommendations contained in the Report of a Committee appointed to enquire into the Books which it might be necessary to purchase as illustrative of the first settlement and progressive history of the country, are submitted as particularly worthy of the attention of the future Council. It is extremely to be lamented, that the complaints, so often made on former occasions, of losses sustained by the Library, appear by the Librarian's Report, to be still pressed upon our attention. The bye-law also, requiring the return of Books, at determinate periods, is inexcusably neglected. The Members of Council cannot do otherwise than recommend to their successors, the adoption, if it be possible, of some decided steps upon this important subject.

The Classes, the Council states with much regret, appear to continue diminishing in energy, or rather, are almost inoperative. It deserves, however, to be mentioned, that the Class of Natural History, set the laudable example of assembling at the call of the Chairman, and, after disposing of all

the papers before it, of offering a Report on the steps most advisable to be taken in relation to the Prizes to be offered for that Class. The Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Classes who may be appointed for the ensuing year, are most respectfully referred to the 40th and 44th bye-laws, and to the Resolution of the Council on this subject, dated the 14th of January, 1836.

No part of the Society's attempts has been so unsuccessful, as the endeavour to call forth the intellectual energies of the country by the offer of Prizes. The Council regrets to state, that, from first to last, this attempt has been a failure. Is it because the public in general have not confidence in the judgment of the Society and its Officers, so as to lead to the expectation of an impartial decision on the merits of their productions? Or is it, what we could hardly expect,—the want of taste for such pursuits? Or is it, as we might more reasonably suppose, so complete a devotedness to business and the ordinary occupations of life, as precludes all attention to objects of a more elevated cast? Or, finally, are the public so impressed with the purity of the motives from which knowledge and taste ought to be cultivated, that they will not acknowledge themselves capable of being roused to exertion by the prospect of a Prize or a Medal?—The probable cause is the want of the stimulus of example, joined to the want of taste for literary occupations. If a few adventurers could once be induced to offer themselves competitors for our Prizes, the rarity of the proceeding would then be worn off, and example and emulation might thus be expected to produce their usual effects. There is reason to apprehend, that the fear of failure, and the mortification that would thence ensue, is the greatest bar to our receiving Prize Essays. It cannot be too much impressed upon the minds of those that might wish to become candi-

dates, that even if they are unsuccessful, the intellectual improvement they derive from such an effort, is much the most valuable part of the Prize ; or, rather, much more to be valued than the Prize itself.

It must, however, be remembered, that seven or eight weeks have yet to elapse before the time fixed for the reception of Prize Essays, or Papers, or Paintings, for the present year. During that time, the Society may still hope, that neither its offers, nor the very liberal ones of the Right Honorable Sir CHARLES GREY, will be entirely neglected by the public.

The Committee on Historical Documents, states, as appears by the Report also before you, that its efforts have as yet been attended with but very partial success. Unforeseen difficulties have hitherto baffled its endeavours to obtain information in England, though it has been led to hope, that these difficulties may at length be surmounted. Its attempts to obtain information from the Bureau de la Marine in France, have been equally unsuccessful, and the last accounts seem to indicate, that the Records from which this information was expected, were destroyed in the Revolution of 1789 and 91. Still the hope is not abandoned. The only object which the Committee has at present the prospect of accomplishing, is the publication of an interesting document, obligingly communicated by Colonel CHRISTIE, and illustrating the History of the Province from 1749 to 1760. It has been just committed to the Press.

Only one other subject remains to be considered, before drawing this hasty sketch of your affairs to a conclusion. The paramount attention due to our financial concerns, has, up to this period, prevented the continued publication of the Society's Transactions. The obstacle arising from this source, has, at last, been removed, and your Council

has lost no time in proceeding to the publication of some valuable papers, that had for a considerable time been accumulating. They consist chiefly of papers on the geological features and physical appearances of the country, with indications also of our Literary occupations.

With this information before it, the Society will, it is hoped, proceed, in the first instance, to the judicious selection of its officers, and then to fulfil its onward and increasing course through the year that is about to commence, and through many successive years. Associations, like this, have a long destiny to run. Elevated above all distinctions of party, and confined to no language, but embracing objects, wide as the wants and necessities of man, they will no doubt be co-eval with his existence on this globe. They will last while the love of knowledge lasts. So long may, we hope that this Society, or some improved substitute for it, will continue to flourish, and be the germ of other Societies, equally beneficial and enduring as itself.

DANIEL WILKIE,
President.