

which, soon or late, must cease; for, while many buy, few read, and they the close readers who make quick work of the loose author. If it is a necessary stage of our evolution, it may be hoped that the relay is not far removed.

GOVERNMENT SURVEYS.

THE proper co-ordination and management of the different government surveys, in order to secure in the most economical manner the results for which they were created, has been and yet is the subject of considerable discussion, and of diverse views among those interested. The consolidation of the geological surveys has prevented much of the clashing that formerly inevitably resulted, and at different times the national academy has been called upon to propose plans for the relations that should exist between the different bureaus. The chief ones proposed, as the readers of *Science* are aware, are, 1°, that the secretary of the Smithsonian institution should be placed in control: 2°, that there should be a cabinet officer, a secretary of science and industry, who should be charged with all the different bureaus. Prof. W. P. Trowbridge, in the issue of the *New York Star* for April 13, urges the establishment of a permanent commission, which should be competent to understand the different works, and have sufficient time to examine them yearly in detail. As he further says, there can be no question but that, in the appropriation of money by congress for any purpose whatsoever, the objects and aims to be accomplished by such appropriation should be definitely and fully known; and funds for any public works of a continuous character should never be dependent upon personal urging by the heads of bureaus, and all this should be within the province of a central co-ordinating authority.

He believes that a properly organized permanent non-political commission, such as that known as the Regents of the Smithsonian institution or the Lighthouse board, and in which should be represented the executive heads of the bureaus, the legislative branch of the government, and the scientific men of the country, would be an efficient safeguard against misdirected expenditures, faulty schemes or projects, and the duplication of work by two or more bureaus. It is not at all certain that a cabinet officer, with his political tenure of office, would be sufficient to co-ordinate the different surveys, except in so far as he would serve as a fiscal administrator, and as a medium between the scientific bureaus and congress or the executive. Political considerations would make it improbable that such a head could always be

found who should possess the varied scientific and other qualifications that would be required to determine the scope, the field of work and investigation, and the methods to be pursued for each branch of scientific work.

The executive and scientific details, as he rightly says, of any one of these bureaus, are enough to tax to the full extent of his powers the most skilled expert in those branches of scientific and practical knowledge which belong to the objects represented by the bureau. For this reason he deprecates any attempt to consolidate the different bureaus, and especially the coast and geodetic survey, whose work has been so fruitful of practical and valuable results for so many years, with any other.

The unfortunate shortcomings in this survey during the past year have given currency to numerous false and exaggerated rumors, which have tended to produce an injurious result, not only upon the public mind, but upon congress. Professor Trowbridge urges the injustice of including in general condemnation all the different bureaus on account of the errors of individuals in one branch, and yet more justly cites the long years of faithful and highly valuable public services that have been rendered by the great body of officers and attachés of the coast survey, who have grown up in the service, and who have not for a moment been included in any recent accusations.

HEALTH OF NEW YORK DURING MARCH.

WE continue in the present number the graphic representation of the daily mortality in New York, which was commenced in *Science* in the number for March 19. In February the greatest mortality from all causes of disease was during the tenth day, when 118 persons died: during March this was exceeded on four days, running up to 137 on the last day of the month. During the twenty-eight days of February there were 2,767 deaths; during the same period in March there were 3,054 deaths, — an increase of 277: if to this are added the deaths which occurred in the last three days of March, we shall have 3,392 representing the mortality of the past month, — an average of nearly 110 each day, or about 5 persons every hour.

The number of deaths of children under five years of age has increased as compared with February; there has also been an increase in the zymotic class and in consumption; while the mortality from diphtheria and scarlet-fever is less. Diarrhoeal diseases have carried off 32 persons, as compared with 33 in the preceding month.