

progress of the Society, on its present state and future prospects.

Here it may be noted that the attendance at the annual general meetings was by no means large : on February 5, 1819, it was nineteen ; and the same number were present on February 6, 1824.

Dr. Bostock, in the address to which reference has just been made, recommended

a regular attendance upon our public meetings. This may indeed appear of less moment, provided we are well supplied with papers, yet I am disposed to think that, in its ultimate effects, it will be found to be equally essential to the well-being of the Society. If our meetings be scantily attended, the spirit of the Society must necessarily languish, there will be little inducement for new members to join us, while the old ones will feel disposed to desert, and both our literary and our pecuniary resources will be in danger of becoming deficient. The plan which has been lately adopted of terminating our meetings by conversations on the subject of the papers, or on other topics connected with geology, seems to have fully justified the experiment by the interest which they have excited. Those of you who have been present at the conversations which have been conducted by our late president [Buckland], who have been equally instructed by his knowledge and delighted by his eloquence, must be aware how very much of this success depended upon his talents and personal exertions.

Dr. Fitton, in his address delivered February 15, 1828, referred to 'the self-command that renders both agreeable and instructive the conversations (I will not call them discussions—much less debates) with which it is now our practice to follow up the reading of memoirs at our table.'<sup>1</sup>

Prestwich has recorded that Charles Babbage (1792–1871) was a very frequent attendant at our evening meetings, and occasionally took part in the discussions. He was Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge,

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Geol. Soc.* i. p. 61.