by the speaker during his recent visit to Jamaica. The collection has not as yet been sufficiently studied to estimate the number of species represented in it. Nearly half of the entire number belong to the Polyporaceæ, about a hundred to the Agaricaceæ, thirty to the Thelephoraceæ, but only three to the Hydnaceæ. Of the Ascomycetes fully half belong to the Xylariaceæ.

As a rule, fungi are more abundant at the lower elevations and on the drier parts of the island. In the moist mountain woods, where the conditions are most favorable to the growth of ferns, fungi are comparatively rare.

Mr. Nash exhibited a living flowering specimen of an undescribed species of *Pitcairnia* collected by Dr. Britton on St. Kitts, West Indies. Among its more prominent characters are the absence of spines and the conspicuous whitening of the under side of the leaves. Dr. Britton described the finding of this plant at the summit of Mt. Misery on the rim of an extinct crater. It was growing in a deep carpet of moss and was associated with other bromeliads, including *Pitcairnia alata,* which is a spiny species, and an undescribed *Tillandsia.*

Dr. Howe was called to the chair and Dr. Britton presented resolutions on the recent death of Dr. Timothy F. Allen.

MEETING OF FEBRUARY 10.

In the absence of the president, Dr. Lighthipe was called to the chair.

The paper of the evening was by Mr. Eugene Smith, entitled 'Remarks on Aquatic Plants.' The speaker exhibited a series of specimens of marsh and aquatic plants. The distinction between the two is not sharply drawn, but true aquatics pass their entire life under water or at most only produce their flowers and fruit at the surface. The flowers of true aquatics are never showy. Marsh and aquatic vegetation contains elements that are very diverse from a systematic point of view, including representatives from the lowest to the highest families of plants. The algæ are exclusively aquatic and constitute the greater part of the under-water vegetation. The bryophytes are represented by numerous species, a few of which are true aquatics. The pteridophytes have a few aquatic and semi-aquatic members. Many families of flowering plants include aquatic species. With water plants having both submerged and floating leaves there is usually a marked difference in form between the two. The tissues of aquatics are usually soft and flaccid, since these plants, being supported by the water, do not need to develop woody tissues. The study of aquatic plants has been much neglected. The waters of tropical regions in particular afford almost a new field for exploration and study.

An interesting discussion followed the reading of the paper, many of the members present taking part in it.

F. S. Earle,
Recording Secretary.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ST. LOUIS MEETING.

To the Editor of Science: Your recent editorial on the importance of beginning early to make plans for the St. Louis meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the affiliated scientific societies prompts me to make a few suggestions and to raise one or two questions.

As to the accommodations necessary for a comfortable and therefore profitable sectional meeting there should be for each section of the association: (*a*) a meeting room, (*b*) a lobby or conversation room, and, if possible, (*c*) a coat and toilet room; the three rooms to be close together. It is evident, enough from our experience at various meetings, either that these three elements of comfort are not considered essential by the local committees, or that if they are so considered they can not be secured for all the sections; yet it may be fairly contended that meetings as important as are the gatherings of the sections deserve the reasonably comfortable accommodations above suggested. Further specifications may be made as follows:

Meeting Room.—The table for the presiding officer and the secretary, the platform, blackboard, etc., for the speaker, and the seats for the audience should form a triangle. This arrangement makes it possible for the

occupants of each corner of the triangle to see those of both the other corners. Any other arrangement is likely to involve the presiding officer in much difficulty if he attempts to see the illustrations shown by the speaker, and to impose upon the speaker the discourtesy of turning his back upon the presiding officer. The presiding officer and the secretary should have an open pathway from their table to a neighboring door; a page ready to attend these officers and familiar with the locality of the meeting should be furnished by the local committee. A platform for the speaker, raised somewhat above the floor, should be provided in rooms not thus furnished. Blackboard and pointer, racks, clips and thumbtacks, lantern and screen should of course be in readiness (perhaps some sections may not need the lantern), though it not infrequently happens that some of these necessary luxuries are wanting at the last minute. The auditors should enter by a door or doors at or near the back of the room; and they should not have bright windows in front of them. The room should be large enough to prevent crowding. One might think that ventilation would be arranged beforehand as a matter of course; yet it is a common experience to have to resort to the windows after the meeting room has become suffocatingly uncomfortable, no one being charged with the duty of supplying fresh air; and the windows usually refuse to open at the top, there evidently having been no preparation for so unexpected a use of the upper sash. The air in the sectional meeting room that I frequented this winter in Washington was almost continuously so bad as to be injurious to health. Electric ventilators are of much service in this connection; they can usually be installed temporarily at moderate expense.

Lobby and Coat Rooms.—Emphasis is always and properly laid on the opportunity that the association meetings furnish for renewing and extending one's acquaintance with his associates. This is so important a matter that formal provision should always be made for it. A single room is, therefore, not enough for a good sectional meeting; there should always be a separate lobby or conversation room, near enough the meeting room to be immediately accessible from it, yet not so near that lively conversation in the lobby shall annoy either the speaker or the auditors in the meeting room. Two or three seats at a writing table should be provided here. Now that meetings are to be in the winter, a coat room will be a great convenience, to say the least.

It is very likely that many local committees will find it difficult to provide the three desired rooms for each section; and this elaborate provision will often be impossible if various scientific societies hold meetings at the same time and place with, but independent of, the sectional meetings. The question then arises: Is it worth while to endure continuously uncomfortable conditions of sectional meetings in order to secure the intermittent advantages of occasional general sessions? My own feeling is that a really well-managed meeting of a national scientific society, such as the Geological Society of America, held independent of the association, gives more profit and pleasure to the attending members than they are likely to secure when their meeting is held in conjunction with that of the association. In the latter case it is almost impossible to provide the accommodations that a national society really deserves, and the discomforts of insufficient accommodations seem to me to outweigh whatever advantages come from a general scientific gathering. In short, if the alternative were presented to one of the national scientific societies of being limited to one meeting room when combining with the association, and of having separate meeting and conversation rooms when acting independently, I should vote for the latter, so high a value do I place on the informal part of a scientific gathering. But if really good accommodations can be provided for the sections and the national societies when all meet together, then let us gather in force and secure whatever results may follow from meetings of large enrollment.

There are certain other suggestions that might be presented to the local committees.

Free lunches are a burden on the local committee that no visiting member should wish to impose; scattered lunches interfere greatly with the sociability of the meeting; distant lunches take up too much time. A light table d'hôte lunch should, therefore, be provided at a moderate price in a good-sized and well-ventilated room near the place of meeting, every day while the sessions last. Separate small lunch tables are preferable to a single long table; service is much simplified by having the dishes on a table at one end of the room, where each member may quickly help himself and then withdraw to enjoy the lunch with a group of friends. The less the formality and the greater the freedom of movement, the better for the real enjoyment of the noon hour.

Formal dinners, such as the affiliated societies not infrequently hold and at which one has to sit in one place for three or four hours, are likely to be tiresome to one's neighbors. Informal smokers, with a light supper served from a side table and plenty of little tables at which groups may easily form and break up, afford much better opportunity for meeting and chatting with old and new friends. Besides, the dinners seem necessarily to involve the conventionality of after-dinner speaking, in which one is in danger of grieving his friends with wide-of-the-mark efforts at humor. The smokers are not yet habitually given over to that form of festivity.

Finally, a few remarks as to general sessions. Most of them are tedious. There seems to be a supposed necessity that the association shall be welcomed by some representative local authority, and that some officer shall respond to this address in a preliminary general session; but it would be interesting to try the experiment of meeting once without these formalities, in order to see if science were any the less advanced thereby. This unconventional plan would at any rate have the advantage of allowing the council to arrange three or four, instead of only two, periods in which the vice-presidential addresses could be distributed, thus making it possible for them to be heard by a much larger number of members than is now the case; and this is certainly desirable, for many of the addresses are of broad interest and should attract large audiences. As to the brief general sessions every morning of convocation week, they are often very thinly attended; it must be but a small pleasure to the president and the secretary of the association to officiate at these listless gatherings. Indeed the sectional lists of papers are now so long that time can ill be spared for daily general sessions. The announcements that have been customarily made at the general sessions—for example, the hour and place of an excursion, or the names of new members—can be much more effectively made at the sectional meetings or in the daily programs. The final general session, at which the officers for the ensuing year and the place of the next meeting are voted upon or announced (whichever practice may now be followed) and in which cut-and-dried votes of thanks are passed in perfunctory fashion, have become lifeless affairs, thanks to the efficient work of the council. Few members would be afflicted if even this final general session were replaced by printed announcements. The two general sessions in the evening, to hear the retiring president's address and the general scientific lecture, are on the other hand of real value in advancing science, and should be maintained.

The intention of all these suggestions is to make it possible for those who attend the meetings of the association to spend their time most effectively and comfortably. Conventional formalities, bad air and distracting gymnastic efforts at opening windows, insufficient room and time for social intercourse are unnecessary hindrances to the best enjoyment of convocation week; and there is no sufficient reason why many or all of these hindrances should not be removed.

W. M. Davis.

Cambridge, Mass.,
February 25, 1903.

THE POLICY OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

I have attended many meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and have watched with great interest the progress that has been made—espe-