

n. s.
FIFTH, SIXTH AND SEVENTH

ANNUAL REPORTS

OF THE

COUNCIL

OF THE

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

FOR

1831-32, 1832-33, AND 1833-34.

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REPORTS, &c.

FIFTH REPORT.

IN delivering up to the Society the control which was last year entrusted to it, the Council begs leave briefly to particularize the circumstances which have arisen during the period of its continuing in office.

Within this time the Society has come into the occupancy of rooms much more extensive than those primarily occupied by it. This change has allowed the various articles of value in the different divisions of the Museum to be displayed to advantage, and the Council is happy to have it in its power to state, that notwithstanding its enlarged premises, there is yet considerable difficulty in giving place to all the objects of interest in the Society's possession. The rapid increase of these, by donation and purchase, will, before long, require a farther extension of space, a circumstance which, though liable to be attended with considerable inconvenience at the time, cannot be regarded but with pleasure by every member.

During the past year the collections of the Society have increased considerably in every department of the cabinet, and it will, doubtless, afford great satisfaction to the members to learn, that the value of the donations has, perhaps, exceeded that of any former years. The Council cannot resist par-

particularising a few, though it would not be able to enumerate all the valuable presents received since the last annual meeting. Of these donations, one of the most valuable is that presented by Nathaniel Gould, Esquire, of London, a gentleman whose zeal in favour of the Society is proved by referring to the reports of former years, but who, in the present instance, has made a most valuable and acceptable addition to the Museum, and has thus formed a commencement of a department which scarcely entered into the contemplation of the members, and which subsequent donations have proved susceptible of increase. The objects presented by Mr. Gould are four casts, from antique statues, known to connoisseurs as "The Discobolus, the Artinous, a Fawn, and a Piping Boy." Unfortunately, from want of proper care in the packing and transportation from London, they arrived in such a state of mutilation as to lead to the supposition that they were irrecoverably lost, but the Council has the greatest satisfaction in stating, that owing to the ingenuity and zealous labours of two of the members, the statues have been repaired in a manner far beyond the expectations of those who had witnessed them in their dismembered state. The Society cannot but feel grateful to the members who, at so much cost of labour and of time, have restored these precious objects of art, and made them ornaments of the collection.

Another donor, whose frequent presents call for particular mention, is Captain Stoddard, of the ship *Thames*, of London, who has likewise been noticed in a previous annual report. In the two voyages made by this ship, during the season, Captain S. was attentive to the wants of the Society, and presented, on each arrival, a large number of shells and other objects of interest.

The Society is also indebted to James Keith, Esq. of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company, for many valuable articles, consisting of Indian curiosities, skins of animals, minerals, and shells, brought from different parts of the continent, and presented by him to the Museum.

A considerable number of coins has been received during the present year, which, it is to be regretted, have not been arranged in such a manner as to be exhibited. As a donor of a large number, the Society is under obligations to R. Weir, Esq. who has presented sixteen silver coins, seven antique Roman, three medals, and thirty-nine copper coins, of various countries.

In the botanical department the principal contributor was the late James Robertson, M. D. whose early death has deprived the Society of a member whose zeal and endowments promised much usefulness. That gentleman presented the collection of plants made by him during his studies in the University of Berlin, arranged by himself, and classed according to the natural orders of Willdenow.

Mr. C. Bain, of England, presented a large number of objects, natural and artificial, collected by him in the Levant. Isaac Lea, Esq. of Philadelphia, has presented a suite of fresh water shells, to the Society's cabinet. Lastly, the Council cannot avoid tendering its thanks (though precluded from mentioning her name) to a lady of Boston, Massachusetts, who has a second time put the Society under obligation, by a valuable donation of sea weeds, lichens, and shells.

The Library of the institution is gradually becoming respectable in the number and value of the books it contains. Many valuable works have been received as donations, and a considerable number has been added by purchase.

As the support of the Institution depends on the number of its ordinary members, the Council with pleasure notices the increased number elected over that of the former year, by which, notwithstanding the removal of some by death, and of others by leaving this city for another residence, the total number of members contributing to the funds exceed that of any former year. There have been elected since the last annual meeting twenty ordinary and six corresponding members.

The Council would willingly have passed over the

mention of a disappointment experienced by the Society, from the scarcity of Essays received during the last year. It is, however, induced to bring it under notice, in the hope that the public mention may be the means of preventing the recurrence of a circumstance so much to be lamented. The progress made by these Provinces in every way during a few years, led to the expectation that the arts and sciences which dignify the older portions of the globe and which are held in so great estimation among our neighbours on this continent, would no longer in this country be suffered to remain nearly unknown or confined to a few isolated labourers. With a view to accelerate this improvement, the Society resolved to announce its intention of granting medals to those Essays that should be judged most worthy of that honour. It was hoped that by means of honorary distinctions, those pursuits which characterize and ennoble an advanced state of civilization would take root among us, and gradually diffuse a relish for literary and scientific enjoyments. The experience of the two former years, and the great increase of Essays offered in competition during the latter of them, induced a sanguine expectation that they would annually augment in number and value. It was, perhaps, too much to expect that each succeeding year should bring an increase, and the Society must, therefore, wait in expectation that another year's experience will shew that the diminution depended on accidental circumstances alone.

The Council cannot, while on this subject, omit the expression of its regret, that a larger number of Essays has not been read at the ordinary meetings, particularly when it might be supposed that a sufficient stimulus to exertion was applied, in the offer of a medal to the author of the best Essay read during the year.

The Council will now proceed to mention an occurrence which must form a memorable epoch in the history of the Society, viz. its being constituted a corporate body. The difficulty of governing an extensive association, the increasing value of their

property, and the desire of rendering permanent the benefits already obtained, made the members of the Society very desirous of procuring an Act of Incorporation, and it having been confided to the Council to take the measures necessary to attain the wished for object, petitions were presented to the different branches of the Legislature, which resulted in the passing of an Act of Incorporation by both Houses. The Council regrets that His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief should have thought it necessary to reserve the bill for His Majesty's pleasure, but it has a confident expectation that this will only cause a trifling delay in the enjoyment of so beneficial a boon.

The Council, in compliance with the directions of the Society, likewise petitioned the Legislature for an aid towards establishing a Lectureship of Chemistry and Natural History, with the view of making the lectures accessible to the public at a very trifling expense and to the members gratuitously. The measure failed, more, it is believed, from the depressed state of the Provincial finances which rendered any grants additional to those made in former years inexpedient, than from any want of inclination on the part of the Committee of Education of the House of Assembly, to comply with the desires of the Society.

A report on the financial condition of the Society being to be made by the Committee of Finance, the Council does not deem it necessary to enter into this subject.

All which is submitted.

By order of the Council,

A. F. HOLMES, M. D.

Chairman.

SIXTH REPORT.

THE Council of the Society for the year 1832-33, in compliance with the established rule, beg leave to refer briefly to what has occurred in the period during which they have had the superintendence of the Society's affairs. The past year can be looked back upon with less satisfaction, as regards the progress of the Society, than any preceding one; but this is to be attributed chiefly to the same cause that paralyzed all other pursuits—the prevalence of that pestilence, whose ravages will long render the year 1832 memorable in the annals of Canada.—Almost immediately after the annual meeting, the ravages of the cholera commenced, and, in consequence, the ordinary business of the Society was interrupted; and no meeting was held from the month of May to the month of October. Much of the business ordinarily transacted at the meetings immediately subsequent to the election of office-bearers, of course, was passed over. Of this, perhaps, the most important omission was, that no prizes were announced for competition; a circumstance much to be regretted, when it is considered how useful such competition promises to be. To the same cause is probably referable, the paucity of donations during the year past, compared with former years.

The Council can, however, point out several subjects of congratulation, which evince that, though not advancing with as rapid a pace as in former years, the Society is by no means retrograding.—Indeed the past year must ever form an epoch in the history of the Society, since, by the Royal assent having been granted to the Bill passed by the two

Houses of Parliament, in the preceding session, the Society has become an incorporated body. By this important event, the permanence of the Society is secured, and the scattering of collections, made at great labour and expense, is prevented. Since the announcement of the passing of this Act into a law, the Society has changed its bye-laws, and now acts under a code different from that of former years, and, it is hoped, considerably ameliorated. By incorporation, the Society becomes capable of enforcing the observance of its bye-laws upon its members, and many difficulties may thereby be prevented.

Another circumstance which the Council recall with pleasure, and which distinguishes the year of their direction from any preceding it, is the arrangement and delivery of a course of lectures, by the members themselves. It is too obvious to need comment, that nothing contributes so much to diffuse a taste for literary or scientific pursuits, as public lectures. The Society has it not in its power to remunerate the services of professed teachers; and, therefore, continued courses on the different branches of literature and science cannot be expected. But, notwithstanding, much instruction can doubtless be given in single lectures; and by engaging the services of the members themselves, a strong incitement to their zeal is given. As all exertion must be voluntary on the part of the members, it was with great propriety (in their opinion) left to the judgment of every individual to select a subject for his own lecture. The newness of this undertaking, perhaps, rendered it less beneficial than it might otherwise have been; but the Council beg leave strongly to recommend the renewal of the course, under better arrangements, during the succeeding winter.

The Council have the further gratification of introducing into this their annual report, the notice of the grant of £50, made during the last session of the Legislature. The Society may now consider itself as placed under the fostering care of that body,

and may expect to be aided, from year to year, by its continued protection.

The fiscal state of the Society will be detailed in the report of the Committee of Finance. The Council is happy to state, that though—from deaths, removals, and other causes—a number of names have been withdrawn from the list of its ordinary members, yet the average number is still kept up; and that the number of members admitted does not decrease.

All which is submitted.

A. F. HOLMES, M. D.
Chairman.

Natural History Society's Rooms, }
May 18, 1833. }

SEVENTH REPORT.

THE Council beg leave, according to usage, to present to the Society a report of the progress and state of the institution during the year which will close at the anniversary meeting. One of the first objects which engaged the attention of the Society during the period, was the drawing up and approving of laws and regulations for its government, a measure rendered necessary by the important Charter of Incorporation, granted by the Provincial Legislature, and confirmed by His Majesty, and which came into operation at the end of the preceding year. The former by-laws were many of them rendered nugatory by the clauses of the Act of Incorporation, and it, therefore, became necessary to establish a code in conformity to that Act, and in subordination to it. A committee was, therefore, appointed, which, with much assiduity and considerable labour, completed a code of by-laws, under which, it having been received and confirmed, the Society now acts. Many of the unavoidable difficulties resulting from the looseness with which members were connected to the Society, will be hence removed, and good in many ways must result from the code of laws now in force, which was drawn up with much deliberation, and with attention to the rank which the Society had obtained as a chartered, and, therefore, a publicly recognized body. The changes which have been introduced in the mode of electing members cannot fail to be very beneficial, and several abuses which had crept into this important part of the affairs of the Society, have already been removed and will be hereafter prevented.

The Society has always kept in mind its peculiar situation, as being formed in the bosom of a community almost in an infant state, and where consequently almost all are engaged in occupations necessary to existence, and allowing little or no leisure for any other pursuits; where, consequently, literature and science have not made much progress, and where education can be only said to be just advancing from its elementary state. In such a condition of society, the number of members able to take an active part in the ordinary duties of a literary and scientific institution, cannot be expected to be great; and, therefore, the Society has not yet been able to furnish to the public a criterion of its respectability or usefulness, by any published transactions, such as have proceeded from other societies more favourably situated. The Society has not felt willing to publish merely for the vanity of having its name affixed to a published volume, without the contents being of value sufficient to warrant such an act. Several papers, indeed, have been laid before the Society, and are in its records, which it might doubtless offer with satisfaction to the learned world as part of its proceedings, but the number of them is too few, and their repetition too uncertain, to make it desirable for the Society to publish a part of a volume of transactions, without knowing when to expect its completion, and the Society cannot consent to fill a volume with common place or borrowed matter, divested of any interest from originality or novelty. In the present circumstances of the Society, papers of all descriptions will be thankfully received and read, probably both with interest and with improvement, and yet such papers, though highly useful, considering its circumstances, might not honor it by being published abroad as the transactions of a society of scientific men.

Keeping these principles in view, the Society works more for posterity than for the present generation, and therefore it is that it pays so much attention to laying up materials for instruction, ready

for use whenever the state of society in this country shall be such, as to seek for facilities in acquiring more advanced knowledge than that which is generally sought after at present. When that period shall arrive, the Society, though now acting in a humble capacity, will be found to have performed a most important work in having collected the treasures of nature, and made them accessible to the studious and inquiring. It is in consequence of what appear just feelings in regard to itself and the community, that the Society directs its chief attention to the collection and preservation of objects of Natural History, and of books descriptive and illustrative of them. Of such objects it now possesses a large and well preserved collection. Its mineralogical cabinet is extensive, and the specimens of the finest description, and in that part of it containing the simple minerals and not including those found in Canada, the number in the catalogue amounts to about 1600, exclusive of duplicates. There are in addition to these, the geological collections, foreign and Canadian, and the collection of Canadian simple minerals. In the botanical department there is found a considerable collection of plants from Europe, from the United States and from Canada. In zoology, marked success has attended the efforts of the Society. Of shells, a large number of fine specimens are exhibited in the Museum, and the Society owns also a large number of cases of insects, natives of Canada and of the East and West Indies—of reptiles, the number is considerable—of quadrupeds, there is a deficiency. But the chief attraction is the large number of birds, prepared in the best manner and exhibiting a lively representation of life. In the ornithological collection, indeed, are contained almost all the birds found in this part of the world; also a large number of the gorgeously decorated inhabitants of the torrid zone, both east and west—and a large number of the birds of Britain.

In forming this collection, the Society is indebted to many generous donors, and especially to the fos-

tering aid of the Legislature. It would not be proper to trespass on the time of the Society, by repeating the names of those who have most largely laid the Society under obligation, as they have been already noticed in former annual reports. The Council cannot resist, however, the mention of some of the donors, who, during the time they have directed the affairs of the Society, have enriched the Museum with their gifts. Among these, the Right Honorable the Countess of Dalhousie is pre-eminently distinguished. The love of the natural sciences, which characterizes that noble lady, renders any gift from her peculiarly acceptable, because, guided by her discriminating taste and knowledge of the subject, they cannot fail to be valuable. It is only necessary for the members to cast their eyes upon the case enclosing the rare, richly colored and beautiful birds presented by her Ladyship, to bear out the Council in the estimation in which they hold these precious objects. Her Ladyship is also the giver of a number of fine shells from her own cabinet, besides having, previous to her leaving this country, presented a considerable number.

The Council feel bound also particularly to mention a large and valuable donation presented in June last by John Clarke, Esq. of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company, and consisting of skins of several quadrupeds and of rare aquatic birds, with other objects of interest from the shores of Labrador. Another valuable donation was presented about the same time by Mr. Matthew Crawford, of this city, consisting principally of fossils from England; the specimens being in a fine state of preservation, and in connection with the rocks in which they are found. The frequent attentions shewn to the Society by Nathaniel Gould, Esq., of London, would render inexcusable the omission of mention of a donation from that gentleman, during the last summer, of a number of objects of curiosity from the South Sea Islands, and of several good specimens of English fossils.

The Council also take pleasure in mentioning the

name of Capt. Stoddard, late of the ship *Thames*, who has shewn himself a constant friend of the Society by frequent donations of valuable articles, at each successive voyage to this country, and who, though he did not return the last autumn, yet transmitted several objects of interest brought from the South Sea Islands.

The Library has not been lost sight of, but the number of volumes added has not been great during the present year. The most important work placed on its shelves, and one exceedingly valuable, because not easily to be procured, is Michaux's celebrated work on the Forest Trees of North America, a copy of which the Society was so fortunate as to procure by purchase, but at a very low rate. The usual scientific periodicals have continued to be received, among which the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, now publishing in semi-annual volumes, may be placed.

The subject that has engaged most of the attention of the Council during the latter part of the year, is the plan adopted last summer for procuring more extensive and suitable accommodations, by erecting a convenient and spacious building where the Society might have a permanent habitation, and which would be capable of containing the extensive collection which the Council is sanguine the Society will possess before the lapse of many years. The absolute necessity of more room is strongly pressed upon the members by the present state of the Museum, where numerous objects of interest are necessarily crowded together, without any attention being allowable to their proper arrangement or exhibition. This inconvenience must annually and even monthly increase, and will at last necessitate the procuring of larger apartments. Every one will see the great risk of injury and loss to the specimens in the frequent removing of them, and must at once admit the propriety of a considerable sacrifice, to obtain for the Society the advantage of a building, adapted not only to the proper custody and arrangement of the collections, but also to all

the other purposes which are required by scientific and literary institutions.

The Council believe that the plan proposed, which was sanctioned and adopted by the Society, is, on the whole, to be preferred, and the success which resulted from the appeal made to the members, and to our fellow citizens friendly to the cause of science, seems to be a very just criterion by which to judge of its feasibility. The sum raised in this city in aid of the fund for this purpose, is larger than could have been anticipated, and reaches the amount of £776 5s. Circumstances may prevent the fulfilment of the plan in all its details, but the Council doubts not the Society will be able sooner or later to carry it, under some modification, into effect. As the Society holds its present lease for two years more, it was not the intention to have made any farther progress in the fulfilment of the plan during the present summer, than to have collected the monies subscribed and to have adopted the preliminaries necessary for finally completing it. The Council regret that owing to some unforeseen circumstances, no grant, (as had been anticipated,) in aid of the project, was obtained from the Legislature, but they trust that the Society will not fail to bring the matter again under the attention of the Parliament at its coming session, when it is to be hoped, the proper exposition of the public nature of the Society, of its wants, and of the advantages resulting, and likely to go on increasing, from its exertions, will not fail to secure the favorable consideration of a body, which has already, by several liberal grants, shewn a disposition to promote its views and advance its interests.

The Council cannot forbear to point out for the encouragement of their fellow members, the success that has attended a similar proceeding in a society, favorably known by the zeal and talent of its members, and whose style and title is similar to our own: they allude to the Natural History Society of Belfast, in Ireland. The objects of that association are very similar to this one, and they have been

prosecuted with great success. With that society our own is already in communication, and exchanges of the natural productions of the two countries have been made with mutual satisfaction. From the report read to that body in June 1832, it appeared that subscriptions had been raised for the erection of a building to the amount of £1559, upon which the society considered itself warranted in erecting a handsome and commodious building, at an expense of upwards of £2,000, believing that the surplus of expense over the subscriptions would not fail to be made up by new ones, or that the usual funds would gradually pay off the debt.

The Council conceive that the example of a society so similar to our own, located as ours in a mercantile city, and commenced in a similar manner with but few advantages, cannot fail to hold out to the members of this Society a powerful incentive to exertion, and to perseverance in the accomplishment of an object, which, when attained, will place the Society on a vantage ground, that will enable it to develop the scientific capabilities of the country, or at least to assist with a powerful hand the advancement of education in general, and of the sciences in particular.

An object of much solicitude with the Society, is to excite a spirit of enquiry, by which the natural productions of the country may be made known, and in accordance with this, medals have been annually offered, for essays on the different subjects chosen by the Society, and with a view to give as large a field as possible, a medal has commonly been offered for the best essay on any other subject, though not included in the list drawn out. The Council have to regret that during this year, but little competition has been excited, only three essays having been delivered to the Corresponding Secretary. No one of these was considered, by the judges appointed to decide upon their merits, to have exhibited sufficient research or originality to warrant their recommending the Society to award its medal to the author, and the Society, always reser-

ing to itself the power to withhold its medals, should none of the essays be found deserving of such a distinguished mark of approbation, coincided in the judgment of the Committee, and therefore no medal will this year be adjudged. The necessity of care in awarding the prizes must be evident to all, as otherwise, instead of being, as they are intended to be, honorary distinctions, and badges of the talent and learning of those to whom they had been given, they would come to be looked upon as a mere mockery, and the object aimed at in offering them would be entirely frustrated. The Council would beg leave, in the name of the Society, to call upon the authors of the essays, who probably are young men, and to desire them not to be discouraged by the result which has attended the trial of this year, but, as they have already made some progress in advance of the ordinary acquirements of the youth of this Province, by attending *at all* to such studies, that they would persevere, and their labour may hereafter be crowned by a happier result.

The Council must express their regret, that the lectures, so happily commenced during the winter of 1832-3, were not renewed during the last. They are aware of many circumstances that tended to lessen the satisfaction of those who were kind enough to come forward, particularly the inconvenient and narrow accommodation of the lecture-room, but they trust that another season will not be suffered to pass without a renewal of the lectures, than which nothing can be more fitted to serve the grand purpose of the Society, *the exciting a taste for scientific pursuits.*

As the permanent funds of the Society proceed entirely from the subscriptions of the members, the accession of new members is a matter of importance, so as to keep up the usual number, and to supply the vacancies caused by death and removal. The number of persons elected into the Society during the present year is not large, perhaps less than during any former year; a circumstance owing, probably in some degree, to the new regula-

tions, which require not only payment, in advance, of the annual subscription, and of some other trifling fees, but the presentation, attested by the signature of the candidate, of a certificate of his desire to join the Society, and of his engaging to obey all its statutes. There have been enrolled during the year ten ordinary members, and only one corresponding has been elected. The number of members included in the roll of the Society at the printing of the laws last year was one hundred, which, increased by the additional ones since received, will make the total number one hundred and four. This is nearly about the average, for the annual additions do little more than supply the places of those removed by death or change of residence. The permanent revenue, therefore, of the Society may be stated at about £125, as each member is bound to pay an annual subscription of five dollars. This income is not sufficient for the ordinary expenses, and for the purchase of books and specimens considered necessary—but from various contingent sources of revenue, especially from grants of the Legislature, the Society has been enabled to meet the demands upon it, and at the present time is nearly free from debt. A detailed statement will, however, be laid before the Society by the Committee of Finance, to which the Council beg leave to refer.

The Council now respectfully submit this report, and thereby lay down the authority with which they were invested, and which they hope has not been unproductive of good. By order,

A. F. HOLMES, M. D.
Chairman of the Council N. H. S.