

# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1888.

SOME VERY INTERESTING INQUIRIES are suggested by the statistics of the enrolment of pupils in the private schools of the country, which will appear in the forthcoming report of the National Bureau of Education. These statistics are necessarily very fragmentary, and some of them bear internal evidence of their incorrectness. But in a few States the reports are sufficiently full to indicate a tendency, at least. In Vermont, for instance, there was a decrease of .36 per cent in the enrolment of children in the public schools, while the enrolment in the private schools increased 3.57 per cent. In Connecticut the increase in the public-school enrolment was only .2 per cent, but in the private schools it was 5.13 per cent; and in New York the figures are .98 and 4.12 per cent respectively. But these percentages alone might be very misleading, since they are computed on different quantities. The actual statistics show that Vermont lost from her public-school enrolment in the year, 265 pupils, and gained in her private schools 259. In Connecticut the gains were 255 and 778 respectively; and in New York, 10,045 and 5,268. Some startling conclusions might be drawn from a superficial consideration of these figures as to the tendency of public opinion as to the relative value of public and private schools; but no confidence could be placed in them, owing to the absence of so many necessary elements of the problem. At the same time it is very desirable that the statistics of the private schools of the country should be collected with the utmost completeness and accuracy, and it is encouraging that Connecticut has already taken legislative action that should secure a complete system of private-school reports in the future, and that movements in the same direction are on foot in several other States.

REPORTS RECEIVED in Washington from Callao describe the sudden collapse of the paper money of Peru. Part of this currency, amounting to 20,000,000 soles, was issued by the banks at Lima ten years ago, and guaranteed by the government. The remaining 40,000,000 soles is government money. Its purchasing capacity declined several years ago to one-twentieth of that of silver, but, in the absence of any other circulating medium, it continued to be used by the people. Finally, in the brief period of ten days, confidence was lost in it so rapidly that it was virtually repudiated in all business transactions not directly connected with the government, which receives it in half payment for duties on imports, and pays it out to its employees. The amount of silver in circulation in Peru is very small. The banks and commercial houses of Lima and Callao could not produce 2,000,000 soles. The experience of Peru is but a repetition of that of every other country that has violated the scientific law in establishing as a circulating medium an article that has no exchangeable value itself, and is not made redeemable in a commodity that has — only more swift and disastrous.

WHEN A WRONG IS ASSAILED in general terms, the assault is apt to be interesting to those who participate in it, and perhaps to those who witness it; but there is some danger that it may not accomplish very much. This truth is illustrated by the results which have so far followed the attempts of various medical journals in this country to abate the evil of quack advertisements in religious newspapers. These attempts have been approved and applauded by medical men, and those who made them knew they

were discharging a useful office. But the religious newspapers have not been cured; and, indeed, they do not seem to have improved materially. One of the reasons for this is, no doubt, the fact that the attack has not been sufficiently sharp on any portion of the line to break it, and that, while the whole religious press bore the brunt of the assault, no one part experienced any special inconvenience from it. The *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, believing that no reform is ever accomplished without somebody being hurt, now states that they shall not hesitate, when next they take this subject up, to lay hands on particular religious papers, and say plainly to the editor of each, "Thou art the man!"

## CONVENTION OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTS.

THE convention of official agricultural chemists, composed of analytical chemists connected with the United States Agricultural Department, or with state or national agricultural experimental stations or agricultural colleges, or with state or national institutions or bodies charged with the official control of analysis of fertilizers, soils, cattle-foods, dairy-products, and other material connected with agricultural industry, met in the library of the Agricultural Department during the first week of August. About thirty members were present, including two delegates from Canada.

The method of this convention is to distribute samples in advance to all its members, upon the analysis of which they make reports, the object being to secure uniformity of methods and results. Previous to last year, fertilizers only were analyzed. A year ago there were reports on dairy-products, and cattle-foods were added; and this year fermented liquors and sugars. The analyses this year showed, that, following the methods adopted by the association, the older and more experienced official chemists arrived at as uniform results as could be expected, — entirely satisfactory ones, — but that there was great room for improvement among others. Following the same methods, some of the chemists reach very widely differing results.

One encouraging fact was mentioned by the secretary, and that was the very general recognition which the association is receiving from the manufacturers of, dealers in, and users of fertilizers. This has been shown by the great demand for the bulletin of the association, the edition of which for last year was exhausted several months ago, with the call for it still continuing, and by the numerous letters received by the secretary, expressing a desire, on the part of all those interested in the manufacture, sale, or use of fertilizers, to conform their methods of analysis to those adopted by the association. Those interested in other articles subjected to analysis by the association will probably show the same interest when the extension of its work becomes known.

By a change in the constitution, all members of the association who lose their right to membership by retiring from the positions that entitled them to it, may become honorary members, and exercise all the privileges of membership except the right to hold office and vote. It is believed that this amendment will secure the continued interest and co-operation of those who would otherwise cease all connection with the association.

Another amendment of the constitution places the selection of subjects for discussion, and the distribution of samples, in the hands of a number of 'reporters,' appointed by the president, to each of whom certain topics are assigned. These are to take the place of the committees.

The officers chosen for the ensuing year were, Prof. J. A. Meyers of West Virginia, president; Prof. M. A. Scovell of Kentucky, vice-president; Prof. Clifford Richardson of Washington, secretary; Profs. William Frear of Pennsylvania and H. W. Wiley of Washington, executive committee.