

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1885.

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION AT ANN ARBOR.

It is well known in what a dilemma the association was placed at the close of the Philadelphia meeting. Without an authorized invitation from any community to hold this year's meeting within its bounds, and propelled by the desire to find cooler quarters than those occupied in Philadelphia, the council hesitated between Mount Desert and Ann Arbor. It is hard for a college professor to cut short his summer rest, and hurry back to make his *confrères* happy during their week's stay near his lecture-room; and it is especially to be regretted, that each year some well-worked men give up their whole vacation, or add to their working hours, that the expected visitors may be kindly cared for. If there is any reward for this unselfish labor, it comes in the satisfaction with their reception shown by the invaders. And we are confident that all who have been present at the Ann-Arbor meeting will be glad that the proprietors of the hotels of Mount Desert turned a deaf ear to the proposals of the association secretary; and that the citizens of Ann Arbor, urged perhaps a little by Prof. J. W. Langley, tendered to the association the use of their halls and houses, and the promise of a kindly welcome.

On every side were heard expressions of pleasure at the arrangements of the local committee. The rooms of the university furnished the most convenient meeting-places the association has used for many years. The meeting was not a large one, the total attendance of members reaching only 364; but the quality, if not the number (176), of papers presented was up to the average.

During the meeting, two changes were made in the organization. By one, the section of histology and microscopy was abolished. This

change has been urged for some time by those who do not think a special science of microscopy exists, but that the microscope is a tool used by scientific men in various branches. The other change was in the name of the section of mechanics, the words 'and engineering' being added to the title, that it may be more clearly understood by Americans that those interested in all branches of engineering are invited to take part in the proceedings.

As this was the first meeting of scientific men since the action of the government in regard to the coast-survey, it is not surprising that the question should have been discussed in private and by the council. The matter was referred to a committee, which offered a series of resolutions given on another page. At the Friday meeting, when the report of this committee was made to the society, the interest of those present was shown by the eager gathering into a more compact body, that the debate might be the more readily followed. The discussion proved to be purely formal, no one offering any objection to the resolutions, which were unanimously accepted as the sense of the meeting. Indorsing remarks were made by Prof. S. P. Langley, Dr. James Hall, Prof. T. C. Mendenhall, and others.

In every direction, one sees at the association meetings the conspicuous badge of the reporter; and each secretary, at the close of the session of his section, is approached by discomfited members of the press, for at least a few suggestions as to what the talk has all meant. Each day, one is urged by the news-boy to buy a 'full account' of the proceedings. He may find some information as to the programme, but will probably be disappointed in the report of the papers and discussions, even of those which could be made interesting to the laymen. There are always a few eccentric individuals present, and these furnish a fruitful theme for the reporters' wit; and the officers of the association come in for a share of attention.

But an account of the meeting which should convey to the public any idea of what it is all about is wanting.

We have again to call attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the reports of the special committees of the association. While in England much of the most valuable work of the corresponding association is the result of investigations carried on under the guidance of its committees, in our association the reports consist mostly of a mere statement that the majority of the members are alive and well, and would be glad to be continued as a committee of the association for another year. As a conspicuous exception, we would call attention to the report on stellar magnitudes, due to the exertions of Prof. E. C. Pickering, which is to be printed in full. The botanists also have brought about some good results.

Some of the statistics of the meeting may be of interest. The number of papers presented was naturally not so large as last year, but exceeded that at any recent meetings in the west; the largest number being presented in section F (32), followed at no great distance by sections B (23), E (27), and H (26). Section G, with its four papers, held but one day's session, and was then merged in F. Section D, with twelve papers, completed its work in two of the four days given to papers. Section A, however, with the same number, remained in session three days; and though the sessions of B closed also on the third day, C and I, with fewer papers (17 and 21 respectively), continued through the four days. One hundred and fifty-four new members were elected, sixty-eight members were advanced to fellowship, and three hundred and sixty-four members and fellows were in attendance.

Although the meeting was a small one, the necessity of despatching business with greater promptitude was so apparent, that additional changes in the constitution were proposed to effect this, besides those which could be decided at this meeting. In accordance with a formal proposition last year, it was decided to elect members by the standing committee instead of in general session; but the association thought

it would also be wise to select the fellows in the same way, and the need of a daily general session preceding the sectional meetings was thus less obvious. The general session is undoubtedly advantageous as bringing together once a day all the members of the association, but very disadvantageous to its work; since after a half hour so spent, the members divide into the various sections, often at some distance from each other, and much delay and confusion result. It is proposed to restrict the general sessions to the beginning and close of the meeting, and to limit the public reading of committee reports in general session to such as seem to the standing committee specially desirable from their interest or importance. All these are excellent propositions, and will come up for decision next year.

The next meeting will be held at Buffalo, N.Y., beginning Aug. 18, 1886, under the presidency of Prof. Edward S. Morse of Salem, Mass.

THE COMMITTEE REPORTS.

THE following is a general account of the reports of committees made to the association at its general session, Monday morning, Aug. 31:—

The committee on the best methods of science-teaching in the public schools reported, through Hon. John Eaton of Washington, that considerable progress had been made, and that everywhere various associations and schools, as well as individuals, were working upon the subject, and many important experiments had been made. The committee, however, was not prepared to make more than a verbal statement, and, on its request, was continued.

The committee on the registration of deaths, births, and marriages, reported, through Mr. E. B. Elliott of Washington, that the object of this committee was to bring about the co-operation of the government of the United States and the several states in establishing a uniform and efficient system of registration. Bills have from time to time been presented by committees of congress, — the last congress having, in both houses, considered bills identical in character, — but, for various reasons, delay had prevented action. There had been no adverse action: the bills had received the hearty co-operation of many earnest friends in both houses, and favorable action in the near future might be expected. The information desired to be secured would be useful to individuals in securing the legitimate descent of heritable property,