

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1888.

SCIENCE CAN FAIRLY CLAIM the honor of having placed the discussion concerning the New York public-school system on the proper basis. The task of educating public sentiment has now been undertaken by one of the most influential journals of the metropolis,—the *Sun*; and in the forefront of its discussion, serving almost as the text for what follows, stands our editorial comment of two weeks ago. Educators in all parts of the country are following the discussion in this city with intense interest, and while it is not in our province to enter too extensively into detail, yet we purpose to keep our readers apprised of the progress of the battle; for it is a battle, in every sense of the word,—it is a battle between right and wrong, between educational progress and enlightenment and educational incompetence. The result will be either to free the schools and their hundreds of thousands of pupils from the deadening influence and control of a political ring, or it will fasten that influence and control on them more surely than ever. If the thinking citizens of the metropolis can be brought to appreciate the real nature of the alternative, the result cannot be for a moment doubtful. From all parts of the country, protests should be sent to the authorities in New York in order that they may be made to see that the country's intelligence and the country's conscience are fully aroused in this matter.

IN THE CURRENT ISSUE of the *Forum*, Ex-President Andrew D. White of Cornell has a suggestive article on 'The Next American University.' It is nothing less than the skeleton of a plan for a national examining university, with sufficient funds to bestow fellowships, scholarships, and travelling bachelorships. Its strength lies in its co-operation with existing institutions of collegiate grade. Its weakness, as a plan, is the immense amount of money required to put it in operation. It would furthermore be difficult to select a suitable chancellor, or, at all events, a succession of suitable chancellors, for such an institution, without incurring the hostility or jealousy of some sectarian body or some educational faction. The ordinary college has an historic policy of its own, and the president is to execute and develop it. In such an institution as Mr. White has in mind, the chancellor would be university, policy, and every thing else, so long as he held office. But if the money is forthcoming, let the plan be tried, and let Mr. White be the first chancellor.

THE WASHINGTON SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES have suspended their meetings for the season after seven months of remarkably successful work. Every session has been well attended, and there have been more papers than there has been time to listen to. Many of these have reported important progress in original investigation, and many others have described work which, although not pushing out into new fields, has perfected and filled up gaps in the work in old ones. The three leading societies—the Philosophical, Biological, and Anthropological—have, by their co-operation, maintained the annual course of Saturday afternoon free scientific lectures. These have all been of a high order, and have been listened to by intelligent audiences that have filled to its utmost capacity the auditorium of the National Museum. *Science* has devoted more attention, and given up more of its space, than usual, during the past few months, to papers presented at the meetings of these Washington scientific societies; and some of our readers may think that we have given them un-

due prominence, especially as we have not published the proceedings of scientific societies in other cities. If there are any such, we would remind them that the scientific societies of Washington are unique; they are composed almost entirely of gentlemen employed in the scientific bureaus of the government, many of them engaged in making original researches that could not be carried on by private enterprise because of their great cost. A large proportion of the papers read before the Washington societies are actual reports of progress or of the results of these investigations, and thus anticipate the official reports by months, and often by years.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING features of the very creditable exhibition of the industrial work of the past year in the public schools of Washington, given last week, was what were termed the 'spontaneous' products of some of the pupils; that is, work done outside of the schools. Some of this was suggested by the teachers, and some was not, but in each case it was voluntarily performed by the pupil. One boy, ten years old, exhibited the head of an Indian, a dog, and a horse, modelled in clay, which showed much latent artistic taste and skill. Another boy, twelve years old, made a vase of clay adorned with blooming roses which he had colored. A third boy, ten years old, had modelled a cluster of roses. One of the boys in a higher grade had made an electric bell, a wire from which stretched around the hall, and was operated by means of a button in a distant part of the room. Two other boys, still in the grammar-school, had made two telephones, which were placed at opposite ends of the hall, and which worked perfectly. This 'spontaneous' work, the teachers say, is indirectly the result of the manual training recently introduced into the public schools.

VERY GREAT IMPROVEMENTS have been made in the National Museum at Washington during the last six months. Professor Goode conceives that the object of that institution should be to teach facts in regard to the resources, arts, and industries of the United States, and to a more limited extent of the world, instead of to make exhibitions to please the eye or excite the wonder of the visitor. There are many things in the National Museum that never ought to have been placed there. For instance: there is a cat upon a fence, with the query why she doesn't go over. The reason is shown in the companion object, which shows a large turtle on the tail of the cat. Probably the worst object in the museum is a deer covered with nails. It was probably once owned by some tradesman who dealt in nails, and who covered it with samples of his wares, and placed it outside his door to attract customers. How it came in the National Museum we do not know; but we do know that it ought not to remain there, and shall be surprised if Professor Goode does not soon banish it to the lumber-heap.

THE WEATHER-PREDICTIONS.

THE meteorological work of the Signal Office began in 1870, when an appropriation of \$15,000 was made for it. When the weather-predictions were first published, they were looked upon with curiosity and wonder by the people, who were surprised rather that they were verified at all than that they sometimes failed. After eighteen years the weather-predictions have become a part of the every-day necessities of the people of this country. They consult them almost hourly, and by them shape their plans affecting their health, their pleasure, and their business. Instead of