

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 1888.

LAST WEEK WE CALLED ATTENTION in a few words to the struggle which is going on in the New York City Board of Education over the election of a superintendent of schools. It is a cause of gratification to observe that the question has been lifted above and beyond mere petty detail, and made to rest on broad educational principles. Commissioner Sprague, who has conducted the inquiry into the fitness of the present incumbent for re-election, has shown great ability and a thorough grasp of the real issue. In his examination of Mr. Jasper he brought out the fact that the latter did not attend educational meetings, did not write or speak on education, and for four years had made no attempt to visit and inspect the schools systematically. On being pressed for an explanation, Mr. Jasper said that he had no time for any of these things! In other words, he is so busy marking examination-papers, computing percentages, and doing other trivial clerical work, that he could not be in any sense of the word a superintendent of schools. This admission should be a source of shame, both to the Board of Education that permitted such a state of affairs, and to the superintendent who did not protest against it. It proves exactly what has been charged; namely, that neither the majority of the Board of Education nor the city superintendent are fit for the positions they hold. In a series of interviews with four or five of the most prominent and respected educators in New York City, which a daily paper has published, substantially the same criticism that we made in these columns last week occurs. One said, "Our system does not properly educate, and is conducted too much on the principle that the teacher's work is to cram the pupil with hard facts." Another added, "The theories of the Board of Education are on trial. . . . The school system in this city is nothing more nor less than a magnificent piece of machinery, crushing out, whether designedly or not, all individuality, and tending to repress all the natural activities of the pupil. Uniformity is the thing aimed at, and the uniformity achieved is that of mediocrity." These expressions come from men who have made education a lifelong study, and who know what they are talking about. The force of such damaging testimony cannot be easily broken.

THE RESIGNATION OF PROFESSOR LOVERING of the chair at Harvard which he has held for fifty years calls for more than passing mention. Professor Lovering first entered the service of the college as a tutor in 1836, and in 1838 was elected Hollis professor of mathematics and natural philosophy. During this period much of the development of physical science has taken place, Professor Lovering's contributions winning for him first the presidency of the American Association, and later that of the American Academy, over which latter society he still presides, following in the line of the very distinguished men who have held the office. In accepting the resignation, which takes effect next fall, the president and fellows expressed their belief that "as a teacher, an administrative officer, and a member of the faculty, Professor Lovering has served Harvard College with perfect fidelity and loyalty, and with sound discretion. As a public lecturer and man of science, he has done honor to the university, and to the department of instruction which he represented." They also felicitate Professor Lovering and themselves upon the condition of assured prosperity in which he leaves the department of physics,—the department to which he

has devoted a long and well-filled life. The successor of Professor Lovering is Prof. B. O. Peirce, who has given much promise in mathematical physics.

THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.

THE present number of *Science* is accompanied by a map of the Yellowstone National Park, reduced from the surveys of the United States Geological Survey. The four-sheet map of the latter, which is based on explorations during the years 1884 and 1885, gives for the first time accurate information regarding the configuration of mountains and valleys. We do not deem it necessary to dwell upon the wonders of the park, which have for years and years proved so attractive to Americans as well as to foreigners, but it may be of interest to learn what measures have been taken of late to improve it and to preserve its natural beauties.

As in 1886 Congress failed to make any provision for the pay of the superintendent of the park, a detail of cavalry was sent to do duty in the park. One of the principal dangers the protectors of the park have to contend with are forest-fires, many of which originate through the carelessness of camping-parties. In August, 1886, many square miles of woods near Gardiner River were thus destroyed before it was possible to check the progress of the fire. Some of these forest-fires are attributed to unscrupulous hunters, who, being prevented from hunting in the park, resort to this method of driving the game beyond the park limits. It is stated that the park is surrounded by a class of old frontiersmen, hunters and trappers, who, as the game diminishes outside the park, increase their efforts, and resort to all sorts of expedients to get possession of that which receives the protection of law. Some fires seem also to have been started by Bannock Indians from the Lemhi Reservation.

Another source of danger to the beauties of the park lies in the vandalism of the visitors, which cannot be condemned too severely. The acting superintendent, Capt. Moses Harris, says in his report to the secretary of the interior, 1886, regarding this subject:—

"It is apparent from the most casual observation that the means heretofore employed for the preservation of the natural objects of wonder and beauty in the park have been entirely inadequate. It may be said without exaggeration that not one of the notable geyser formations in the park has escaped mutilation or defacement in some form. Those that have been most fortunate are covered with lead-pencil inscriptions recording the names of those shallow-minded visitors to whom such a distinction is a pleasure. A lead-pencil mark seems to be a very harmless defacement, but names bearing date of 1880 are still discoverable through the thin deposit of silica; and, if this marking should go on unchecked, in a very few years these once beautiful formations will have become unsightly and unattractive objects. At the Upper Geyser Basin names with date of June, 1886, have been chiselled into the solid geyserite so deep, that, in the slow process of nature, many years must elapse before this mutilation will be obliterated. Not content with the defacement of the formations, efforts are constantly being made to destroy the geysers themselves by throwing into them sticks, logs of wood, and all sorts of obstructions. The eruptive force of several of the geysers has been totally destroyed by vandalism of this character. The footsteps of the throngs of visitors are wearing away the delicate and lace-like tracery of the silicious deposits, and in a few years the formations surrounding the geysers will present the appearance of the worn pavements of a city street. The wilful defacement of these beautiful objects can only be prevented by watchful supervision, supported by the rigid enforcement of lawful penalties. A certain amount of wear and deterioration, incident to the multitude of visitors, is probably unavoidable."