was officially settled by the board of overseers last week. The subject has excited great interest, because Harvard is generally looked to as the leader in the matter of higher education in this country; and it was pretty generally felt that whatever course Harvard should take in this regard would be quite generally followed, in the course of time, by other institutions of learning. Pending the settlement of the question, — and it was one which a conscientious president or overseer could not settle in a day, — the Harvard authorities and one or two of the professors have been subjected in some quarters to a criticism which was as unnecessary as ill-timed. A deliberative body of any force of character is not to be deterred from doing its duty as it sees it, by the noisy clamor and abuse of *ex-parte* advocates. The subject is now settled, and it will give general satisfaction when it is known that the guiding principle of the solution found is unsectarian Christianity. Whether this will be found possible of attainment in practice is a question, but the overseers have provided for it as best they could. Rev. Francis S. Peabody becomes Plummer professor of Christian morals, and head of the department of religious instruction in the college. He will also be the university pastor. As coadjutors, Professor Peabody is to have five college preachers, who are to be clergymen of reputation and large experience. These college preachers will, with the professor, have charge of the chapel services and of the religious instruction. As we understand the scheme, each college preacher is appointed for a year, but fulfils the duties of his position only one-fifth of the time. In this way a constant succession of able clergymen of various denominations will be in co-operation with Professor Peabody. In theory this plan seems excellent, but we shall await its practical application with interest and not a little incredulity.

THAT SCIENTIFIC MEN believe that the claim of Pasteur has merit enough to entitle it to investigation, if not to credence, is evidenced by the fact that commissions are being sent to Paris to examine into the methods now practised for the prevention of rabies. The English government has appointed such a commission, having selected some of the most eminent men in the kingdom. Sir James Paget, T. Lauder Brunton, Sir Henry Roscoe, and Burdon Sanderson are names which will satisfy every one that justice and caution will be exercised in the inquiry. Germany, by the selection of Virchow and Koch, has shown her interest in the matter. The Academy of medicine of Rome has sent delegates for the same purpose; while the Archduke Charles Theodore of Bavaria, a physician, has started for Paris to make an investigation on his own account. It would seem reasonable to expect some decided results from an investigation made by such talented men as most of them are known to be, and that the truth or falsity of Pasteur's claim was in a fair way to be established beyond a peradventure.

IT IS TO BE HOPED that congress will not fail to pass the bill authorizing the appointment of a commission to inquire into the merits of inoculation for the prevention of yellow-fever. This bill was introduced at the instance of Dr. Joseph Holt of New Orleans, and has received the indorsement of the American public health association. From the daily press we learn that the physicians of the military garrison at Vera Cruz have already commenced inoculations for the prevention of yellow-fever. The material employed is injected hypodermically at intervals of eight days. Such a commission as could be selected from this country could establish the value of this method of prevention of yellow-fever, so strongly advocated by Freire and Carmona.

A TASK FOR ANATOMISTS.

"WALLACE," writes Oscar Schmidt, "might well say that we live in a world which is zoölogically very impoverished, and from which the hugest, wildest, and strangest forms have now disappeared." But old as the world appears, who shall say that it has passed or even reached maturity — if so be that worlds, like animals, have their day, as some have been bold enough to assert? It is true that the fishes no longer predominate, that the reptiles have dwindled into insignificance, and that of the mammals only a handful of great forms remain. But another type, the last to appear, and, of all, the most notable, — man, — is in the ascendant. His age is but begun. If we look upon the world of to-day as poorly furnished with striking animal forms, what must be the verdict of the man of the fiftieth or sixtieth century, when Europe will be a chain of cities, Africa and South America densely peopled continents, and North America the home of a population to be counted by hundreds of millions! The increase of powerful appliances for the subjection of the earth to human needs, within the memory of men now

living, is without parallel, and there is no indication that the climax has been reached. It is not, indeed, improbable that our age may come to be looked upon as plodding and unprogressive.

It is not, however, to the development of the world's resources to which I would direct attention, but to some of the effects impending from the ascendency of many, and the duty of zoölogists in connection therewith.

Some of the great changes in the zoölogical condition of the globe, incident upon the increase of human populations, the extension of railroads and the introduction of steam-power and horse-power, agricultural machinery, and the general use of perfected fire-arms, are familiar to everybody. The existence of vast herds of bison on the western plains of North America has become a matter of history. The aurochs, the bison's European cousin, is likewise menaced with destruction. "It no longer exists," says M. de Tribolet, "but in the condition, as one may say, of a living zoölogical specimen." Similarly the bands of destruction are daily tightening about the wapiti, the moose deer, the antelope, the manatee, and the mountain sheep and mountain goat, in North America; the chamois, the wild goat, the beaver, and the stag, in Europe; the kangaroo, in Australia; the elephant, the gorilla, and the chimpanzee, in Africa; and a score of other mammals, as well as birds and reptiles, in different parts of the world.

The reckless slaughter of some of these animals is painful to contemplate. "Some years ago," writes the author from whom we have just quoted, "a little family of beavers was discovered on an island in the Rhone; it was a happy accident, there was hope that we should see the revival of a species well-nigh extinct. All have been slaughtered without pity, — a folly which one could not have supposed possible, except among a non-civilized people, where the culprit is unconscious of his guilt." Words cannot entirely express the sorrow with which the true lover of nature witnesses the wanton annihilation of so many of the greatest and most interesting of living creatures.

But there is room for more than sorrow. There is good cause to fear, that, unless anatomists bestir themselves, many large species of vertebrates now existing will become extinct before their structure is at all thoroughly known. Gosse's dictum, that "it is better to err on the side of minuteness than of vagueness," should be applied to this matter. It would be best to lay aside thesis and hypothesis, and to record facts, — as many and as much in detail as possible. From the stand-point of to-day, rudimentary, defective, and 'nascent' structures attract an inordinate amount of attention, because of the light they shed upon the theory of evolution. But ten or twenty centuries hence a new theory may dominate, a new stand-point be taken, and a new standard adopted. Then the anatomical details we ignore may perhaps be diligently inquired into. We do not find fault with the early historians because they recorded so many facts, but because they recorded so few, and these so imperfectly. It may be that the fool *collects* facts, while the wise man *selects* them; but the wise man — the supreme genius — is one man of a million, and the fools had best content themselves with piling up the store of truths against his coming.

But whether fools or wise, posterity will certainly charge us with slothfulness if we fail to record, so far as our opportunities and appliances and the condition of zoölogical knowledge permit, the last details of the structure of those species of animals we know to be about to become extinct.

A work similar in character to this is being carried on at the present time by the Smithsonian institution's bureau of ethnology, the Davenport academy, and other similar organizations. American ethnographers have awakened to the fact that the study of the aborigines is becoming every day more difficult, and with most commendable zeal have set to work to record all that can be learned regarding the history, languages, religions, and customs of our Indian tribes. Let anatomists in all parts of the world follow the example of these investigators. In the case of vanishing peoples and species of animals, what the ethnographer and anatomist of to-day fail to record, the future archeologist and paleontologist can never find out, or can only guess at. F. W. TRUE.

THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE American historical association held its third annual meeting at Washington on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, April 29–May 1. The venerable George Bancroft presided at all but two sessions, when the first vice-president, Mr. Justin Winsor, librarian of Harvard college, took his place. The sessions were held in the large hall of the Columbian university, and were well attended. Mr. Bancroft's address of welcome was very well received. It will be printed in the next number of the *Magazine of American history*. Gen. J. G. Wilson of New York followed with a paper on Columbus, advocating an international celebration of the discovery of America by the great explorer. At a subsequent meeting a committee was appointed to wait on the President, to ask him to call the attention of congress to the matter. It is understood that the President received the