

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 17, 1883.

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION AT MINNEAPOLIS.

THE number of people who take an interest in scientific discovery is very great. We may assume that it far exceeds estimates based on the support given to scientific periodicals and societies. The question is not of thousands, but of hundreds of thousands. Of a report of Professor Tyndall's lectures on light in New York, there were sold over a half-million copies. That was ten years ago: the popular interest in science has vastly increased in the interval. This is shown by the gain of membership in the American association for the advancement of science, being within the last four years as great as in the previous thirty-one years.

Compared with what may be called the scientific following, the number of workers in science is small. Upon that following the workers must depend for recruits, and, directly or otherwise, for support. Science must lean on her friends: they are numerous, but few of them give help. There are large and rich communities where the local developments are on a par with the Pickwick club. The men and means for good work are not wanting, but the impulse is. 'Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,' like that of Louis Agassiz, to warm the dormant interest into life!

For this purpose the American association is an effective agency. It unites in one body the workers and those who are not professionally engaged in scientific pursuits. Its management should be and is favorable to the desires of both classes. In the social features of its meetings, all share alike, and perhaps with equal zest. But the workers regard the meetings chiefly as the occasions for hearing and reading 'papers.' Teachers, who form a large part of the membership, seek the most recent things of knowledge to add to their capacities

for instruction. A majority of the attendants at the meetings come simply with a wholesome curiosity for the novelties of science.

The production and delivery of 'papers' at these meetings give rise to some queries. Is there any natural reason for expecting genius to burst into blossom in August rather than in any other month? If a man of science is diligently pursuing some line of research, may not the light that never was on sea or land break upon him in any other of the fifty-two weeks than the one when he can present it to the annual meeting? If he keeps back his announcement of progress or discovery, or if he brings it forward before he is fully prepared, does he not harm the cause of science and himself?

The 'papers' are of necessity often technical and uninteresting to all except experts in some special line. At one of the meetings a certain mathematician stated the case bluntly, thus: "I shall read my paper by title only, as there is nobody but myself here who can understand it." The rapidity with which a crowd of members thins out when the reading of a technical paper fairly begins, is at least suggestive. Nor should the departing crowd be denounced as simply unworthy of the pearls spread before them. They will stay if the paper has only a fair trace of popular interest. Doubtless many of those who leave the association in their first year of membership are disappointed. They had hoped for something not quite so 'dry.' Yet, if the reading of papers were dropped, the association would fail to gather the workers of science at its meetings.

Plans have at times been considered for securing addresses from men who are known as popular speakers, capable of attracting large audiences, especially if aided by suitable apparatus for the display of experiment. In various ways such a course might add largely to the resources and influence of the associa-

tion. What is vastly more important, it would rouse an enthusiasm for science at the locality of the meeting, which, if rightly fostered, would give permanent results.

The association has sought to meet some of these wants and difficulties by creating a larger number of sections, each of which has a presiding officer, who is expected to deliver a formal address. This is an advance, but only a half-way measure. The papers increase in number every year; and the several sections must all work at once and arduously to finish their reading in the allotted time. To many a member, even to a specialist who may be engaged in two distinct lines of research, comes the disappointment of missing the hearing of valuable papers when two or three are delivered simultaneously.

Many of these features must appear prominently at the present meeting. The attendance will consist in greater proportion than usual of the popular element. The membership is now so large that there is no risk of the meeting being insignificant in size, as at Dubuque in 1872. But, since Minneapolis is the farthest point to the west yet tried, its distance must withhold many familiar faces. After this, we shall know better whether the kind invitations of San Francisco may be accepted two or three years hence. Next year the meeting should not be too far from the British association at Montreal.

At least eight addresses will be given by presidents of sections, — excellent in their kind, but not quite a substitute for thoughts that breathe and words that burn. If free and wide discussion could be encouraged at these meetings, the retiring president's address would now give abundant occasion. Dr. Dawson hits hard where he thinks he sees a crevice in the armor of the evolutionists or of the glacialists, and many will chafe if there is no immediate opportunity to return his thrusts. But, while it may fail of excitement, the meeting at Minneapolis is very enjoyable. The city and vicinity are picturesque and delightful. The hospitality of the west is as broad as its prairies

W. C. W.

THE IGLOO OF THE INNUIT. — I.

THE Esquimaux of the arctic regions of North America call themselves 'Innuits,' and their winter-houses, built of ice and snow, 'igloos.' This short explanation may be needed to make clear my somewhat obscure title.

These strange huts have been incidentally described by many travellers in the accounts of their arctic explorations. But beyond the fact that they are rude domes of snow, in which these polar people live for the greater part of the year, little is known of the manner of their construction, their internal arrangement, or of the conditions which have led to their existence.

The many inquiries I have been called upon to answer in regard to these northern cabins, and the misconceptions I have found even among the better informed of my questioners, have led me to believe that an account of the igloo as I saw it during my life with the Innuits would be of interest.

The origin of the igloo can only be guessed from the few facts we know of early man. I will not discuss the ethnological problem which would identify the Innuit of the present day with the cave-men of Europe, but, assuming that it is true, will sketch a possible history of the ice-hut.

These cave-men are known to have existed along the edges of the *mer de glace*, which, during the ice period, overspread Europe, and buried it as Greenland is probably buried at the present day. What caused this great flow of frigidity to the south, or its retrogression to the north, it is needless to consider; suffice it to suppose that our hyperboreans followed it in all its migrations. The earliest evidences of their history are those they left in the caves of middle Europe when the glacier extended nearly to the Alps and Pyrenees, beyond which, with its outlying polar fauna of cave-men, cave-bears, cave-hyenas, mammoths, and reindeer, it never extended.

These caves were the work of nature. When these people lived in their vicinity, it is probable that they knew no other habitations, winter or summer, and disputed their possession with the many animals whose bones are found beside the implements and bones of the cave-men themselves.

As the *mer de glace*, with snail-like pace, withdrew northward, it was followed by these children of the cold (the cave-men), driven, as some suppose, by the more powerful river-drift men, or following that climate which was the more congenial.