

or minutes, the relative position of the hands on the dial probably at once sufficiently indicating the time to most persons without any need of reference thereto, but it would be by no means so easy to pick up the hour from a circle containing twenty-four, and especially in the case of public and turret clocks. There is also the question of change of the motion-work to which allusion has been already made—necessary if the hour-hand is to make one revolution only in twenty-four hours—a practical question in regard to which the watch- or clock-maker could probably best speak.

There is another way of adapting ordinary watches and clocks to the twenty-four hour system, which, if the watch is intended only for the reckoning of local time, seems deserving of consideration. It consists in making the hour figures shorter, not necessarily at all less distinct, and placing two circles of figures round the dial, an inner circle with hours from 0 to 11, and an outer circle with hours from 12 to 23. The hour-hand would thus point to 1 and 13 and to 2 and 14, &c., at the same time, it being understood that the hours 0, 1, 2, &c., would be reckoned in the morning, and the hours 12, 13, 14, &c., in the afternoon, a convention to which people would probably soon accommodate themselves. On such a plan a watch would only require a new dial, no change of wheelwork being necessary, so that it could be very readily applied to existing watches, and so sooner promote the use of the twenty-four hour system. Persons might perhaps object to the introduction of two hour-circles from an artistic point of view. But, after all is said, the question whether one circle containing twenty-four hours, or two circles having twelve hours in each, be preferable, is one to be settled only by a consideration of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two proposals, in regard to which it would be interesting to learn what business men and others on the one hand, and practical watchmakers on the other, may have to say. There are conditions under which the one circle of twenty-four hours would certainly be the more advantageous, and clearly it would be well that one system only should if possible be used.

As regards clocks, there is the further question of striking the hours. For public clocks we could not go on to twenty-four. It may be a question whether in large towns one stroke only at each hour might not be a sufficient indication, though even this rule probably could hardly be universally applied.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

AT a meeting of the General Committee of the British Association held at the Royal Institution on the 11th instant, Sir Lyon Playfair was elected President for the meeting at Aberdeen next year. It was resolved to request the following to accept the office of Vice-President for that meeting:—The Duke of Argyll, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Sir William Thomson, James Matthews, Lord Provost of Aberdeen, Dr. Alexander Bain, Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen, the Very Rev. Principal Pirie, and Prof. W. H. Flower. The following were elected Local Secretaries: Prof. G. Pirie, Dr. Angus Fraser, and Mr. J. W. Crombie; Local Treasurers: Messrs. Robert Lumsden and John Findlater. The following appointments were also made:—General Treasurer: Prof. A. W. Williamson, Ph.D., F.R.S.; General Secretaries: Capt. Douglas Galton, C.B., F.R.S., and A. G. Vernon Harcourt, F.R.S.; Secretary: Prof. Bonney, D.Sc., F.R.S.; Ordinary Members of the Council: Capt. W. de W. Abney, Prof. W. G. Adams, Prof. R. S. Ball, J. F. La Trobe Bateman, Sir F. J. Bramwell, Prof. W. Boyd Dawkins, Dr. Warren De La Rue, Prof. J. Dewar, Capt. Sir F. J. Evans, Prof. W. H. Flower, Dr. J. H.

Gladstone, J. W. L. Glaisher, Lieut.-Col. H. H. Godwin-Austen, J. Clarke Hawkshaw, Prof. O. Henrici, Prof. T. McK. Hughes, Dr. J. Gwyn Jeffreys, Prof. H. N. Moseley, Admiral Sir E. Ommanney, W. Pengelly, Dr. W. H. Perkin, Prof. Prestwich, the Right Hon. George Sclater-Booth, Dr. H. C. Sorby, Sir R. Temple; Auditors: John Evans, D.C.L., Treas. R.S., Dr. Huggins, F.R.S., and George Griffith, M.A.

Invitations for the year 1886 were received from Birmingham, Bournemouth, and Manchester, and after a discussion (in which the representatives of Manchester expressed their willingness to withdraw in favour of Birmingham for the year 1886, but their earnest hope that the Association would not fail to visit them in 1887), it was agreed, *nem con.*, to accept the invitation from the town of Birmingham for the year 1886.

The report of the Council relating to the rules concerning the representation of local scientific societies at the meetings of the Association and the establishment of a Permanent Committee as a means of union between them and the Association were sanctioned, and it was resolved in accordance with a recommendation from the Council to present the die for the medal which is about to be founded at McGill University, Montreal, in commemoration of the visit of the Association to Montreal.

THE NEW VOLCANIC ISLAND OFF ICELAND

AT the end of July this year the light-keeper at Cape Reykjanes, the south-west point of Iceland, reported that a volcanic island had risen in the sea a few miles off the cape. Reykjanes has long been noted as a centre of volcanic activity, and from time to time islands have arisen and submarine eruptions have occurred in its neighbourhood. In the year of the great Skaptárfell eruption, which proved so fatal to Iceland, 1783, an island appeared off Reykjanes, only to disappear again after a very brief existence. Only a year or two ago an eruption of considerable violence occurred in the sea, not far from the spot where the new island appeared. Columns of steam and clouds of dust, mingled with occasional glowing masses of fused rock, were seen to rise out of the sea, and large quantities of pumice were thrown up and drifted ashore on the neighbouring coast.

Being desirous to learn as much as possible about the new island, I visited Reykjanes on September 9. The cape, like the greater part of the surrounding district, is entirely covered with lava; not far from the sea lie a number of boiling pools of considerable size, from whose agitated muddy waters arise the columns of steam that give the cape its name, Reykjanes (Smoking Cape); over a large area surrounding the pools the earth is perforated by steam jets and small mud boilers, and the traveller must pass warily over its treacherous surface, for under the thin and yielding upper crust lie beds of soft many-coloured clays, boiling hot, permeated by steam and mixed with sulphur. On a projecting cliff about 150 feet high stands the lighthouse, a low octagonal stone house, and from the point a line of islands, four in number, runs out to the south-west, the nearest being about seven miles, and the farthest about sixteen miles, from the cape. Of these only the nearest two, Eldey or Melsækken (the Meal-sack, so called from the guano deposits that whiten the top of its bleak cylindrical mass), and Eldeyjardrangur, are usually visible from the lighthouse. The farther two, Geirfuglasker and Geirfugladrangur, are chiefly interesting as having been formerly frequented by the Great Auk or Gare-fowl (*Alca impennis*), now apparently extinct.

When I reached Reykjanes, rain and mist obscured the sea, Eldey could only with difficulty be seen, and the new island was quite invisible. I waited patiently for better weather, employing the time in examining the boiling springs and hot clay-beds, which are similar to