

ing the adoption of the report, some of the older members of the board of education seemingly regarding the proposed innovation as a reflection on the character of the education now given, and therefore opposing it.

Unfortunately the special committee was defeated in its request for immediate action; and, as the report was referred to the standing committee on the course of study, it is hardly possible that, even if it is finally adopted, any thing can be accomplished under it for another year. But the report itself, the favorable reception it has met with in the press and among all intelligent citizens, and much of the discussion concerning it in the board of education itself, clearly indicate that this proposed advance in the common-school system of the metropolis will soon become an accomplished fact. It is only a question of time now, and we trust of a short time.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NEW ENGLAND METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY.

THE third annual meeting of the New England meteorological society was held at the Institute of technology, Boston, Oct. 19. Prof. J. D. Whitney read a paper on 'Rainfall statistics in the United States,' considering especially the statements that have been made concerning the increase of rainfall on the western plains as a result of cultivation of the ground. These statements are considered altogether untrustworthy. In dry regions the amount of precipitation is generally variable. The records kept in the west are seldom of long enough period, of sufficient accuracy, or of sufficient uniformity, to decide so large a question. Moreover, in the eastern part of the country, where long records have been kept, no definite variation in the precipitation is found.

Mr. S. A. Eliot read an essay on the 'Relations of forests to rainfall and water-supply.' The common opinion that forests increase and clearings decrease the rainfall was traced to the authority of eminent writers, based, not on well-kept observations of rainfall under these contrasted conditions, but chiefly on the well-known diminution of stream-flow in cleared districts. This, however, may be due to increased evaporation rather than to decreased rainfall. Forests undoubtedly retard evaporation of fallen water, but it is very problematic if they increase the amount that falls. Mr. Fitzgerald commented on this by referring to a statement, apparently on the authority of DeLesseps, that the rainfall along the Suez canal had increased since trees were planted there. On writing directly to DeLesseps, answer was received that he had made no such statement,

and that there were no facts to support it. Mr. Davis added, that, if the causes controlling rainfall be separated into those dependent on and independent of forests, we find that the latter are now powerless to produce forests in forestless countries, such as those around the eastern Mediterranean, and therefore could not have originated the forests once there, unless formerly of different value from now; but, if it be admitted that these non-forest causes vary, the deforesting may be due to natural changes, not to the hand of man.

Several seismoscopes and a series of photographs illustrating the effects of the Charleston earthquake, lent by the U. S. geological survey, were exhibited and explained at the meeting.

In the absence of the director, Professor Upton, an informal report on the work of the year was presented by the secretary. Members now number 110, against 95 last year, and include well-known meteorologists outside of New England. The monthly bulletin has been regularly issued, and recent numbers include reports from 140 to 151 observers, against 123 last year. More attention has been devoted to improving the character of the observations than to increasing the number of stations. Free tests of instruments belonging to observers reporting to the society have been begun by Prof. S. W. Holman. Three valued observers have been lost by death, — Hon. Hosea Doton, Woodstock, Vt.; Dr. B. F. Harrison, Wallingford, Conn.; and Mr. R. H. Gardiner, Gardiner, Me. The records of the last two will be continued. Special investigations, supported by grants from scientific funds, have been undertaken: a report on thunderstorms in New England in 1885, by the secretary, is thus already distributed to members; and a report on the distribution of rain in cyclonic storms, by the director, is now in press. While such special studies are generously supported, the society still needs to increase its membership for the support of its regular work.

PARIS LETTER.

M. CH. ZENGER recently made known, at a meeting of the Academy of sciences, some interesting facts concerning the singular property that different substances have of giving luminous rays in darkness after having been exposed to solar or even diffused light. M. Zenger remarked that Mont Blanc emits, till about half-past ten in the evening, a peculiar blue-green light, very similar to that given by Lake Leman; and he believed that this light originates in the ice of the glaciers as well as in the lime of the rocks. Thinking it might be possible to take a photograph of