

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1887.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

THE FULL DISCUSSION, from both the economic and the commercial standpoints, that the interstate commerce bill has received in the United States, brought out the many points of contact between the railway problem as it presents itself to this and to other nations. We have had forced home upon us the conviction, that while local conditions may vary, yet the question at issue is substantially the same, whether it presents itself here or in Great Britain or Germany. For this reason the observations concerning the railways and transportation made by the British commission on the depression of trade — of whose report we present an account elsewhere — will be of interest to those who have studied the railway problem in the United States. The report of the majority of the commission finds, that, among all the causes which are said to have aggravated the prevailing depression, none has been so persistently put forward as the difficulties connected with the transportation of goods. The complaints made before the commission under this head are of three classes : “1°, that the railway companies regulate their charges so as to favor one district, or place, or trade, at the expense of another, and the importer of foreign goods at the expense of the home producer ; 2°, that the cost of transit in this country is excessive as compared with the charges made for similar services in other countries, and that consequently our home trade is being crippled or destroyed to the advantage of our foreign competitors, who are able to place their goods in our markets at a less expense than the home producers, who carry on their operations at a much less distance ; 3°, it is contended that if the water communications of the country were properly developed, an effective competition would thus be established which would regulate the monopoly now possessed by the railways.”

The report states, that, so far as the first of these points goes, even if proved, it could only account for a local and not for any such wide-spread depression as is found to prevail ; for what one trade

or locality loses, another must gain. Furthermore, if companies be compelled to withdraw the advantages complained of in the case of imported goods, what assurance is there that it may not be found necessary to follow the same treatment with goods intended for export, and, in fact, to abolish all through rates? In regard to the second point, it is admitted that railway transportation is cheaper on the continent than in Great Britain, because of the lower initial cost of the continental railways, and because the longer distances to be traversed there operate to reduce the rate per mile. But it is contended that the present rates — which have parliamentary sanction — only afford an average return of about four per cent on the capital invested, and consequently cannot be reduced. The commission adds that it is not so much the cheapness of land transportation on the continent that is felt, but the cheapness of the sea transportation between the continent and Great Britain : for the complaints arise principally from the inland towns which have no transport save that afforded by the railways, and consequently are at a disadvantage as compared with sea-coast towns. As this advantage in favor of the latter is perfectly natural, the commission finds no justification for interfering with it. On the third point both complainants and commission agree, and the latter recommends the adoption of measures which will permit of the free development of canals wherever they are likely to be useful and prevent their being controlled by the railway companies, as appears to be the case in many parts of the country.

THE BILL WHICH has been introduced in the assembly of the state of New York, entitled “An act to regulate the licensing and registration of physicians and surgeons, and to codify the medical laws of the state of New York,” is one which should meet with the hearty support of the medical profession, and receive the vote of every member of the legislature. That legislative action is necessary to codify the laws relating to medical practice is evident, when it is considered that there are at the present time fourteen or more such laws in force, some of them having been enacted as

long ago as 1806. The act now before the legislature repeals many of these laws entirely as well as the inconsistent and useless sections of the others. We have not had time to compare the proposed law with those which it will repeal, but as the act has been prepared by the counsel of the New York county medical society, who has probably had as much experience in these matters in the courts as any of the lawyers, we presume the repealing clause is right and proper. We are glad to see that provision is also made by which the question of registration will be settled, so that the practice of county clerks throughout the state will be uniform. It will hereafter be necessary for a physician to register in person in but one county, after which registration he will receive a certificate of registration from the county clerk. If he desires to remove his practice to another county, or to engage in practice or open an office therein, he may present his certificate in person to the clerk of that county, or mail it to him by registered letter. On this certificate the clerk will indorse, 'registered also in — county,' and the physician is then qualified to practise therein.

Another section of the law which is most equitable and just, and one which will remove all cause for doubtful interpretation of existing laws, is as follows: "Nothing in this act shall be construed to punish commissioned medical officers serving in the army or navy of the United States, or in the U. S. marine hospital service, while so commissioned, or any one while actually serving as a member of the resident medical staff of any legally incorporated hospital, or any legally qualified and registered dentist exclusively engaged in practising the art of dentistry, or any lawfully qualified physicians and surgeons residing in other states or counties meeting registered physicians and surgeons of this state in consultation, or any physician or surgeon residing on the border of a neighboring state, and duly authorized under the laws thereof to practise physic or surgery therein, whose practice extends into the limits of this state, providing that such practitioner shall not open an office or appoint a place to meet patients or receive calls within the limits of the state of New York; or physicians duly registered in one county of this state called to attend isolated cases in another county, but not residing or habitually practising therein." The other provisions of the law which are intended to punish all those who fraudulently practise medi-

cine, are also worthy of commendation. We sincerely trust that the whole bill will promptly pass both houses of the legislature and receive the signature of the governor.

CAPT. A. W. GREELY'S appointment as chief signal-officer with rank of brigadier-general is a well-merited promotion. It is also a compromise with those who have been advocating the separation of the service from the army; for, while the new chief is an army officer, he is also a man of scientific attainments and experience, and it was for the purpose of securing a person with the latter qualifications that the change was advocated. The appointment is also applauded by the President's friends as being in strict line of civil-service reform, as Captain Greely was next in rank in the bureau to General Hazen, and had worked long enough with him to understand fully the methods of the service. The general impression seems to be that the senate will confirm the nomination.

THE LATE ERUPTION FROM KILAUEA.

BECAUSE of the increased numbers of tourists, better facilities are now offered for visiting Kilauea. Instead of the arduous equestrian journey of thirty miles from Hilo, over rough lava, often in the midst of rain, the traveller can now disembark from the Kinau — the best of the inter-island steamers — at Keauhou on the dry side of Hawaii, and reach the Volcano House by a new road, only eighteen miles long, and that mostly in a carriage. Arrangements have been perfected by which the round trip can be taken from Honolulu in six days' time, allowing two nights and one and a half days at the caldera, and at a cost of sixty dollars.

The first recorded eruption from Kilauea was in 1789, when a troop of native soldiers were suffocated. The first scientific accounts are those of Ellis in 1823, and of the U.S. exploring expedition in 1840, as given by Commodore Wilkes and Prof. J. D. Dana. Since then the more notable changes have been recorded by Dr. Titus Coan in the columns of the *American journal of science*. In 1882 Capt. C. E. Dutton explored Kilauea and the Hawaiian Islands generally, presenting in the 'Fourth annual report of the U.S. geological survey' the best description of the volcanic phenomena of that part of the world that has yet appeared. In the following year, and also during the past summer, the writer went over the same ground.