

ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS, 1876.

BY WM. GOSSIP, VICE-PRESIDENT.

IT is a duty imposed by the rules of the Institute, that at every recurring Anniversary Meeting the President shall deliver an Address, which shall embody some account of its present circumstances and future prospects. I did not expect that our worthy President, Dr. BERNARD GILPIN, would be in Halifax upon this occasion, and as the next in office, I prepared to comply with the requirements of the rule that imposes the duty. I am very glad that he has arrived in time to preside at this Annual Meeting, although I am not so well pleased that he persists in devolving upon me a duty of his office which he is so much better able to perform.

There may have been very little to communicate that was new or of much interest, at preceding anniversaries; and so far as I know there is little of importance to communicate now. But occasional non-observance of rules begets a general looseness of practice, which at length must have injurious effect upon the working of any institution. A short address, therefore, at our annual meetings, will not be at all inappropriate, and may help to create an interest in our proceedings; and this rule, which has not hitherto been carefully observed, being a good one, we should probably suffer, sooner or later if we forgot it entirely, from the absence of that systematic operation, wisely marked out for us by those who framed it, who took great pains, and followed the best examples at their command, to make the Institute thoroughly efficient.

I do not intend to occupy your time with scientific topics. Our concern, this evening, is more with matters connected with the management of the Institute. Even on these my knowledge is not so intimate or complete as it ought to be, and what I have to offer will be more suggestive than dogmatic.

It happens unfortunately, that our able Secretary, upon whom the chief burden of the work of the Institute rests, is at the Phila-

delphia Centennial Exhibition, in charge of the Nova Scotian contingent of that immense display of the ingenuity and labour of the nations of the world; and therefore some information must necessarily be omitted which otherwise would have been placed before you. It remains, however, in good hands. Further, with the opportunities he has enjoyed of being acquainted with the Exhibition, we may expect at some one of our ordinary meetings after his return, an animated description of much that was important and interesting there,—so that those of us who have not visited Philadelphia on this occasion, may have less reason to regret that we have remained at home.

To members present, unacquainted with the rules which govern the proceedings of the Institute, I may observe that our Annual or Anniversary Meeting takes place on the second Wednesday of October in every year. The outstanding accounts of the previous year are then submitted, examined and passed; the Treasurer's statement laid before you, and audited; also the state of our funds and their sufficiency to meet expenses incurred, and that have to be incurred. The officers for the ensuing year are then balloted for and elected; new members proposed, and so far as possible the papers to be read at the ordinary monthly meetings, commencing on the second Monday of November, and ending May of the following year, provided for. All this business has been carefully attended to at previous anniversaries, by the Council of the Institute, and you will find that body ready to give any explanation that may be asked of them with reference to these or other matters that have come under their supervision. They meet every fortnight during the Winter session.

I am glad to say that our onward progress, if not all that could be desired, has been steady and assured. We are continually receiving accessions to the roll of membership. As to our finances, we have hitherto, and with the help of the Legislature, which has annually for some years past, voted us a small sum of money to enable us to publish our Transactions, kept out of debt. That assistance, which is amply repaid by the information we are thus enabled to send abroad of the natural resources of Nova Scotia,

has become almost indispensable, inasmuch as it never has been very easy, although our books show the large number of some seventy members, to collect the full amount of subscriptions. Means will, however, be adopted whereby it may be hoped such liabilities will be made more available for the support of the Institute. We may safely assert then, that our finances, if not flourishing, are in a satisfactory state, and that in so far we can go on our way rejoicing.

We are the more encouraged in our work, which is entirely disinterested, by the estimation in which the Institute is held by sister societies abroad. With some of the most celebrated among them we exchange our "Transactions," in which they evidently take a special interest. From Australia, from Canada, from most of the Scientific Associations of the United States; from Denmark, from Italy, from Germany, from Russia, from England and Scotland—we receive their publications. We also, occasionally, find in scientific periodicals, favorable notice of the work of our Institute. I may mention that we have published three bound volumes of our Transactions, covering twelve years of our existence, and can refer to them with some degree of pride, as the best works on the various sciences of Geology, Zoölogy, Botany, and Meteorology, &c., so far as Nova Scotia is concerned, that have ever issued from the Provincial press. And the fourth volume (making sixteen years work) goes bravely on, and will appear in due course of time.

That the small income of the Institute cramps its usefulness and prevents its expansion, must, I think, be evident to all. The insufficiency is felt in various ways. We want a more convenient place for our winter ordinary meetings, which cannot be had without trenching upon funds required for other necessary purposes. For our present accommodation we have been indebted principally to the Local Government, and next, to the kindness of Dr. HONEYMAN, our Honorary Secretary. Much as we desire to value the privileges so enjoyed, it would still be better, I think, if we had a convenient room we could call our own, in a central part of the city; and I venture the hope that some practical suggestion, that carried out may accomplish the result, will be made. We shall

not affect to despise any assistance that may be afforded us, pecuniary or otherwise, in this behalf. In the meantime, we owe the Provincial Government thanks for its appreciation of the objects of the Institute, manifested in this and other modes in its behalf; and to Dr. HONEYMAN, for doing all in his power to make the Museum a convenient place for our meetings.

Our want of means also prevents us from adding to the Institute a library of publications on Natural Science, which would not only be a source of profitable amusement and intelligence to those of our members who are interested in such pursuits, but a great assistance to such of us as may feel inclined to take the trouble of composing papers on subjects which come within our knowledge, on which we may have arrived at some degree of proficiency. We already possess some valuable books of this description, but the want of many more is being felt continually.

We would also like to be able to invite to Halifax, occasionally, men celebrated in various walks of science, who might communicate by papers read before our Institute, or otherwise, some of the knowledge they themselves possessed. Such incentives to progress could not fail to be of service to the Institute, and valuable to the whole community.

It would likewise be pleasing to many of us if more of our members would furnish papers for the Ordinary Meetings. Accident oftentimes, and careful observation frequently, elicit facts and discoveries, which help to settle doubtful points of science, and all such would be very interesting at those meetings. At present, valuable as our monthly papers may be, and we believe are, we depend nearly altogether upon a stereotyped list of authors. We beg, however, to state, lest there may be some misapprehension on this head, that it is not because the papers read have been superior to others at our disposal, but because none other are submitted, that the same names are so often announced. We do not know of more than one instance where a paper written with fair grammatical accuracy, and treating of any branch of Natural Science, has been withheld. It might have been as well, perhaps, on occasion, that all had not been printed; but whenever there has been a question

of orthodoxy, or a doubt of usefulness or propriety, they have not been published without a reason given for their becoming a part of our Transactions. I mention this, because a periodical of this city is said to have contained some depreciatory observations on a paper of Mr. Dewar's, so published. Not having seen the critique, I am unable to judge whether, as respects the article in question, it was just or unjust; but the writer, whoever he may be, if disposed to find a reason for printing that paper, could not have failed to find it in the book of Transactions itself; and we hope we may be allowed to be the best judges of the most judicious mode of conducting our own affairs.

It would have given me much pleasure to state that we had observed the prescribed number of Field Days during the past summer. We have again fallen short of our rules in this particular. At the formation of the Institute it was supposed that those excursions would be generally taken advantage of, as pleasing and popular features of our proceedings. In no one year, however, since that time, has there been found much enthusiasm in their behalf, or willingness to engage in them. This may be attributed to the fact that each member of the Institute considers his public or private business of paramount interest, and the pursuit of science in this way quite a secondary object. I often think it a pity that it should be so at all times, and that we lose a large amount of knowledge and of profitable recreation by not attending to those pleasant meetings. I am glad however to record, that we have had one field excursion during the past summer, attended by thirteen members. The country explored lies between Wellington Station and the Grand Lake. Some interesting facts were pointed out by Rev. Dr. Honeyman, corroborative of the sequence of geological formations, and of a long continued ice drift of the glacial period, from the Cobequids. All present appeared highly delighted with the excursion; and on arriving at Oakfield, the estate of Colonel Laurie, we were handsomely entertained by the hospitable Colonel and his estimable lady.

That the Nova Scotian Institute, cramped as are its means and resources, has done and is doing a good work in and for the Pro-

vince, it is impossible to deny. It is making us better known at home and broad, creating an interest in our natural resources, active and inert, that is assisting their development, and paving the way for the introduction of capital and enterprise. Let us not, therefore, remit our exertions. Every member of the Institute can help the cause,—I may be pardoned in saying, can do more for it than he has hitherto done. There is no royal road to the acquirement of science. It demands to some extent self-sacrifice on the part of all who may profess a desire to encourage it. Dry as may be some of its details, they lie at the foundation of the wealth of nations, and its active votaries are all the better for the stimulus of judicious approval. There ought, gentlemen, to be a much larger attendance at our monthly Ordinary Meetings. Those who take the trouble to prepare papers for our instruction and amusement, and who find some eight or ten out of seventy members assembled to listen to them, cannot feel much inclination to repeat the task, or recommend it to others. Some of those papers have settled questions which concern our own Province in Geology and Zoölogy, in Botany and Meteorology, for all time to come. But there is a large amount of talent in this community, and amongst our own members, which has never yet engaged itself in our behalf, and from which good may be yet expected. We await with patience its development under favorable auspices. Meanwhile, with Rev. Dr. Honeyman in our Geological section, Dr. Bernard Gilpin, J. M. Jones and others in the Zoological; Professor Dr. Lawson, Rev. Mr. Ball and Dr. Somers in the Botanical; Frederic Allison, the Dominion Meteorologist, and others in cognate departments of Natural Science, we maintain and uphold our standing very well with kindred Institutions elsewhere; and our publications, to which I have before alluded, show that these gentlemen have not spared themselves in the service of the Institute, for the promotion of the laudable objects in which it is engaged.

I feel assured that we are all glad to know that Dalhousie College has come to the aid of Physical Science, and that there is every prospect of its becoming a permanent feature in her course

of instruction. A shining light of Nova Scotia, Dr. MCGREGOR, one of her Alumni, comparatively young in years, but who has already made his mark in the Universities of the world, is to be the first occupant of the new Chair. I can not affirm that the example of our own Institute has had any weight with Dalhousie in the determination—most probably none at all,—but of this I am sure, that the University is entering upon a course of study which, so far as the training of our youth is concerned, is second to none in importance in her whole curriculum, and which, if zealously persisted in, will place her higher than ever in the estimation of all orders of the community. We may, I hope, expect from the liberal character of the learned Professor, and also from the Alumni of his department, much assistance in our own work.* Our members cannot all be students of Dalhousie, but she may do herself honour beyond College bounds by lending her aid to the public enlightenment. Nay, this is part of the work to which she is appointed, and in its accomplishment she will best fulfil her destiny.

In conclusion of this general but imperfect summary of the doings of the Institute, I may as well say that I have been far from intending to deal harshly with shortcomings. These may be easily avoided or amended, and there is a bright side to the prospect, to which I would shortly advert. I remember that at our first Ordinary Meeting, fifteen years since, the present Provincial Secretary, still a member of the Institute, delivered the Inaugural Address. Then, the Marquis of Normanby, at that time our Lieutenant Governor, attended our meetings, and gave us in his plain, unvarnished but forcible style, a word of encouragement. After him Sir Richard McDonnell, another Lieutenant Governor, would have done us more honour than our conduct towards him deserved at his hands. I am compelled, in mentioning his name, to make this acknowledgment. Our Governors have invariably been our patrons, and have been pleased to preside whenever we have held a conversazione. We should like them to go a little farther than this, as some of their predecessors did not think it

* Which has since been rendered in an excellent Paper on Electricity delivered at one of our Ordinary meetings.

unwise to do,—but this also is quite capable of amendment. Chief Justice Sir William Young, a consistent member of our Institute, has frequently attended our meetings. The Bishop of Nova Scotia is also one of our members. A goodly list from among the clergy and the bar follow in their wake. We may hope soon to be an Incorporate Society, a status which we believe the Legislature will concede to us whenever we think proper to make the claim.

Upon the whole, then, there appears to be nothing that we can reasonably desire, that is not attainable by active and judicious management; and I express my perfect conviction that the Officers and Council of the Institute, whom you may elect to-night, will do their utmost to promote its efficiency in every way that may be desirable, that approves itself to their judgment.

Trusting that you will pardon me for occupying so much time with matters which principally concern ourselves, with which we are all more or less familiar, but which are not without a certain degree of significance to the community at large; and that you will excuse my rather lengthy performance on the ground of its infrequency,—we may now, with the sanction of the President, proceed with the election of officers for the ensuing year.