the creation of more professorships and the propriety of combining their forces into a national faculty, institute, or school, of advanced geographical teaching. In this way no additional expense would be required, and yet the work might be more effectively carried on.

The minister in replying evinced his sympathy with the view that geography was growing daily more important and should be more widely taught. He declared his desire for more numerous chairs of that science, and that it should be taught more effectively, but doubted whether it were desirable that any centralized body should undertake instruction of that science separately, evidently believing that it should be taught in conjunction with other branches of learning. He also pointed out that much progress had already been made. Four professorships of geography have been created since 1870, and more than ten others combine history and geography, besides which there are several courses of lectures on geographical subjects. M. Drapeyron, the editor of the review, is devoted to the project of a national school of geography, and has constituted himself its apostle in France. By geography is, of course, meant 'knowledge of the earth' in its widest sense, and not merely a smattering of political divisions, large towns and the most salient physical features, mixed with a little history, ethnology, architecture and cartography, which passes muster for the science of geography in most of our schools.

Great Britain has recently been stirring in the matter of geographical teaching, and, though this country has benefited greatly by the work and presence of such men as Guyot and Maury, and by the constant progress of actual exploration, which has made certain aspects of geography familiar to the public mind, yet even here the teaching of this science leaves much to be desired, and it is not yet, we believe, recognized by a full professorship in any of our universities.

ASTRONOMERS AT MOST observatories must envy those at Nice their clear skies. M. Charlois of that observatory was the first to pick up Tuttle's comet at its late return, and, although it was only possible to observe it for ten or fifteen minutes each morning, between its rising-time and twilight, yet, in spite of its faintness, nearness to the horizon, and this limited time, he was able to compare its position with that of neighboring stars on six consecutive days after discovery, thus furnishing plenty of data for fixing the time of perihelion passage and correcting the elements of its orbit, even if no other observations are secured at this return. The same observer also obtained good observations of Barnard's comet on the seven consecutive nights following the telegraphic announcement of its discovery. These are records that could be made at very few places outside the sunny skies of southern France and Italy.

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE of astronomy and meteorology, as looked upon in some parts of the world, is well illustrated in a volume just published whose title page reads: "Meteorological observations made at the Adelaide observatory, and other places in southern Australia and the northern territory, during the year 1882, under the direction of Charles Todd, C. M. G., F. R. A. S., observer, postmaster-general, and superintendent of telegraphs." The volume is a folio of 298 pages, of which all but two are devoted to meteorology. These two describe the astronomical work of the Adelaide observatory for 1882, the first being devoted to the observation of ten phenomena of Jupiter's satellites, of which only two are eclipses, the phenomena timed in these cases being described as 'first seen,' 'quite distinct,' and 'full blaze.' The other page is devoted to the director's observations upon the transit of Venus of December 7, made at Wentworth. The description of the determination of the latitude of the observing station is worth quoting. "The latitude, deduced from eleven meridian altitudes, kindly taken with a sextant by Mr. J. W. Connolly, surveyor, is 34° 6′ 24.7″."

THE ALERT EXPEDITION.

THE steamer Alert, Lieutenant Gordon, R. N., commanding, arrived at St. John's, N. F., Oct. 14, from her second attempt to reach Hudson Bay, having visited all the stations where observers had been placed in 1884, relieving the parties and supplying their places by fresh observers. All were well, only one death, that of a station hand by scurvy, having been reported. One of the stations was found deserted, but the party, fearing the Alert might not reach them, had taken passage on the Hudson Bay company's steamer Labrador. The results of work at the stations have been favorable, though exact details have not yet been received. The Alert reached her destination

without difficulty, and those most interested in the route by Hudson Bay to Europe for the wheat of Manitoba, are enthusiastic in their assertions that this proves the practicability of the route. A sober second thought, however, would indicate that, as far as yet made public, absolutely nothing new has been learned on the voyage of the Alert. The character of the navigation of Hudson Bay, a great shoal inlet, with its bottom dotted with stupendous bowlders often rising nearly to the surface; with no good port in the southwest, where, at the best anchorage, the vessel lies eight or nine miles from what must be the shipping point, permanent piers of any length being out of the question, owing to the movements of the ice; a strictly arctic climate, constant mirage, and no charts of any value: these incidents of the plan do not seem to be affected by anything done on the voyage as far as yet known.

USE AND ABUSE OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

EVERY country thinks, doubtless, when it looks at the peculiar way in which things are done in other countries, that it could devise a method of much more dignity and wisdom for carrying out its purposes. We may certainly be excused for thinking that the plans by which great men are selected in both England and France might be improved upon. The familiar story of the candidate for the fortieth arm-chair of the French academy going about and soliciting the votes of thirty-nine immortals, never fails to give one an unpleasant shock at every fresh hearing. Even our presidential candidates are considered to be deficient in dignity when they make public speeches in their own behalf, and the literary man is supposed to be a man of much more delicate feeling than any politician. Nor is the English way of granting admission into the Royal society at all to be preferred; to hold an actual competitive examination, on the result of which a certain number of successful candidates are annually chosen, is not to show deference to the feelings of the candidate any more than the French have done.

There is a simple principle that should guide the bestowal of honors,—it is that they should be given and not sought. In private life a man is not expected to press his merits or his company upon his friends. We should consider it a barbarous social etiquette in which a person was required to call upon all his acquaintances and beg to be invited to their choicest dinners. If rewards are to be given at all for distinction in science or in letters, they should be given freely, and not be made bitter by conditions to which a gentleman has never before been obliged to submit. It may be a difficult matter to make the proper choice, but, at least, it should be made without the assistance of the candidate himself.

The English method has the additional disadvantage that it does not secure the men whom it is most desirable to honor. During the school-boy period, the distinction between different individuals is a distinction of learning, and an examination is not unfitted to discover the boy who deserves reward. But learning is not the quality which a state needs to make it great. Casaubons are not the kind of men who have built up English science. The qualities which ought to be encouraged, and which it should be a nation's delight to honor, are qualities too subtle to be detected by a competitive examination. That is a way of dealing out honors which, as Professor Chrystal has just said before the British association, belongs to the pupillary age both of men and of nations.

In our own national academy, whose tender age forbids as yet the lustre that clings to the ancient institutions of the European capitals, the only knowledge a man may have that he is a candidate for election is through the imprudence of his friends among the academicians,—an imprudence which is unhappily too common. Indeed it is becoming evident to many that the candidate active in pushing his own claims, in however secret a manner, is *pro tanto* lessening his chances of admission. And this is as it should be; merit in the eyes of others should be the single test.

THE RECENT EDUCATIONAL MEETING IN BOSTON.

THE educational conference, which met on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 16 and 17, at the Boston Latin school, was one of the most notable ever held in America, by reason of the representative character of the delegates, the nature of the topics discussed, and the possible effect upon our higher education of the movement there inaugurated.

The teachers of the preparatory schools have for some time been conscious of certain difficulties arising from the lack of a proper understanding on their part of what the colleges really desire of them, and particularly as regards the requisitions for admission to college, in the determination of which, they, however interested parties, have never been recognized as having a voice. Addi-