

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, JULY 9, 1886.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

NOT INFREQUENTLY STATEMENTS APPEAR of the death of some individual who has passed his hundredth year. The evidence in these instances of great longevity is, as a rule, exceedingly unreliable, and oftentimes there is not so much as an entry in a family Bible upon which to rest the claim. Professor Humphrey of England has determined to investigate, so far as he can, these reported cases, and is now collecting the information from every available source. While there can be no doubt that there have been many true claimants to the title of centenarians, yet it will probably be found, as a result of Professor Humphrey's labors, that a not inconsiderable number have falsely or ignorantly laid claim to an honor which they did not deserve.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE BRAIN of the late King of Bavaria by six of the medical profession of Germany has resulted in confirming the opinion of his physicians given during his lifetime, that he was insane. Marked changes of the brain substance and its membranes, and also of the bones of the skull, were found; some of them showing evidences of having existed for a considerable time, and others of more recent formation. These signs of degeneration, coupled with the idiosyncrasies which marked the later years of his reign, leave but little room for doubt as to the insanity of King Louis.

FROM TIME TO TIME epidemics of scarlet-fever more or less extensive have been traced to the dairy. The usual history has been that of some attendant, while convalescing from the disease, and before the skin had thoroughly desquamated, being found in the act of milking. Portions of skin containing the infectious material have thus found their way into the milk, and the disease has appeared among the consumers. Another method by which this disease may be propagated has just been brought to light by Professor Cameron of London. He finds that the cows them-

selves may have scarlet-fever; and in an epidemic recently investigated by him, this was, in his opinion, the source of infection in a family attacked with the disease. Dr. Cameron regards it as occurring usually in the first instance in newly-calved cows, and communicated to healthy cows by the hands of those who do the milking. The symptoms in the cow are very similar to those observed in the human species, including fever, sore throat, discharges from the nostrils, and an eruption upon the skin.

THE SEARCH FOR THE GERM of hydrophobia, or rabies as it should more properly be termed, has up to very recent date been unsuccessful. The London *Lancet* announces that Dr. Dowdeswell claims to have found it in the central canal of the spinal cord and in the medulla oblongata. He has also found it in other parts of the brain and cord, but not in such abundance. He describes it as a micrococcus, and accounts for the failure of others to find it, by the fact that the hitherto known methods of staining will not affect it. He will shortly describe his own method, and an opportunity will then be given to experts to examine the evidence on which he bases his claim: until then the matter remains *sub judice*.

THE FIELD-WORK of the coast and geodetic survey is almost at a standstill, owing to the lack of money to conduct it. Only those parties are at work which had been sent out prior to the close of the fiscal year. The parties on the transcontinental arc will be put in the field as soon as the appropriation passes. All the parties from the south are now in, except those of Assistant Hodgkins, who has been detained at Cape Lookout by bad weather, which has prevented his making a survey to show the changes in that locality, which, from casual observations and a partial report by Mr. Fairman Rodgers, are very great. This form of delay in work is common to all the government departments, first to one and then the other, when the proper committees fail to do their work promptly. Some delay may be justifiable under the conditions; but it is none the less injurious.