

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1888.

THE DISCUSSION in the New York City Board of Education concerning the succession to Superintendent John Jasper is attracting very general attention. This is necessarily so, because the position of superintendent of schools in New York City is one of great influence and power, and its incumbent ought to be one of the foremost educators of the country. He can mould or make more characters and more intelligences a hundred times over than the most powerful college president. His voice should be heard in educational gatherings, and his counsel should be sought all over the country. He should inspire and lead on his great army of teachers to greater efforts for success in their work. He should be a wise, careful, and unprejudiced administrator. The present incumbent of this great post has held his position for nine years, and during the whole of that time the schools of New York City have been looked upon with contempt by all qualified students of public education. From the standpoint of organization and system, they are magnificent, but they are not educational. Rigid technical requirements and an awful dread of a preposterous marking system rule teachers and pupils alike. Every natural instinct, every activity of the pupil, is recognized only to be crushed and held in check. Superficial results such that they may be estimated in fractions of a per cent are the end and aim of the scholastic exercises. Examinations, inspections, and marks recur with fearful tirelessness; and above and behind them all sits the city superintendent, — a mere calculator of results and percentages. He is unknown to the educators of the country; his face and voice are unfamiliar to every educational gathering. His teachers have no meetings or institutes worthy the name. At least two-thirds of his assistants are disqualified for their positions by age or incapacity. It is freely charged that base and unworthy motives find play in many official actions. More definite charges of other kinds, all turning upon the inefficiency and delinquency of the present administration, have been made in the Board of Education and elsewhere. For these reasons, vigorous and effective opposition is being made to the proposition to continue indefinitely this state of affairs. All fair-minded men, and especially all educators who realize the importance of the New York city schools, should support in this crisis those members of the Board of Education who are making this fight for a principle. This is no time for personal considerations nor for petty jealousies. Argument should turn on the highest good of the schools alone. That that can be best served by a radical reform in present methods of administration and discipline, is obvious.

AFTER AN INTERVAL of about eight months, news has been received from Major Barttelot, commander of the camp at Yambuga Rapids, which confirms the favorable view regarding the state of affairs in Central Africa, taken by all who have watched the events closely. The cable reports the following message: "No news from Stanley since I wrote, toward the end of October. Tippo-Tip went to Kasongo on Nov. 16, but in March he had procured only two hundred and fifty carriers. Jameson has gone to Kasongo in order to hasten the despatch of three hundred and fifty carriers more, which Tippo-Tip promised to furnish. Jameson will be back here on May 14. I cannot leave until June 1. I shall pass Stanley Falls Station, where I shall leave an officer with all that is not absolutely necessary. All are well. — Barttelot." This news

was brought by Mr. Ward from Barttelot's camp to Stanley Pool, but we fail to learn how he descended the river. The important facts we learn from this despatch are these: that the fear that Tippo-Tip might have betrayed Stanley, which was entertained by many people, was groundless; that Barttelot has had no difficulty in obtaining provisions for his men; and that the Arabs of Stanley Falls are again friendly towards the whites. All these are reassuring facts, and we may assume that ere long we shall hear of Stanley's safe arrival at Lake Mvutan. It is useless to speculate what he is going to do next.

COMMANDER JOHN R. BARTLETT, who for the past six years has been chief of the Hydrographic Office of the Navy Department, has been relieved from duty, and granted leave of absence for a year. He will accept the superintendency of the Union Street Railroad of Providence, R.I., a position which was offered him several months ago, and which has been held for his decision. A proposition was made not long ago to make the Hydrographic Office one of the regular bureaus of the Navy Department, with an officer at its head nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. This has been defeated by the opposition of naval officers, which has been provoked to some extent, it is believed, by jealousy. The defeat of this movement undoubtedly caused Commander Bartlett to ask to be retired. Before Commander Bartlett took charge of the Hydrographic Office, it was scarcely more than a depository for the charts of vessels. He has made it, under Commodore Walker, one of the most useful and important branches of the government. Its sailing-charts are most highly prized by mariners of all nations, and its Pilot Chart is the best published anywhere in the world. It has received frequent recognition by learned societies of Europe, and from the leading naval officers of foreign countries. By the establishment of branch offices at several of the most important ports on the Atlantic coast, it has succeeded in getting into very close relations with the merchant marine of the country, and in securing from it a great fund of the data of which it has made valuable use. The Hydrographic Office, under Commander Bartlett, was the first to direct attention to, and press upon, mariners the use of oil to smooth the waves of the sea during or after storms. By persistently calling attention to it, and publishing upon the Pilot Chart the reports of masters of ships who had successfully used it, the subject was forced upon the attention of navigators, until no properly equipped captain will now go to sea without his supply of oil and the means of using it. The logs of all incoming vessels are carefully examined, and all unusual phenomena are noted. In this way the history and movements of storms have been traced, plotted upon charts, and published, thus adding very greatly to the scope of meteorological science. Water-spouts have been described, and the accounts of them given by the officers of different vessels collected and compared; so that much has been added to what was previously known about them. Hurricanes have been traced, and the accounts of the officers of different vessels which encountered them have been collated and compared; so that the laws that govern them are now better understood than they were before. In this way the Hydrographic Office has become one of the most important of the government scientific bureaus. Lieut. George L. Dyer, assistant hydrographer, who has been associated with Commander Bartlett from the beginning, and has been a most efficient assistant, has assumed charge of the office, and will continue in the place until an appointment is made.