

found overlying twenty-five feet of gravel and sands; and in the apparently corresponding beds at Finchley and Hendon Lane drift fossils and casts are occasionally found.—Dr. Hicks agreed with the conclusion that these sands and gravels are Mr. Wood's Middle Glacial.—Mr. Caleb Evans thought the heights to the north of London marked the southern termination of the Glacial drifts.—Mr. Bott considered that the Glacial sea had extended over the country south of the Thames.—Collections of fossils and boulders from the Drift of Middlesex were exhibited, and Mr. J. T. B. Ives drew the attention of the meeting to a quantity of peat which he had taken from the Drift.—At the next meeting of the Association, 5th January, 1872, a paper will be read "On the Overlapping of several Geological Formations on the North Wales Border." By D. C. Davies, Esq., of Oswestry.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LOCAL MUSEUMS AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.¹

SIR,—I am glad to see in the November Number of the *GEOLOGICAL MAGAZINE*, that my suggestions with regard to Local Museums are seconded by Mr. Townshend M. Hall.

If the British Association had for its object something beyond the reading of scientific papers and discussions thereupon, part of its energies might be well expended in giving an impulse to scientific investigation in the several localities it annually visits. The value of individual labour in the cause of science would be greatly enhanced by the development of scientific organization throughout the country, *i.e.*, by the development of the proper functions of local scientific societies and museums. The result would be a greater national appreciation of the importance of scientific investigation as it relates to this country; science would meet with greater support, and the valuable private local collections of Geology, Natural History, and Archæology, would often eventually be added to the several museums to which they would locally belong. The museums would rise from their present debased position as curiosity shops, and would become valuable storehouses for the benefit of science and posterity. But this desirable state will not be arrived at so long as societies are isolated, and have merely local journals of proceedings. It is needless to say what important results might arise from their uniting their observations in a common journal of science. The present system of societies throughout the kingdom is like a vast machine, of which the wheels are unconnected; unite them, and the results might be gigantic.

Scientific societies should always be in connexion with a local Museum, for the development of which the members should individually labour in their several departments. Private collections if undertaken with any energy soon become an incumbrance. Unfor-

¹ See *Nature*, vol. v., p. 35.

tunately the present museums are in such a state of neglect from the want of competent curators, and from the apathy and ignorance of committees connected therewith, that they render the formation of local collections waste of time and energy, as they are unfitted for their permanent and efficient preservation.

Scientific men seem frequently to be so much engrossed in their own departments that the result is, the general interests of science are neglected. This want of public spirit is much to be regretted; not to mention the jealous spirit too often exhibited, and their acting, in some instances, as if they had taken leases of certain departments of Nature, and had set up a notice "Trespassers Beware."

I may mention that a museum in London, as a centre of the provincial museums, would be a great requirement, representing an epitome of the collections throughout the country, and of British Geology, Natural History, and Archæology. This should be the British Museum. *British* not in a national, but in a scientific sense. The more appropriate term for the present British Museum would be the "National Museum"; and it should confine its collections more especially to the productions (Natural History, etc., and Antiquarian) of foreign countries.

F. G. S.

November 17th, 1871.

GREENLAND METEORIC IRON.¹

SIR,—When reading Mr. Forbes's account of the meteoric iron, whose occurrence on the shore of Greenland was communicated to the Geological Society on the 8th November, the same idea which was expressed by Professor Ramsay occurred to me before I had got as far as his remarks, viz., the idea that this native iron, instead of being derived extraneously from the fall of a meteorite, might be a portion of a "metallic core of the earth, brought to the surface by the eruption of the basalt in which it is said to be imbedded."

But upon consideration this seems extremely unlikely. Nothing is more certain than that the earth consists of concentric spheroidal strata, each stratum being of equal density throughout. And since the mean density of the whole is fully twice the mean density of the surface, it follows that there must be strata of great density within. Now such being the case, it seems not to admit of doubt, that the more dense strata will be there more deeply situated. When, then, we consider the relative densities of meteoric iron, which is about 7·7, and of basalt, which is about 3, it seems highly improbable that they should be sufficiently nearly associated in the interior for the heavier one to have been raised to the surface entangled in the lighter. Nevertheless a terrestrial origin appears to me possible.

From the analogy of meteoric stones, it seems very probable that our earth may possess a central core of iron. Those bodies are, as is well known, divisible into stony and metallic. The former nearly resemble our crystalline rocks, and the latter consist principally

¹ Other letters have been received on this subject from Colonel Greenwood and F. G. S., but want of space precludes their publication till next month.