

FIELD MEETING AT ASHBOURNE, JUNE 26, 1866.

BY invitation of the PRESIDENT, a Field Meeting of the Institute was held at his residence at Ashbourne, North West Arm, and vicinity, on Tuesday the 26th June.

The programme contemplated,—1. a visit to Downs' Zoological collection, head of the North West Arm, and thence to Ashbourne. 2. A visit to the grave of the late TITUS SMITH, eminent in Nova Scotia as a Naturalist, where the President would read a short sketch of the life of that person; thence to proceed to Geizer's hill, where a splendid panorama of the surrounding country is presented, and where the party could study the botany and geology of the district. 3. An excursion from Geizer's hill to Byers' lake. 4. The return to Ashbourne to dine, and afterwards to visit the President's private museum.

The party assembled at the Province building, where conveyances were in waiting to take them to Downs' cottage. The day was beautifully fine but intensely hot, the thermometer ranging 84° Fah. On arriving they were received with a hearty welcome from Mr. Downs, who very politely escorted them over his grounds, and showed them all the curiosities. Amongst these the principal and more imposing are a splendid young polar bear, a seal, and several deer and antelopes from southern America. The collection consists otherwise of foreign, British and native animals, birds and beasts, of rare and interesting species, all well worthy the inspection of naturalists, and of strangers visiting Halifax. After passing an hour delightfully, the party next proceeded to Ashbourne, the mansion of the President, where they were hospitably entertained, and rested for a while previously to entering upon the further business of the day.

Ashbourne is prettily situated, at an easy distance from the city, and just beyond its taxation, an advantage not to be despised even by men of science. The grounds are tastefully cultivated, and on either side, within a neighbourly distance, are neat suburban residences, and progressive improvements, which at no distant day will make the "Dutch Village," so called, one of the most delightful spots in Nova Scotia. The scenery embraces northward, a view of Bedford basin, bounded by the sombre pine-clad hills; eastward, the well cultivated fields and farm houses of the peninsula, and beyond, the citadel and the upper portion of the city of Halifax; southward is the North West Arm, the harbour of Halifax, and a grand ocean distance. The soil, which is susceptible of the highest cultivation, rests on the metamorphosed slate of the peninsula, and here and there on the surface are scattered granite boulders, large and small, derived from the glacial action of which the district has largely partaken. There can be little doubt that here as elsewhere in the metamorphic coast band, gold is present in the numerous quartz veins that make their appearance wherever the rock is exposed. Westward, and at a short distance, are the chain of lakes which help to furnish the city with a copious supply of water. These, as well as the valley of the Dutch village, have evidently

been scooped by glaciers, which have also formed the North West Arm, and largely denuded the rocks and excavated the depths along the western shore of the harbour.

From Ashbourne a walk of half a mile through the forest led to the Naturalist's grave. It is a quiet spot on a rising ground in view of the surrounding landscape, covered with a young growth of birch and other deciduous trees—just such a place as a philosopher might be expected to select for his last repose. Here all around “the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,”—the Dutch and German emigrants, who more than a century ago, settled at this place, which was called after their name. A wooden railing, fast going to decay, marks the grave of the “Philosopher of the Dutch village.” The party encircled it, and with bared heads listened to the interesting recital by the President, of the biography with which he had been furnished. At its close, anecdotes and reminiscences of the departed were conjured out of the past, and related by those who had known him and admired his talents and unobtrusive virtues. It would be an act of grace, while the remembrance of the man lingers among the present generation, to erect a more befitting monument to one who may be truly regarded as a pioneer of civilization and science in Nova Scotia.

This tribute rendered to departed worth, the journey was made to the top of Geizer's hill, the highest ground in the vicinity, from which there is an extended view of the country that amply compensates the fatigue of the ascent. Geizer's hill is nearly of the same elevation as that on which the citadel stands, and which it pretty well commands. It is composed of metamorphosed slate and quartzite, much disturbed, with granite boulders interspersed—the compactness of the rock, and probably its elevation, preventing the erosion which has evidently befallen the land for some distance on either side. The retreat of the glaciers however, must have left a considerable deposit of clay and drift, and this impregnated in the lapse of time with granitic and slaty detritus and decomposed vegetation, has in some places produced a fertile soil, which at this height appears to reward the labour of its cultivators.

The land at a short distance from the hill inclines with a gradual descent to the chain of lakes which skirt the Margaret's bay road. Byers' lake, the next requirement of the programme, is about a mile distant in a north-westerly direction. Just however as it came in sight, after a hard scramble through bushes and over interminable boulders, it became the unanimous opinion,—taking into consideration the intense heat, and the exertion required to overcome the difficulty of the way, and the little of interest that might be expected when the goal was reached,—that it would be wise to retrace the route. The main body accordingly returned to Ashbourne, where they were soon after joined by stragglers who had taken another direction, but eventually had arrived at a similar conclusion. The extreme heat and toil had told more or less upon all, but all were in excellent humour, and in half an hour were well prepared, with sharpened appetites, to discuss the ample repast prepared by their worthy entertainer.

An excellent dinner was served under the trees, in a hardwood grove a

little distance from the mansion. Mr. Parish the photographer was on the ground, and attempted a sketch of the scene, but owing to the broken light among the trees, was but partially successful. A pleasant hour quickly passed, after which a visit was paid to the PRESIDENT'S private museum, which is contained in a building erected for that purpose.

The collection of specimens gathered together in this building is varied and interesting, comprising many rare and curious forms in every branch of zoology, brought at much trouble and expense from various parts of the globe, and exhibited either in the drawers of cabinets, or in table cases which extends down the centre of the room. The foreign entomological collection, principally from the East Indies and South America; the conchological collection containing some rare land shells from New Guinea, Arroo and other Pacific islands; and especially the beautiful specimens of corals from the Bermudas—attracted the notice of the members. But perhaps the most interesting portion of the whole lay in the series of madrepore and asteroid corals, illustrating the growth of the Bermuda reefs, which is considered by Mr. Jones to be far more rapid than is generally supposed. Coal, glass bottles, recent shells, containing their inhabitants; roots of trees, &c., were here to be seen coated with a vigorous growth of coral, affording facts sufficient to prove beyond a doubt that some polyps are able to secrete their calcareous forms very rapidly in the Bermuda waters, in comparison with similar or allied species in other parts of the world, which according to some naturalists are *supposed* to take thousands of years to form a few feet of calcareous matter. The collection of Nova Scotian reptiles was also worthy of notice, as it possessed nearly every species known to the country, and in some cases species were exhibited in all stages, from the embryo to the adult. The whole collection comprises from seven to eight thousand specimens.

This ended the first Field Day of the Nova Scotian Institute, for 1866. A subsequent half hour was spent on the green sward amid the quiet beauties of nature and in merry social converse, under the influence of a delightful summer evening. Carriages then arrived to take back to the city the Members and their friends—and the party broke up, after kind adieus to the worthy PRESIDENT, by whom they had been so agreeably entertained.

W.G.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF TITUS SMITH. BY WILLIAM SMITH.
(COMMUNICATED BY THE PRESIDENT.)

AT a Field Meeting of the Institute held at Ashbourne, near Halifax, the residence of the PRESIDENT, June 26, 1866, one of the places of interest visited was the grave of TITUS SMITH. Mr. SMITH resided at the commencement of the present century for several years in the vicinity of Halifax, leading a retired life and devoting nearly his whole time to the study of nature. He was one of the first observers who paid attention to the Natural History of Nova Scotia, and his manuscript notes contained in the archives of the Province, bear testimony to the careful manner in which he registered all facts, especially those relating to the botany of the country. Being employed in different Provincial surveys in the interior he had ample opportunity of pursuing his favourite study, and made such good use of his time while in the forest on these expeditions, that he was enabled to write a