

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.

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#### 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,

which necessarily changes ownership on an average three times a century; useful to people at large in determining the relative salubrity of localities when compared with the census returns; and especially useful in preparing tables of annuities, and other tables bearing on the duration of human life. On the request of the committee, it was continued.

The committee on stellar magnitudes reported that the chairman of the committee, Prof. E. C. Pickering, was to have sent an elaborate report with tables, which had been considered in committee; but probably, by some miscarriage, it had failed to reach the general secretary. On recommendation of the standing committee, it was voted that the report should be printed, and the committee continued.

The committee to confer with committees of foreign associations for the advancement of science, with reference to an international convention of science associations, reported, through Dr. C. S. Minot, as follows:—

This committee reports that it has conducted an extensive correspondence, and made considerable progress. The question of an international convention in London is now before the British association, and dependent upon its action, which cannot be reached before its meeting in Aberdeen. The committee is not at liberty to publish the correspondence; but it feels that much progress has been made, and it seems not improbable that a meeting will be held in London within a few years. Owing to the liberality of Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson of Stamford, Conn., an endowment has been secured, and twenty-five thousand dollars placed in the hands of a board of trustees, the income to be expended in the promotion of pure science by the international convention when organized. For this, Mrs. Thompson deserves the thanks of our association. A fuller account of this will be found in *Science* for Aug. 28. In regard to the gift of Mrs. Thompson, this sum of twenty-five thousand dollars comes in five thousand dollars presented last year by Mrs. Thompson, and twenty thousand dollars presented by her this last spring. The two sums have been placed together: a board of trustees has been organized, with Dr. H. B. Bowditch of Boston as Chairman; and having for its other members, Mr. William Minot as treasurer, President F. A. Walker of the Massachusetts institute of technology, Prof. E. C. Pickering of the Harvard observatory, and Dr. C. S. Minot as secretary. Mrs. Thompson, seeing the international association might not immediately come into existence, and desiring to render her fund immediately available for the promotion of science, has very liberally empowered the trustees to expend the income in such manner as shall seem to them desirable, until it shall be transferred to the board for which it is ultimately designed. In consequence of this liberality of Mrs. Thompson, we shall have at our disposal a considerable sum, available this autumn, which will be appropriated in some manner for pure investigation or research of some kind yet to be determined; and the board of trustees will make a public announcement of the manner in

which appropriations may be made from this endowment. I myself, continued Dr. Minot, regard this endowment, from the very liberal terms in which it was made, as one of exceptional value; and it seems to me that this association should, in the most cordial manner in its power, express to Mrs. Thompson its thanks for her liberality to science. I have further to report, on behalf of the standing committee, its recommendation that the report of this committee be accepted, and the committee continued, and the name of the committee changed from its present very long title to the 'Committee on international scientific congress.' The recommendation of the standing committee was adopted, and the standing committee was directed to prepare a suitable resolution of thanks to Mrs. Thompson.

The committee on the International congress of geologists reported that two members of the committee would attend the coming congress in Berlin, and a report should be expected at the next meeting of the association.

The committee in relation to duties on scientific books reported progress, and requested that the names of Professors Baird, Newcomb, and Mendenhall should be added to the committee, and this was done.

The committee on the uniformity of graphic illustrations in representing facts of statistics, etc., reported that the committee had been formed at the instance of Mr. Francis B. Hough, since deceased. The remaining members of the committee recommended its discontinuance, as no one of them was ready to undertake the charge of the work which Dr. Hough had planned: the committee was discharged.

The committee appointed at the last meeting of the association upon the encouragement of researches upon the health and diseases of plants, reported through Mr. J. C. Arthur, that, considering that its most important work was to secure the coöperation of the department of agriculture at Washington, it had urged upon the commissioner the establishment of a bureau or division in that department for the study of plant-diseases, especially those affecting fungi; and urged upon him, that, in the appointment of an officer to make such investigations, he should select a man whose training had been such as to enable him to call to his aid all the knowledge and appliances of the best modern scientific methods. In accordance with the recommendations of the committee, the commissioner reported his hearty sympathy with the objects of the committee, and announced that he had appointed Mr. F. L. Scribner of Girard college, Philadelphia, to take charge of such work for the department. On the recommendation of the standing committee, this committee was reconstituted with the following members: J. C. Arthur, C. E. Bessey, T. J. Burrill, W. G. Farlow, and Charles V. Riley.

Other committees reported progress, and were continued. Some of their reports were, by recommendation of the standing committee, read in the section to which the subject appertained. One or two committees were discharged.