

without difficulty, and those most interested in the route by Hudson Bay to Europe for the wheat of Manitoba, are enthusiastic in their assertions that this proves the practicability of the route. A sober second thought, however, would indicate that, as far as yet made public, absolutely nothing new has been learned on the voyage of the *Alert*. The character of the navigation of Hudson Bay, a great shoal inlet, with its bottom dotted with stupendous bowlders often rising nearly to the surface; with no good port in the southwest, where, at the best anchorage, the vessel lies eight or nine miles from what must be the shipping point, permanent piers of any length being out of the question, owing to the movements of the ice; a strictly arctic climate, constant mirage, and no charts of any value: these incidents of the plan do not seem to be affected by anything done on the voyage as far as yet known.

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#### USE AND ABUSE OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

EVERY country thinks, doubtless, when it looks at the peculiar way in which things are done in other countries, that it could devise a method of much more dignity and wisdom for carrying out its purposes. We may certainly be excused for thinking that the plans by which great men are selected in both England and France might be improved upon. The familiar story of the candidate for the fortieth arm-chair of the French academy going about and soliciting the votes of thirty-nine immortals, never fails to give one an unpleasant shock at every fresh hearing. Even our presidential candidates are considered to be deficient in dignity when they make public speeches in their own behalf, and the literary man is supposed to be a man of much more delicate feeling than any politician. Nor is the English way of granting admission into the Royal society at all to be preferred; to hold an actual competitive examination, on the result of which a certain number of successful candidates are annually chosen, is not to show deference to the feelings of the candidate any more than the French have done.

There is a simple principle that should guide the bestowal of honors,—it is that they should be given and not sought. In private life a man is not expected to press his merits or his company upon his friends. We should consider it a barbarous social etiquette in which a person was required to call upon all his acquaintances and beg to be invited to their choicest dinners. If rewards are to

be given at all for distinction in science or in letters, they should be given freely, and not be made bitter by conditions to which a gentleman has never before been obliged to submit. It may be a difficult matter to make the proper choice, but, at least, it should be made without the assistance of the candidate himself.

The English method has the additional disadvantage that it does not secure the men whom it is most desirable to honor. During the school-boy period, the distinction between different individuals is a distinction of learning, and an examination is not unfitted to discover the boy who deserves reward. But learning is not the quality which a state needs to make it great. Casaubons are not the kind of men who have built up English science. The qualities which ought to be encouraged, and which it should be a nation's delight to honor, are qualities too subtle to be detected by a competitive examination. That is a way of dealing out honors which, as Professor Chrystal has just said before the British association, belongs to the pupillary age both of men and of nations.

In our own national academy, whose tender age forbids as yet the lustre that clings to the ancient institutions of the European capitals, the only knowledge a man may have that he is a candidate for election is through the imprudence of his friends among the academicians,—an imprudence which is unhappily too common. Indeed it is becoming evident to many that the candidate active in pushing his own claims, in however secret a manner, is *pro tanto* lessening his chances of admission. And this is as it should be; merit in the eyes of others should be the single test.

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#### THE RECENT EDUCATIONAL MEETING IN BOSTON.

THE educational conference, which met on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 16 and 17, at the Boston Latin school, was one of the most notable ever held in America, by reason of the representative character of the delegates, the nature of the topics discussed, and the possible effect upon our higher education of the movement there inaugurated.

The teachers of the preparatory schools have for some time been conscious of certain difficulties arising from the lack of a proper understanding on their part of what the colleges really desire of them, and particularly as regards the requisitions for admission to college, in the determination of which, they, however interested parties, have never been recognized as having a voice. Addi-