ONONDAGA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE.

At the November meeting of the Academy Professor P. F. Schneider read a paper on 'Onondaga Whetstones,' giving a short history of the use of whetstones and comparing the various commercial stones. The Labrador stone is found at the southern border of the county and is manufactured in a nearby town. It makes an excellent 'table stone.' The Arkansas stone is also manufactured by the same company, the 60,000 pounds annually shipped here yielding about 20,000 pounds of the finished product.

At the December meeting of the Academy Professor Schneider spoke on 'Palæobotany of Onondaga County,' illustrating his remarks by about a dozen plant remains from the local Silurian and Devonian rocks.

Mrs. L. L. Goodrich spoke on 'Variations in *Trilliums*,' and exhibited specimens ranging from the typical *Trillium grandiflorum* through gradations of petioled leaved forms to extreme forms with purely radical leaves. In nearly all cases the petals were more or less marked with green, and various degrees of reduplication and suppression of floral parts were noted as common occurrences.

Dr. A. A. Tyler spoke on 'The Origin of Species Through Variations,' after which the topics of the evening were discussed by Dr. W. M. Beauchamp and Dr. Hargitt.

H. W. Britcher,
*Corresponding Secretary.*

THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE OF ST. LOUIS.

At the meeting of the Academy of Science of St. Louis, of January 9, 1899, the following officers were declared elected for the current year: President, Edmund A. Engler; Vice-Presidents, Robert Moore, D. S. H. Smith; Recording Secretary, William Trelease; Corresponding Secretary, Joseph Grindon; Treasurer, Enno Sander; Librarian, G. Hambach; Curators, G. Hambach, Julius Hurter, Hermann von Schrenk; Directors, M. H. Post, Amand Ravold.

Mr. Hermann von Schrenk presented informally the results of a study of a sclerotium disease of beech roots which he had observed in southeastern New York during the past summer. The sclerotia, which were formed by the webbing together of rootlets by sterile mycelial threads, were stated by the speaker to have apparently no connection with the mycorrhiza of the beech. Mr. von Schrenck's remarks were illustrated by drawings and alcoholic and sectioned specimens.

William Trelease,
*Recording Secretary.*

## *DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.*

SCIENCE AND POLITICS.

At the last biennial session of the Legislature of Kansas there was passed what is known as the State uniform text-book law. A commission was appointed whose duty it was to select the text-books of all grades used in the public schools of the State, which were to be furnished at a stipulated price to all pupils. No other texts than the one selected may be used by any school under pain of severe penalties. The law has now been in force for two years and these books are being used by several hundred thousand pupils. So far as I can learn, specialists or experts were not consulted in the choice of the texts. Wide latitude was given to the commission, the one important stipulation being that the books should be cheap! Protests have been made, but in vain—the books must be used in every case where prior contracts are not in force. Let us examine the wisdom of the Kansas Solons in one case; I am told that others are like it.

The text in Physiology used in all grammar grades is one by a C. L. Hoxie, whoever he may be. As he is the author of text-books in Physics, doubtless his name will be familiar to the physicists of the country! The work had the benefit of revision by two high-school teachers of St. Louis. The part they took in the revision ought certainly to elevate them from obscurity.

We can sympathize strongly in the introductory statement by the author that the "value of a thorough knowledge of physiology in all of its departments can scarcely be estimated. If one be well a knowledge of physiology will keep him so. If one be sick the same knowledge will enable him to regain that priceless treasure—good health." One must suspect

that the author is a confirmed invalid! His definition of physiology is certainly unique:

"Physiology proper naturally divides itself into three departments, Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene." "Bones, like all other organic structures, consist of cells; the cells are more or less of a hexagonal form." He seems especially hazy about the lymphatic system: "The lymphatics perform the office of absorption, chiefly in the skin." At one time he has the lymph 'poured into the blood through the thoracic duct into the *vana cava* in the neck,' but farther on he modifies this by saying that the lacteals 'terminate in two ducts, which open into the large veins, and finally into the heart,' one on the right side and the other on the left side of the chest! "The liver performs the double office of separating impurities from the blood and secreting bile." The 'bile acts as a solvent of the fatty portions of food,' while we are informed that 'fat is an oily concrete substance, composed of stearine and elaine!' One of the chief functions of the saliva is to 'quench thirst,' and the 'epiglottis serves to deaden sound!' Among other 'important facts' the author says that the 'heart of quadrupeds lies in the middle line, and not to the left, as in man.' "All reptiles have two auricles and one ventricle." From the fact 'that coagulation is greater in the lower animals' he derives the very interesting conclusion that 'this seems to be a wise provision, since these animals can not stop a flow of blood from a wound by artificial means.'

But enough. These few examples are chosen almost at random. The book contains more poor English, wild and loose statements of fact, errors and absurdities than I ever saw before in a text-book of modern times. One might be amused at such stuff, published as 'science' were it not that tens of thousands of children in this State are compelled to learn it, usually taught by teachers whose ignorance of the subject is greater than that shown by the author himself.

Everywhere that a moral can be lugged in by the ears or tail the baneful effects of the poison alcohol are urged. Can such a book be expected to serve any useful purpose in teaching the principles of temperance?

And this is what politics may do for science in the public schools!

S. W. WILLISTON.
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, LAWRENCE.

## THE STORING OF PAMPHLETS.

ON reading Professor Minot's explanation of his method of storing pamphlets as given in the issue of December 30th I feel inclined to add a word in commendation of the method. I began using these boxes six or seven years ago and now have 152 upon my shelves. About one-half are devoted to Experiment Station bulletins, the boxes being labeled by States and arranged alphabetically. The other half is used for miscellaneous pamphlets on subjects pertaining to my line of work. The boxes have proved perfectly satisfactory in every way, and as a simple time-saving device they are worth many times the cost. My system of pamphlet arrangement differs in some ways from that adopted by Professor Minot and has been adopted only after trial of several other methods.

Each case is labeled and is also given a number. The pamphlets are numbered consecutively and arranged in the cases, as far as possible, by subjects, and each one is stamped with the number of the case in which it belongs. The location of each is, therefore, permanent. It is always returned to the same case and the same relative position as regards others in the case.

In a convenient drawer of my desk is a card index where all papers are recorded by author and by title. Each card carries the pamphlet number and the case number, thus indicating the exact location of the pamphlet desired. Often a dozen or more pamphlets may be in use, scattered over my work table for several days; when ready to be returned, the numbers direct to the case and to the correct position within the case. If each pamphlet contained but a single article the alphabetical arrangement would be the most simple; but many contain more than one title, often several, and not infrequently by different authors. These were a sourse of annoyance until the present system was adopted. I do not find the system cumbersome, and the time employed in keep-