

the fitting out of a naval Arctic expedition in 1874. Mr. Goschen is, we have reason to think, now conversant with the subject, and, as the Minister whose duty it is to advance and foster the interests of the British navy, it is impossible that he can fail to see the advantages of Arctic service. He is supported, at the Admiralty, by Sir Alexander Milne, who has ever been friendly to such enterprises, and sensible of the excellent school for naval men afforded by voyages of discovery; and by Admiral Richards, the hydrographer, whose sound judgment and great Arctic experience render his advice most valuable.

The Prime Minister, with whom the decision will rest, is a statesman who well knows the general, as well as the scientific uses of Arctic enterprise. He formed one of that Ministry which despatched the last scientific expedition to the Arctic Regions; and, as a member of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Sir John Ross's case, he signed a report expressing his approval of Arctic voyages in the strongest terms—"A public service is rendered to a maritime country, especially in times of peace, by deeds of daring, enterprise, and patient endurance of hardship, which excite the public sympathy and enlist the general feeling in favour of maritime adventure." Such were, and we trust still are, the views of Mr. Gladstone with reference to the general uses of Arctic voyages of discovery. When to these general impressions are added a knowledge of the important scientific and practical results to be attained, the assurance that there is no undue risk, that the cost will be comparatively slight, and the good both to the navy and to mercantile interests incalculable, we cannot bring ourselves to believe that the decision of Mr. Gladstone will not be favourable to a renewal of Arctic research.

#### LOCAL SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES\*

##### II.

ALTOGETHER, so far as we have been able to ascertain,† the number of existing local societies ‡ which have for their main, or only as a part of their object the culture of Science, that were established in the years between 1781 and 1830, are only 22. We shall see that the increase since 1830 has been enormous, though the large majority of those established during the last forty-three years are of a much more simple kind, so far as organisation is concerned, than those established during the former period, have to a great extent a different object in view or rather accomplish the intellectual improvement of the members after a different fashion, and are, we think, thoroughly characteristic of the scientifically inquisitive and increasingly intelligent period during which they have been established. Not many "Literary and Philosophical Societies" have been established during the latter period, most of them being professedly devoted to study and research in Science, especially in natural history, in all or one of its branches, and a large majority of them being Field Clubs, as those associations are called, the whole or part of whose programme is to investigate the natural history (including botany, zoology, and geology) of particular districts, in combination sometimes with

their archæology. Indeed the last forty years might well be designated the era of field clubs.

We have already mentioned the Northumberland, Durham, and Newcastle Natural History Society, established in 1829, which, although it has done some excellent field-club work, was not professedly established for this purpose. There can be no doubt that the first genuine field-club was the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, founded September 21, 1831, though Sir Walter Elliot traces the true origin of field-clubs to an association of students, formed in 1823 at the University of Edinburgh, under the name of the Plinian Society, for the advancement of the "study of natural history, antiquities, and the physical sciences in general." They met weekly in the evening during the session, from November to July, for reading papers and discussions; and also, as the season advanced, made occasional excursions into the neighbouring country. The chief promoters of the scheme were three brothers named Baird, from Berwickshire; but John, the eldest, must be considered the founder. He drew up an elaborate code of laws in eighteen chapters, and, as the first president, made a statement of the proposed plan and objects of the society at their inaugural meeting on the 14th January 1823. Among the original members occur the names of James Hardie, J. Grant Malcolmson (both Indian geologists), and Dr. John Coldstream; and, at a later period, those of Charles Darwin\* (of Shrewsbury, 1826), John Hutton Balfour (1827), and Hugh Falconer (1828), with others who have since become distinguished in the scientific and literary world. The latest notice of the society is the session of 1829-30, up to which time the Bairds, although they had left the University, appear as occasional contributors.

No doubt this Edinburgh Association had considerable influence in originating the Berwickshire Club, for two of the Bairds became parish ministers in Berwickshire, and it was they, along with their brother, the late Dr. William Baird, of the British Museum, Dr. Johnstone, Dr. Embleton, and four or five others, who met at Coldingham on the date above given, and drew up the plan of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, "a term," Sir W. Elliot remarks, "now first extended to a scientific body." Its object was declared to be the "investigation of the natural history of Berwickshire and its vicinage;" in reality its field extends over the whole of Berwickshire, Roxburghshire, and the north-east part of Northumberland, to the limits of the Tyne-side Club's district. The rules of the club, as all rules should be, are short, providing that the club should hold no property, require no admission fee, and should meet five times in the year at a place and hour to be communicated to each member by the secretary. Thus the Berwickshire Club is a field-club pure and simple, having, unlike many other similar clubs, no winter meetings for the reading of papers, whatever papers are read being read after dinner on the days when excursions are made. At the first anniversary it numbered 27 members, and in 1870, when Sir Walter Elliot gave his address, there were 249 members on the roll, including a few ladies, and "two corresponding members, the last description having been

\* Concluded from vol. viii. p. 524.

† We regret to say that none of the Edinburgh Societies have been mentioned forward as informants.

‡ We do not include in this article the great London Societies, as the Royal, the Linnean, the Astronomical, &c.

\* The first paper contributed by him, entitled "On the Ova of the *Fleustra*," in which he announces that he has discovered organs of nutrition, and, secondly, that the small black body hitherto mistaken for the young of *Fleustra* is in reality the ovum of *Fleusticoides muricata*, exhibits early habits of minute investigation.