

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 1883.

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*THE SOCIETY OF NATURALISTS OF  
THE EASTERN UNITED STATES.*

IN answer to a call dated March 31, a number of working naturalists met at Springfield, Mass., April 10, to consider the advisability of organizing a society for the discussion of methods of natural history work. In the discussion which followed the election of Professor Hyatt to the chair, it was shown that every one present had often felt the need of opportunities to meet other workers in his own special field with whom to discuss such topics as methods of laboratory work; laboratory technique; new and valuable processes of staining, mounting, cutting, and preserving sections; different systems of instruction in various departments of natural science; methods with small elective classes, or with large college classes; the position which the sciences of observation should hold in the college curriculum; the amount of natural science which should appear in college entrance examinations; the amount and character of such instruction essential in preparatory schools; museum interests; mutual aid or co-operation between different museums; methods of museum work; methods of exhibition; and similar topics.

While there are many opportunities for the publication of the results of scientific work and investigation throughout the country, and for keeping up with current results, there has existed heretofore no association where such subjects as those above named could be made the chief topics of discussion. The need of an association devoted to such technical purposes is certainly as great at the present time, when science is beginning to take its proper place in the curriculum of all educational institutions, and laboratories and museums are springing up all over the country, as was the need in earlier days for founding the American association for the advancement of science. Published essays can be read at home; but for the right understanding of difficult manipulation in the laboratory, of methods of instruction either in the laboratory or class-room, or for any

efficient co-operation, it is essential to meet and talk with the originator of the method, or with one who is well versed in its application. The worker in natural science knows that in every laboratory new points are being constantly developed, which, though of value for saving time or labor, are frequently never published.

At the meetings of this society there will be special opportunities for getting such information from a number of laboratories where work is constantly going forward. Again: the meetings will furnish chances for those at home to meet and question the many American naturalists, who, on their return from visiting or working in the best laboratories in England and Europe, bring with them the latest methods in vogue on the other side of the Atlantic, — a number which may increase, now that an American table at Döhrn's zoölogical station, Naples, is held by Williams college.

The work of organization occupied nearly all the time at the Springfield meeting; but, in the brief informal discussions which followed, the opinion was very generally expressed, that one of the most important questions with which we have to deal, and one which needs immediate attention, is the preparation necessary for the study of natural science in colleges. The great difficulty in making a success of college instruction in the sciences of observation lies in the fact that not one young man in twenty knows either how to observe, or how to think about facts of observation. His education in that line is very deficient, or else entirely wanting; he is utterly helpless without his books, and seems quite unable to see or to correlate facts for himself. No other branch of the curriculum is so inefficiently treated by the preparatory schools and academies. It is the reverse of right, that the college professor, with a class of from forty to eighty men, should have to make the vain attempt to teach the lowest step in the observational sciences. Methods which can alone guarantee success in imparting to the eye and the mind the rudiments of science cannot be employed under such conditions. Moreover, it is a matter for

the deepest regret, that young men who are soon to be in places in the world where they have no books, and where the keenest exercise of the powers of observation, and the judgment of facts are demanded, should in so many cases have no opportunity, or next to none, either in school or college, for the acquisition of a training upon which the success of their life-work, in the larger number of professions and occupations, is dependent.

It is to be hoped that one needs only to mention such objects as these, to bespeak for this new association the sympathy and support of all naturalists and earnest workers in science.

At the concluding session of the meeting just held, the society elected the following officers: president, Professor Alpheus Hyatt, curator of the Boston society natural history; vice-presidents, Prof. H. Newell Martin, Johns Hopkins university, Prof. A. S. Packard, jun., Brown university; treasurer, Prof. William B. Scott, Princeton college; secretary, Prof. Samuel F. Clarke, Williams college.

At the same session, a constitution, which had been drawn up by a committee of three, was read and adopted. In it the object of this society is stated to be "the association of working naturalists, for the discussion of methods of investigation and instruction, laboratory technique and museum administration, and other topics of interest to investigators and teachers of natural history, and for the adoption of such measures as shall tend to the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of natural history in the community."

Membership in the society is limited to instructors in natural history, officers of museums and other scientific institutions, physicians, and other persons professionally engaged in some branch of natural history. Any member may present to the executive committee names of candidates for membership, but only those candidates who are approved by the executive committee may be elected to membership by a majority of the members present at any meeting of the society. The annual fee for membership is two dollars.

The officers are elected by ballot at the annual meeting of the society, their official term commencing at the close of the meeting.

The five officers of the society constitute the executive committee, who are to recommend to the society, from time to time, such measures as they may deem expedient for the purposes of the society.

The proposed meetings of the association are to be held only in the New England and Atlantic states north of Virginia. They are not fixed to one locality, but are peripatetic; and it is intended to have them held in different college and university towns, to facilitate means of illustration.

The annual meeting is to be held on the second Wednesday of March in each year, unless otherwise ordered by the executive committee; and special meetings may be appointed at any time by a vote of the society or of the executive committee. The second meeting, for instance, is to be held in New York during the next Christmas holidays.

It is also declared to be the policy of the society, by correspondence and otherwise, to encourage the formation, and co-operate in the work, of societies of similar name and object in other parts of the country. We are informed, indeed, that a request for the formation of such an organization in the west has already been received, and favorably reported on.

We understand that some objections have been raised to the formation of a society distinct from the American association; but it will be evident from this sketch of its plan, that at present it is neither general enough in its object, nor broad enough in its geographical field, to permit of working in connection with the larger organization.

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#### *THE MATHEMATICAL TRIPOS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.*

IN January of this year the list of successful candidates for mathematical honors at the University of Cambridge was published under new rules, which provide, among other things, that the names shall be finally arranged alpha-