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WASHINGTON AS A CONVENTION CITY.

It is a notable fact that the recent holiday week has been made the occasion for the gathering of at least four great national scientific societies at the national capital, besides several important ecclesiastical conventions, to say nothing of an army of more than fifteen hundred school teachers coming in two parties from New York and New England. This is certainly an interesting sign of the times. The advantages of such a winter meeting place are obvious; among them being the general attractions of the locality, the accessibility by railroad, the hospitality of the citizens, and above all the facilities furnished by the immense libraries and museums. The scientific bodies thus meeting have been the American Economic Association, the American Historical Association, the Forestry Congress, and the Geological Society of America. Three of the societies met simultaneously under the roof of the Columbian University; thus enabling members of any one body to drop in occasionally to witness the transactions of the others, and in this way to broaden their ideas and quicken their sympathies with various phases of modern culture.

Notwithstanding the diversions of the holidays, and the fact that Congress continued in session, the attendance upon the meetings was unusually large and enthusiastic and a great deal of hard work was actually done. Several hundred papers were read and the discussions to which they gave rise were of great value, not only from the immediate interest excited, but as showing the progress made in historical, scientific, and practical research. It has been decided to hold similar meetings of some of these bodies at Washington next August, in which month will also be held there the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and likewise the International Geological Congress. The timely suggestion was made by some of the public-spirited citizens that it would be well to urge the erection of a suitable convention hall, with committee rooms and all needful appointments; as a means of ultimately concentrating in the locality at least the winter meetings of the various national associations, as well as furnishing facilities for important gatherings of a political and commercial nature.

THE AMERICAN FORESTRY CONGRESS.

The startling fact that, before the woodman's ax, fires originated by hunters and by sparks from numerous railroads running through all parts of the country, the native forests of America were rapidly disappearing, until, perhaps, only from ten to fifteen per cent of the original woods remained, stirred up the minds of those interested in this subject to take active measures for the prevention of such wanton destruction; and also for replacing by tree-planting what had already been destroyed. The work began in Nebraska for economic purposes eighteen years ago. The very first year it was officially reported that 12,000,000 trees had been planted; and now, in that one State, it is known that over 600,000,000 trees have been planted by human hands. In pursuance of this good work, the American Forestry Association was organized nine years ago, to promote the preservation, the management, and the renewal of our forests, by the gathering in of statistics, the securing of appropriate timber acts, and by the suitable education of the rising generation in this regard. The total membership, as reported at the recent Washington meeting, is now 224; and among the beneficial results already secured is the actual establishment of special national reservations, such as the Sequoia tract of 350,000 acres in Tulare County, California, the Yellowstone and Yosemite, and other national parks. Concerning this part of the work, the Forestry Association has now passed resolutions in favor of withholding from sale all forest lands under national and State control; largely extending the boundaries of existing parks (so far as may be desirable), approving the recent request made by the Secretary of the Interior for companies of cavalry to protect the same; and the exclusion of railroads from such parks, and the indorsement of all public and private efforts for the preservation of the Adirondack forests in New York, and those in the White Mountain regions in New Hampshire; regulating the sale of wood supplies under a system of licenses, so as to satisfy the various needs of those in the lumber business, and to superintend the proper manner of cutting so as to secure reforestation. The officers elected at the meeting, which was held in the Agricultural Department, were: President, William Alvard, of Cleveland; treasurer H. M. Fisher; recording secretary, N. H. Egleston; corresponding secretary, E. A. Bowers.

Among those present and participating in the papers and discussions were Secretary Willets, Dr. F. B. Lovering, Col. Henry Strong, Prof. W. W. Folwell, Hon. B. E. Fernow, Mr. Gifford Pinchot, and Hon. B. G. Northrop, and many others.

To Mr. Northrop the nation is especially indebted for what is known as "Arbor Day," an idea suggested by him eight years ago, at the meeting of the association in the city of St. Paul, and since then so efficiently carried out by him as chairman of the committee appointed for the purpose, that thirty-seven

States have adopted the day. As illustrating the work accomplished by Arbor Day, it is reported that in Pennsylvania during the past seven years 300,000 trees have been planted by the school children; and in the State of New York 50,000 have been planted during the past two years. The importance of this peculiar work, together with his establishment of successful village improvement societies in various parts of the country, entitle Mr. Northrop to be regarded as a national benefactor.

THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA.

The second annual gathering of American geologists was held in the chemical lecture room of the Columbian University at Washington, D. C., during the holidays. In the absence of Professors Dana and Newberry, who were detained by ill health, the duty devolved upon Professor Alexander Winchell of replying to the cordial address of welcome made by Dr. Welling, president of the University.

He spoke briefly of the organization of the society, which in its original form was the predecessor of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and which for fifty years formed one of its most active branches. He claimed for geology that it lies at the foundation of the multiform culture of modern life. Stupendous and costly enterprises of national importance have been undertaken in the development of the practical results of geological investigation. He spoke of the ethical influence of this particular science in promoting conscientious study, and claimed that if its methods prevailed in every-day affairs, the consequences would be highly beneficial. The study of geology in our public schools should be encouraged because it develops the imagination, the powers of generalization, and indeed every faculty of the human mind, so that it is a crime against the youth of our land to exclude it from any grade of their school life.

Although the conditions of fellowship in this society are exacting and somewhat expensive, it has already enrolled 202 members, most of whom are in professional work. It has published one volume of its bulletin, and another will shortly appear. It has also begun an excellent work in the collection of rare and original photographs illustrating gorges, chasms, dikes, bosses, buttes, mines, cataracts, and the like.

The officers elected for the coming year are: President, Alexander Winchell, of Ann Arbor, Michigan; vice-presidents, G. K. Gilbert, Washington, D. C., and T. C. Chamberlain, of Madison, Wisconsin; H. L. Fairchild, secretary; H. S. Williams, of Cornell University, treasurer; editor, W. G. McGee, of Washington, D. C. During the three days' session which was held morning, afternoon, and evening, more than 50 papers were read, some of them of very considerable length, all of which go into the hands of the executive council to be published in full or by abstract in the proceedings, at their discretion.

Among the papers of more general interest may be specified an illustrated address by Prof. T. C. Russell, concerning the expedition sent out last summer under the joint auspices of the United States Geological Survey and the National Geographical Society, to explore the region lying between the Yakutat Bay and Mount St. Elias, in Alaska. Examples of both the Alpine and continental types of glaciers were studied. The former exist in great variety in every cañon and valley, amid the mountains, some of them ending in sea walls of solid ice, others situated on steep slopes with no well-defined limits, while others, again, flow out from the mountains through broad valleys as great rivers of ice that unite to form a vast plateau of ice that has forced back the sea. Such plateaus are termed "Piedmont glaciers." A glacier of this nature between Yakutat Bay and the south base of Mount St. Elias, known as the Malospina glacier, has an area of 500 square miles; and west of that mountain there is an extension of the same ice field whose limits are unknown. These fields are similar in many respects to the great Laurentide system. Along the coast bergs are continually breaking off and floating away. Toward the interior the character changes, the region being indented by profound crevasses, while other portions form plains overlaid by soil, so that the phenomenon is presented of a luxuriant floral growth and groves of considerable size flourishing above beds of ice varying in thickness from 500 to 1,000 feet.

Professor G. F. Wright, of Oberlin, O., gave the results of two months' field work amid the extensive lava beds of the Snake River region, in Idaho, having in view the determination of the age of several remarkable lava deposits. His observations began at Soda Springs in the valley of the Bear River, extended thence northward to Beaver Canon, eastward to the Yellowstone Falls in the National Park, southward to Jackson's Hole, and westward crossing Teton Mountains to Market Lake, thence down the valley to Huntington, Oregon.

In connection with Professor Wright's paper, Professor George F. Becker, of San Francisco, described well authenticated discoveries of highly finished ab-