

Transactions

OF THE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1888.

MEETING AT BANFF.

VOLAPUK.—Under the auspices of the Banffshire Field Club, Herr Schilling, of Aberdeen, delivered a lecture on Volapük in the Academy Buildings, Banff, on Friday evening, in presence of a large audience. Rev. James Davidson, The Parsonage, presided, and, after the admission of new members, briefly introduced Herr Schilling to the meeting. The lecturer at the outset referred to the greatly improved means of travelling and intercommunication available in modern times, and stated that the principal difficulty which remained for a full and free intercourse between different countries was a linguistic one. He believed it was impossible for any one to be able to speak all the languages of the earth. There were two ways of attaining a language that could be understood by all—a dead or living language might by common assent be raised into the position of an international language, or an artificial language might be invented. Both ways had been tried, and both had proved failures. He alluded to the different times in which the Latin and French languages gained the ascendancy over others, but though these had a kind of international position they were far from being international languages, as they were only known to the learned few. There was hardly any prospect of any of the living tongues becoming an international language. It was stated that English would become this language, because it was spoken by the greatest number of people, but the argument was faulty, as Chinese was spoken by more people than was English. He referred to the invention of several artificial languages, but all these had one fault, namely, that they were not founded upon the principle that all the natural languages were based upon—the principle of naming the things and ideas, and dividing these names into nouns, adjectives, verbs, &c. This error the inventor of Volapük had avoided, and, therefore, he had been successful. After giving an interesting account of the life of the inventor and explaining

the method that he had set to work, he said the grammar of Volapük was exceedingly simple, consisting of between 40 and 50 rules without exceptions. It could be learned in a very few weeks, while the declension, which was the same for all words, could be learned in one minute. He gave a number of examples of the use of the language on the blackboard. Having selected an English word, he gave its equivalent in Volapük, and by the addition of vowels and consonants to this root he converted into one word the equivalent of a number of English words. Continuing, he said it had all the advantages of natural languages without their defects. The chief advantages were its orthography—one sound one letter, its grammar which combined the greatest simplicity with the greatest wealth of forms, surpassing in this respect the Greek language, and its euphony. It was already written, read, and spoken by over two millions of people, and among other advances which the language had made on the Continent there was noted the fact that the Spaniards had instituted a Chair of Volapük at the University of Madrid, and nine periodicals were published in the language, all this progress leading him to believe that the time was not far distant when every child would learn Volapük after his own language. The chairman complimented Herr Schilling on his eloquent and clear lecture, and invited discussion on the subject. Rev. Mr Chisholm gave, amid some laughter and cheers, a short address in Volapük, and added that he had found the acquirement of the language very easy. Sheriff Hamilton-Grierson said he had listened with very great interest to the singularly clear way in which Herr Schilling had explained this new language. He thought a difficulty presented itself in the number of original roots one would require to learn in order to apply the terminations and prefixes. The Chairman sympathised with the difficulty, but added that the peasantry in this part of the country managed to get along with less than one thousand words. Herr Schilling stated that 75 per cent. of the words of the Volapük language were drawn from English words. The Chairman moved a vote of thanks to Herr Schilling for his lecture, which was cordially awarded, and on the motion of Herr Schilling. Rev. Mr Davidson was warmly thanked for presiding.