

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1885.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

STUDENTS OF MAPS may have noticed upon nearly all maps of Colorado issued during the past twenty years a settlement indicated upon White River, near the western boundary of the state, denominated Golden or Goblin City. This is a curious example of the persistence of a geographical blunder. Many years ago an army expedition traversed this region, going from Fort Bridger, Wyo., to old Fort Massachusetts, Col. In this neighborhood are bad lands, eroded into curious forms, which naturally suggest a ruined city; and the commander of the expedition gave the locality the name of *Goblin City*, which name appeared on his map. The map-makers, in their haste to fill up the blanks in this unsettled region, jumped to the conclusion that this was a veritable settlement, and gave it a place on their maps,—a place which it has ever since retained. Not only have the commercial map-makers, almost without exception, fallen into this error, but such authorities as the U. S. engineer office and general land office have adopted it. The name has, however, been gradually changed from Goblin to Goldin, and thence to Golden City, while more than one enterprising map-maker, reasoning, probably, that a city cannot exist without means of communication with other settlements, has constructed on paper a road down the White River to it. It is scarcely necessary to add that there is not, and never was, a settlement in this neighborhood.

IN THE APRIL ISSUE of the *Druggists' circular* appeared an offer by the publisher of three prizes for "the three most practical and otherwise valuable essays on disinfectants." In the May issue the following gentlemen were announced as the committee of award: Prof. S. A. Lattimore, Rochester, N.Y.; Dr. Henry B. Baker, Lansing, Mich.; Prof. Joseph P. Remington, Philadelphia. In the June number it was announced that nearly two dozen essays had been handed in, and several of them, selected at random, were printed in that and succeeding issues. Finally, in the October number, the successful names were announced: first

prize, \$125, to Mr. Marcus Benjamin, New York City; second prize, \$75, to B. W. Palmer, M.D., Detroit, Mich.; third prize, \$50, to R. G. Eccles, M.D., Brooklyn, N.Y. The essays all appear in a book issued by the *Druggists' circular*, entitled 'Disinfectants and their use.' From the editorial remarks made in the issue announcing the decision, we learn that the delay was caused by the difficulty of arriving at a unanimous decision as to the merits of the various essays, and that it was finally decided by a majority of the committee. From a letter which appeared in the *New York medical journal* of Nov. 7, we infer that Dr. Baker's was the dissenting voice. It is also distinctly stated in the announcement of the award that the decision of the committee is not to be regarded as an endorsement of the accuracy and scientific value of the essays, but is merely an indication of relative value.

The result reached by the committee has been in many quarters adversely criticised. Inasmuch as these essays were intended to meet the urgent demand for reliable disinfectants, in view of the possible advent of cholera, it is very unfortunate that they should be sent broadcast through the land, with what amounts to a statement that their accuracy and scientific value are not indorsed by the committee. Essays with these qualifications were called for, and, if they do not supply this want, they are of no more value than so many school-boy compositions: indeed, they may do infinite harm, as, this want of indorsement being overlooked, a false sense of security may be created in those who employ the remedies suggested, to the exclusion of means which have been found reliable and trustworthy. In the first six essays, there being twenty-one in all, we find no less than thirty substances mentioned as having disinfecting value; how many there are in all, we do not know. We can imagine the satisfaction which would be felt by one of those subscribers asking for "the most practical information in relation to disinfectants," for whose benefit these essays were obtained, when he turned to this volume for help.

WE HAVE RECENTLY received "Outline of matter and advance sheets of the Report of the

legislative, administrative, technical, and practical problems of irrigation, in course of preparation and publication, by William Ham Hall, state engineer, California." This outline is 304 pages in length, and is an exhibit of the character of the report in preparation, which will be in seven books, forming five or six volumes, of five hundred pages each, or from 2,500 to 3,000 pages in all. How the compilers are paid is not stated; but judging from the following sentence,—"Great public works, such as national roads, railroads, basins and docks, canals and the canalization of rivers, whether enterprises of the state, of departments, communities, or of particular companies, whether toll is to be charged in any way or not, or whether a subsidy of treasure is to be granted or not, or whether any part of the public domain is to be used or not, can only be executed by virtue of special law, which can be passed only after an administrative inquiry has demonstrated the feasibility and desirability of the work, and a report has recommended it,"—which is a fair sample of the book, we presume they are paid by the word; the idea evidently being that of quantity, and not quality. A thorough investigation of the problem of irrigation, as developed in the old world, with reference to the new, would be of almost inestimable value; but the work should be concise, stating briefly the old laws, the work done in each country, the necessity and uses of irrigation as drawn from these examples, the land to be irrigated in California, and the plan to be adopted. If the book had been written with these ends in view, it would have been generally read and widely useful. Now few will read it, for it is necessary to look for the facts in a volume of words as you would for a needle in a haystack. We trust the legislature of California will thoroughly revise the work, and see that it is made less expensive and more useful.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN within recent years a great multiplication of biological journals in Europe, many of which, from the character of the articles they have published, take high rank, yet they have nearly all been in fact, if not in name, confined almost exclusively to physiology and morphology. This is especially the case with the zoological periodicals, none of the best of which touch, except incidentally, upon the systematic, geographical, or biological departments of the science. In three fields there are special journals, with their *clientèle* principally among

amateurs. We refer to entomology, ornithology, and conchology. There is certainly a great deal of work in zoölogy, of great value and interest, and quite outside of either morphology or physiology. It would be a great convenience if there could be a journal which included a large fraction of the work of the character indicated.

We are glad to learn that such a journal is to be inaugurated in Germany, under the title *Zoologische jahrbücher*, and the sub-title *Zeitschrift für systematik, geographie und biologie der thiere*. It is to be edited by Dr. J. W. Spengel of Bremen, and published by Fischer at Jena. It is desired to give it a distinctly international character, and it is hoped to secure the co-operation of American zoölogists. The editor justly attributes special value to thorough monographs, either of large or small groups, from any part of the animal kingdom, and to faunal papers. The division of the journal devoted to the life-histories of animals ought to prove peculiarly interesting and valuable. It is high time that something more was made of these than mere curiosities—which, in most cases, is all they pretend to be. Those who intend contributing will be pleased to know that articles will be published in German, French, English, or Latin; and that the authors are furnished with forty reprints of them, besides being paid a small sum. That the new journal will be of a high character, the editor's name assures us. Dr. Spengel is one of the best-known and ablest of the younger German zoölogists. His memoirs on the urogenital system, and on *Bonellia viridis*, are of altogether exceptional value, and are familiar to all scientific morphologists.

THE MODE OF ADMISSION INTO THE ROYAL SOCIETY.¹

OUR contemporary *Science*, in the last number which has reached this country, makes some remarks concerning the admission of candidates into the Royal society, against which, in the interests of truth and accuracy, it is our duty to protest, the more especially as it is also implied that the French system of canvassing those who are already fellows of the society is also adopted.

The statements actually made are, 1°, that there is an "actual competitive examination, on the result of which a certain number of successful candidates are annually chosen;" and, 2°, "that the English method has the additional disadvantage

¹ From *Nature* of Nov. 19.