

I have only to fear that I have not brought them in relief (to use an appropriate figure), with the force to which, as I respectfully conceive, they are entitled.

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*Stated Meeting, March 2.*

Present, fifteen members.

Prof. FRAZER, Vice-President, in the Chair.

A letter was read from the Corporation of Harvard College, dated Cambridge, Jan. 26, 1855, returning thanks for No. 52 of the Proceedings of this Society.

The following donations were announced:—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

- Rough Notes of an Exploration for an Inter-Oceanic Canal Route, by way of the rivers Atrato and San Juan, in New Granada, South America. By John C. Trautwine, Civil Engineer. Philadelphia, 1854. 8vo.—*From the Author.*
- Official Army Register for 1855. Published by order of the Secretary of War. Washington, Jan. 1, 1855. 8vo.—*From Major H. Bache.*
- Report of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, for the year 1854. By Thomas S. Kirkbride, M.D., Physician to the Institution. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From the Author.*
- Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, for 1854. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From James J. Barclay, Esq.*
- The Plough, the Loom and the Anvil. Vol. VII. No. 8. Feb. 1855. New York. 8vo.—*From the Editor.*
- The Astronomical Journal. Vol. IV. No. 9. Feb. 21, 1855. Cambridge. 4to.—*From the Editor.*
- American Journal of Science and Arts. Vol. XIX. No. 56. March, 1855. New Haven. 8vo.—*From the Editor.*
- Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, showing the Operations, Expenditures and Condition of the Institution up to Jan. 1, 1854,—and the Proceedings of the Board up to July 8, 1854. Washington. 8vo.—*From Prof. J. F. Frazer.*

Mr. Ord, pursuant to appointment at a former meeting, read an obituary notice of William M'Ilvaine, a deceased member of the Society.

William M'Ilvaine, son of Dr. William M'Ilvaine, a respectable physician of Bristol, Pennsylvania, was born in the said town on the 2d of May, 1786. His maternal grandfather was Chief Justice Shippen, a name conspicuous in the annals of our commonwealth.

Mr. M'Ilvaine's predilection for learning was manifested at an early age; his parents therefore determined to have him prepared for a collegiate education. To this end he was placed under the care of the Reverend Dr. Staughton, in the Burlington Academy, New Jersey. On his matriculation in the college of Princeton, it was ascertained that extraordinary exertions, on his part, were necessary, in order to keep pace with students, of the same class, older than himself. Hence his unremitting perseverance enabled him to reach the desirable period of graduation, and to obtain the bachelorship, at the age of sixteen: an unequivocal evidence of industry and mental powers but rarely exhibited, even in our most favoured seminaries.

On quitting his *alma mater*, the choice of a calling became the subject of deliberation; and it was finally resolved, that, of the liberal professions, jurisprudence was the most eligible, as presenting the widest field for social distinction, and as best adapted to the bias of his mind. An arrangement was accordingly made with a distinguished jurist of Philadelphia, for supervision in his preliminary studies. But the result of his emulous incitement at college became manifest in a weakness of his visual organs, which tended to a deprivation of sight. Hence, under medical advisement, he was restricted, for several months, to a darkened chamber; where, deprived of intercommunication with society abroad, his chief solace was derived from the assiduities of his sisters; who had the satisfaction of beholding him at length restored to his wonted health and vigour.

It was now deemed expedient to relinquish the study of the law; and the pursuits of commerce being resolved upon, Mr. M'Ilvaine, in 1806, was admitted into the counting house of a merchant of Philadelphia.

After a novitiate of some twelve months, a voyage to Canton in China was projected; and Mr. M'Ilvaine, conjointly with an acquaintance, embarked, at the port of Philadelphia, in the capacity of supercargo. On the fulfilment of this eastern adventure, he proceeded to the north of Europe, where, for six years, he was occupied

in superintending the affairs of a respectable mercantile establishment of our city. This was an eventful period in the history of the United States; as the war, which took place with Great Britain, occasioned extraordinary embarrassments in the commercial relations of the citizens of the former with foreign countries. Mr. M'Ilvaine's duties were very arduous; but he acquitted himself in a manner not only satisfactory to his employers, but he was also enabled to render efficient aid to several of his countrymen, who had become involved in difficulties similar to his own.

In April, 1826, Mr. M'Ilvaine was elected a member of this Society. The same year he was appointed chief cashier of the Bank of the United States; and he entered, with alacrity, upon the performance of his multifarious duties. This responsible office, we are assured, was not of his seeking; it was tendered to him, by the President of the Institution, in a manner the best calculated to assure his consent: a trust for which he was competent, but which subsequent events convinced him, after due deliberation, it was advisable to relinquish. In the year 1832, he resigned the office of cashier; and profiting by the lessons of experience, he resolved thenceforward to devote himself to pursuits which were more congenial to one of his taste and temperament.

In 1838, Mr. M'Ilvaine, accompanied with his confidential friend, Mr. Clement C. Biddle, crossed the Atlantic once more, with the intention of making an extensive tour in Europe. Disembarking at Liverpool, they proceeded to Ireland. The British Association for the Advancement of Science holding, in August, its eighth general meeting, at Newcastle upon Tyne, thither our travellers went; and they had the satisfaction of intercourse with some of those eminent philosophers that this association annually draws together. From Newcastle they journeyed into Scotland; and when in the highlands, Mr. M'Ilvaine and his companion separated; the former directing his course to the Hebrides, chiefly with the intention of beholding that basaltic curiosity, Fingal's Cave, in the Island of Staffa. After some pleasant rambles in England, he crossed the channel to France. While in Paris, which offers so many inducements for varied occupation, a cutaneous affection, in his lower extremities, having become aggravated by excessive exercise, he was induced to submit to empirical remedies, which not only confined him to his chamber for many weeks, but which were attended with symptoms that gave no hope for permanent relief, under injudicious treatment. In the persuasion of the imprudence of extending his travels, under existing cir-

cumstances, he promptly resolved to forego his intention of visiting Italy, and to return to the United States. Embarking at Havre in the spring of 1839, he reached in safety his home; where the attentions of domestic kindred were found to be more efficacious than the skill of the physician.

Mr. McIlvaine, possessing an estate in Burlington, New Jersey, his summer residence was in that agreeable retreat; but he was accustomed to sojourn, during winter, in our capital, as affording greater incentives to social intercourse, or literary and scientific investigation. His health being now re-established, and being uncontrolled by any settled occupation, he appropriated his leisure hours to those pursuits which were most congenial to his disposition, and consequently most conducive to his happiness. Judging from external appearances, his friends flattered themselves with the hope, that the life of one whom they so highly esteemed was destined to be prolonged for many years to come. But this expectation proved to be illusive; for in the morning of the eighth of August, 1854, finding himself suddenly ill, he was prevailed with to retire to his chamber. While a physician was noting the symptoms of his disease, paralysis became manifest; this, in the following morning, was succeeded by apoplexy, the precursor of death, which shortly ensued. He was interred in the cemetery of St. Mary's Church, in the town of Burlington.

Mr. McIlvaine's scholastic studies having been strictly classical, he was sedulous in his endeavours for improvement in those branches of knowledge which are essential to good breeding. With English literature, in general, he was conversant; but he occasionally superadded investigations of a scientific character, as offering an ampler scope for intellectual exertion. The defects in chronological tables, which are sanctioned in colleges, having excited his attention, he was induced thereby to investigate the cause. The result of his labours appears in a "Memoir explanatory of a New Perpetual Calendar, Civil and Ecclesiastical, Julian and Gregorian." This Memoir was read to the American Philosophical Society on the 15th of August, 1845. A supplement was read on the 18th of December, 1846; and an appendix on the 15th of July, 1847. The whole appears in the tenth volume, new series, of our Society's transactions.

For the advancement of the science of geology, which, of late, has happily invited so much of the regard of the public, and which is so closely connected with the permanent prosperity of our country, he felt a lively interest; encouraged, probably, by his friendly relations

with individuals eminent for their researches in this master branch of the natural sciences.

With the doctrines of the leading political economists he was also familiar; and, being uninfluenced by any motives of personal interest, he was at liberty to entertain those enlarged views of trade, commerce, and productive labour, which best comport with national prosperity.

Mr. McIlvaine was well enabled to draw from the fund of his disciplined intellect, matter which might have been deemed deserving of more than transient notice; but his modesty induced him to slightly estimate the value of his own acquisitions. He, however, occasionally contributed to the journals short essays on popular topics. But these ephemeral productions were so little regarded by him, that he showed no solicitude to perpetuate their remembrance, by an avowal of authorship. Unlike many, he shrunk from notoriety; humbly content to enjoy, among a select circle of friends, those pleasures which spring from the intercourse of polite and cultivated minds. The regret of these friends, at the loss of their respected associate, is not a little soothed by the reflection, that, as his course through life was highly exemplary, so, in its termination, he was exempted from those sufferings which usually accompany the exit of humanity: he expired without a struggle or a groan.

Prof. Frazer offered the following minute and resolutions, which were read, considered and adopted:

The Society having been informed that an attempt has been made to induce Congress to alter the Act establishing in the City of Washington, the Smithsonian Institution for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men, in such a manner as to divert the whole or a large portion of the funds from the objects to which they have been applied by the Regents, to the formation of a public library;—and believing that such a change would be very detrimental to the usefulness of the Institution:—

*Be it, therefore, resolved*, That, in the opinion of this Society, the present organization of the Smithsonian Institution is a proper and judicious one,—and the funds at the disposal of the Regents appear to have been prudently and fruitfully expended for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.

*Resolved*, That, in the opinion of this Society, the withdrawal of any part of the funds now employed in encouraging new researches,

and in publishing their results, would render the Institution less efficient for the fulfilment of the trusts under which it was founded,—and that the advantages accruing from the formation of a public library would in no wise compensate the loss thus incurred.

It was further ordered that a copy of the foregoing resolutions be attested by the Secretary of the Society, and forwarded to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

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*Stated Meeting, March 16.*

Present, twelve members.

Prof. FRAZER, Vice-President, in the Chair.

A letter was read from Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, dated Washington, March 8, 1855, returning thanks, on behalf of the Board of Regents, for the expression of approbation on the part of this Society, of the course they have pursued, as indicated by the resolutions adopted by the Society at last meeting.

The following donations were announced:—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. Vol. XV. No.

3. Jan. 12, 1855. London. 8vo.—*From the Society.*

An Essay to prove the Contagious Character of Malignant Cholera, with brief Instructions for its Prevention and Cure. By Bernard M. Byrne, M.D., Surgeon U. S. Army. Philadelphia, 1855. 8vo.—*From the Author.*

Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Annual Reports of the Trustees of the Philadelphia Gas Works, to the Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia, 1853, 1854, 1855:—with two Pamphlets containing the Proceedings in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, for the Eastern District, July Term, 1854, in relation to the Philadelphia Gas Works. Philadelphia. 8vo.—*From John C. Cresson, Esq.*

Rectification of Mr. T. A. Conrad's "Synopsis of the Family of Naiades of North America;" published in the Proceedings of the