

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1885.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

THE NEWS-REPORTERS of the daily press are trying to enliven the dull season by the invention of stories of fraud and irregularities in the various scientific bureaus of the government. Now it is a new find in the accounts of the coast-survey, and now it is a startling report upon the proceedings of the fish-commission, or the work of the national museum. These stories have the appearance of being earnest endeavors to guess out things which, from the point of view of the news-reporter, might possibly be true, made by men who do not know enough about the case to make their guesses even plausible. Last week the *Boston Advertiser* published a despatch from Washington, purporting to give an abstract of a report on the operations of the geological survey. The despatch might have passed muster but for an unfortunate endeavor of the reporter to strike beyond his reach, by saying that Professors Cope and Marsh had been allowed to appropriate collections of the value of \$150,000, belonging to the survey. Had he known that Cope never had any connection with the survey, and so had never had an opportunity to possess himself of its specimens, the inventor would, no doubt, have substituted some other name for his. That a board of experts would accuse the director of the Peabody museum of Yale college of unlawfully possessing himself of specimens handed to him for examination and report, is a statement fitted only to provoke a smile. The fact that the director of the survey had just left for a month's tour of inspection in the far west, rendered almost unnecessary the denial of the auditor that such a report existed.

When the history of the irregularities in the coast-survey is calmly reviewed, it will, no

doubt, be found that the interests of the government have suffered less than one would suppose from the flaming head-lines which introduced the treasury report on the subject. If, as is said to be the case, the work unlawfully paid for was all done outside of office hours, and in addition to the regular duties, the case may admit of some palliation from a moral aspect, even though we deplore such a departure from the spirit of the wise and necessary law that salaried government employees shall not receive extra pay for real or supposed extra work. The country will not see any great wrong in loaning antiquated transit instruments to institutions of learning, when they no longer serve the purposes of the survey. The disposition to show a newly discovered evil in the strongest light, and to omit palliating circumstances, is common to all men, committees of investigation included. Let us, then, reserve our judgment until we have heard and weighed the other side.

THE PUBLICATION of his third report on the insects of Illinois furnishes the state entomologist, Dr. S. A. Forbes, an opportunity to prepare an index to the first twelve reports, which is done in excellent manner, and to call attention to the fact, that, in volume, the fourteen reports of the entomologists of Illinois, amounting in all to 2,358 pages, exceed the literature of economic entomology of any other state. Commenced by Walsh, who died soon after his appointment, and continued by Le-Baron and Thomas, the office has now fallen into better hands than at any time since its foundation, the reports of Mr. Forbes having already become a standard by reason of the independent and original methods with which he is pursuing the study of economic entomology. The three reports which he has now published, equal in value the larger bulk of their predecessors.