SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 8, 1887.

IN THE LEADING civilized countries in which a decimal system of weights and measures is not in vogue, there are considerable bodies of men urging the adoption of at least a decimal coinage. From time to time attacks are made on the time-honored and inconvenient pounds-shillings-and-pence system in which English trade is carried on, but thus far conservatism has proven too mighty even for convenience. It is nevertheless true, that, each time the agitation for a decimal system is begun in Great Britain, it obtains larger support than before, though the opposition to it loses nothing in vehemence. Within a few weeks an influential deputation has waited on the chancellor of the exchequer to urge his advocacy of a decimal coinage. The deputation represented sixty-eight provincial chambers of commerce, all of which, out of a total of sixty-nine, have passed resolutions in favor of a change to a decimal system. The deputation urged the change on five grounds: first, because every foreign country in the world possessed a decimal currency, and some of the British possessions (Canada, Ceylon, and Mauritius); second, because no country which had once adopted the decimal system of currency had retraced its step; third, because the mathematical education in the schools would be simplified by the use of the decimal system for measuring values, and consequently the period necessary for education in the elementary schools would be shortened; fourth, because experience proved that in business-houses in decimal-using countries considerable time was saved in calculations both for home and foreign business, while transactions between countries using the decimal system were rendered uniform, and an economy of labor therefore resulted; and, fifth, because the British currency might be placed upon a decimal basis with a minimum of change by decimalizing the pound sterling. It is proposed to decimalize the pound sterling by making it equal to 1,000 mills, the mill to be the unit of the system. Then the half-sovereign would equal 500 mills; the crown, 250 mills; the double florin, 200 mills; the half-crown, 125 mills; the florin, 100 mills; the shilling, 50 mills; and the sixpence, 25 mills. Three new coins would be necessary, — a dime, equal to ten mills; a half-dime; and a new farthing, equal to one mill. Various speakers enlarged on these arguments. Mr. Goschen, in reply, acknowledged the importance of the subject and the authority of the delegation, but he could give no promise of government action, because a reform of so far-reaching a nature depends for its success on a practical unanimity of popular sentiment; and that, Mr. Goschen thought, is far from having been reached at present. He closed by encouraging the deputation to go on with their propaganda, and endeavor to unite public sentiment in favor of the change. If that were done, he felt sure the necessary legislation would follow.

IT IS THE PRIVILEGE of the philosopher, at least of such a one as bases his right to that title on the practical comprehensiveness of the study of his choice, to have an important word on those general problems of civilization most intimately connected with human development. And it is the privilege of our age to emphasize the truth that every intellectual worker is to a greater or less extent a philosopher in his own domain. It is not a coincidence, but a deeply significant fact, that the 'new education,' the 'new political economy,' the 'new psychology,' the 'new biology,' and the rest, are all claiming attention at the same time. It is the expression of the consciousness of the changed conditions of modern life. A most alarming symptom of this change is the increasing frequency of mental 'breakdown,' caused by a failure to adapt one's self to the changed environment. For the use of the mental powers, we now substitute their abuse. The business-man is worried into insanity, the student hurried into unhealthy precocity, and the woman forced into an imprudent competition with man. One of the earliest cries of warning to the most restless of all nations, the Americans, was raised by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, in a paper entitled 'Wear and Tear,' which has just reached a fifth edition as a separate publication. In the period since its first appearance, this sermon has been preached by educators, political economists, and psychologists, as well as by the family physician, and to some extent has been listened to. Practical men are so apt to think that the studies of the theoretical scientists are more or less the pursuit of useless hobbies, that the opportunity of so glaringly showing the essential importance to them of theoretical science should not be neglected. To be able to express physiologically and psychologically such doctrines as are suggested by the practical experience of thoughtful men, endows these principles with the authority of natural laws, and sanctions their introduction into the elementary education of the next generation. It makes science out of opinion. The cause which Dr. Mitchell pleads under the above terse heading is well known to-day. It is simply the problem of obtaining a maximum of work with a minimum of overwork; a brisk and healthy wear without a rushing and wasteful tear. And it is because this problem is so largely the problem of a rational education founded upon a scientific psychology, that it merits notice in this column. With the successful solution of this problem, — and all this applies with increased force to our country, — the new education, the new political economy, the new psychology, and the new biology will all have succeeded together.

THE INCREASE OF STATE INTERFERENCE IN THE UNITED STATES. — II.

AS to the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut, our information is fairly full and accurate, though showing a curiously divergent condition of things in two adjoining States. The secretary of state for Rhode Island finds, as the result of nearly twenty years' experience in connection with the legislation of the State, the tendency has rather been away from than toward interference with personal concerns. Numerous matters of that nature which formerly occupied the attention of the Assembly have now ceased to have attention, the jurisdiction of the courts having been enlarged so as to cover such matters. The Legislature has further established a joint rule to the effect that "neither House shall entertain any petition the subject of which is within the jurisdiction of any court in the State." Rhode Island, owing to a peculiar constitutional provision, has no general act of incorporation, and every charter is a special act of the Legislature. In granting these charters, much of the time of the Assembly is occupied.

From Connecticut Professors Hadley and Farnam of Yale agree in pointing out the Sunday traffic (railroad) law, the law limiting the hours of employment for women in stores and factories, the law prohibiting child-labor under thirteen years of age, the law making weekly payments compulsory, and the laws providing for the inspection of certain classes of business, as the latest particulars in which State interference is being manifested. Mr. A. Hills of Bridgeport finds that Connecticut legislation is showing "an increasing tendency to interfere between employers and employed, and generally to regulate matters which individuals ought to be left to arrange between themselves." Mr. Morris F. Tyler is of similar opinion. He writes, "It may be said that legislation in Connecticut shows that in almost all the relations of life the meddle-