committee will consist of thirty delegates, of which sixteen will belong to the Section of Science, and fourteen to that of Literature. In full committee the two delegates of one Academy will have only a single vote. After delay, in such cases, all the Academies, with the exception of two or three, have sent in the names of their delegates. The delegates of the principal Academy will take the chair at the committee of the Association, the principal Academy being that of the place in which it is proposed to hold the next general meeting.

The Conference of Wiesbaden having decided on a resolution to which we can here only draw attention, that the first general meeting of the International Association should be held in Paris this year, a difficulty has arisen not foreseen when the provisional rules were drawn up. Three Parisian Academies have joined the Association, it is necessary to decide to which shall be assigned the presidency on this occasion. The delegates of the three Academies of the Institute of France have met, and have unanimously decided to confer for this year the presidency of the Association upon the Academy of Sciences, which was the first to join the Association, and moreover, has taken an active part in the discussions, at the conclusion of which the Association was constituted.

It has been further decided that the first session of the committee shall be held in Paris towards the end of July, the first meeting being fixed for Tuesday, July 31st, at 9:30 a. m., at the Palais de l'Institut.

The agenda for the first meeting will include the preparation of a scheme of government for the committee, the settlement of the exact date and the order of the day for the next general meeting. The Royal Society of London, which has taken so active a part in the formation of the Association, has already announced a scheme which it proposes to submit for approval to this next general meeting; it concerns the measurement of an extended arc of a meridian in the interior of Africa.

The Academy, by the act of joining, has subscribed to the rules of the new Association. There is no occasion to recall here with what prudence and moderation they have been drawn up. The object of the Association is to prepare and promote scientific work of general interest which may be proposed by one of the constitu ent Academies, and generally to facilitate scientific relations between different countries. In any particular case, each Academy reserves to itself the right to give or refuse its support, or decide the choice of methods and the means to be employed.

If these principles are followed, the Association will become a powerful instrument of study, of concord and of scientific progress; it will rapidly take its place in the front rank of those international scientific associations, the *rôle* of which must necessarily be satisfactory.

Faithful to the principles which they have always followed, the three Academies of the Institute of France, called by the nature of their studies into the Association, will strive to assure it the success and influence which have been desired for it by its promoters.

Finally, attention may be directed to a particular clause in the rules which will interest some of our colleagues. For taking into consideration the study or preparation of scientific enterprises or researches of international interest, upon the proposition of one or more of the associated Academies, special international commissions may be instituted either by the general meeting or one of its two Sections or, in the interval between two general meetings, by the committee or one of its two sections.

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*DEFECTIVE VISION OF BOARD SCHOOL CHILDREN.**

THE London School Board have just tabulated the results of a test of the eyesight of school children in the Board schools. The object of the test was not to obtain statistical information or to satisfy scientific curiosity, but to achieve the practical end that children whose distant vision is defective should be placed in the front benches in the class room where they are required to see what is written or drawn on the blackboard. Some interesting results, however, have been obtained which are well worth the consideration of the medical profession and the attention of the parents of the children. The School Board at the end of last year requested the teachers to test the eyesight of the

* From the London *Times*.

children by means of certain testing cards, and to record the results. Sir Charles Elliott, who has taken great interest in the examinations, has appended an explanatory note to the return which has been made.

The manner in which the eyesight test was conducted, he states, was to hang up on the wall of the school, in a good light, the test card for distant vision and to mark on the floor a line at a distance of 20 feet from the wall. At this distance the children were required to read certain lines of letters. It appears, from a summary of the results, that of 338,920 children tested, 259,523, or 76.6 per cent., were found to have good sight, and 79,167, or 23.3 per cent., defective vision. The large number of 2675 children were only able to see the enormous top letter of the test card at a distance of 20 feet—a letter which is meant to be read at a distance of about 200 feet. The 79,167 children were given notices to their parents that they were suffering from 'serious defective vision' and advised to consult an oculist without delay. Taking the figures in the tables by School Board divisions it is seen that by far the largest percentage of defective vision is found in the city, where only 56.6 per cent. of the children have good sight. The other divisions where sight is below the average are Westminster (where the percentage of those having good sight is 67.7), Hackney (73.0), Tower Hamlets (74.0), Finsbury (74.3), and Southwark (74.9). Those in which the eyesight are above the average are Greenwich (which has a percentage of 82.2 having good sight), East Lambeth (78.7), West Lambeth 78.9), Chelsea (77.3), and Marylebone (77.1). In these latter divisions the houses are less dense and there are larger open spaces than elsewhere.

The figures, therefore, as far as they go, seem to bear out the hypothesis of 'town vision' expounded by Mr. Brudenell Carter in 1895, or, in other words, it points to the injury to the sight being caused by living in thickly-populated areas, where the eye has little opportunity of being exercised in distant vision. Another curious result of the test is that the proportion of good sight increases as the children rise in the different standards, which broadly coincide with the ages of the children. The percentage of good vision in Standard I. is 70.8; in II., 74.9; in III., 77.0; in IV., 78.9; in V., 80.3; in VI., 81.3; in VII., 82.9; and in ex-VII., 83.7. So that without a single break the ratio rises with the standard as the age of the children increases. But it may be doubted whether this means an increase in the power to see or only in accuracy of reading. Sir Charles Elliott expresses the belief that the recorded rise is contrary to general medical experience, and throws some doubt on the value of the whole statistics. Mr. Bland, of the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, he says, suggests the explanation that the bad results are partly due to weak power of reading rather than weak sight. "The trained eye is better able to discern letters than the untrained eye, and it is probable that the children in the higher standards achieved better results partly on account of their training."

The eyesight of girls appears to be inferior to that of boys, and Mr. Carter, in the inquiry made by him, seems to have arrived at similar results and to be inclined to account for them by the strain of needlework on the eyes of girls. Professor W. Smith, in a note appended to the Board's return, states that he had seen Mr. E. Clark, surgeon to the London Ophthalmic Hospital, in connection with the results, and they agreed that a similar return should be made of the available figures for near vision; that the figures were most interesting and valuable as giving the first experience on a large scale of the extent of defect of vision amongst children of school age; and that the figures showed that rather more than a fourth of the children suffered from defective vision. The London School Board proposes to repeat the test, year by year, in order to secure a correct record being kept of the progressive improvement, or the reverse, in the children's power of distant vision.

PROTECTION OF WILD ANIMALS IN AFRICA.

THE London *Times* has received the following letter, dated May 10th, from a correspondent at Beira, East Africa:

I venture to bring before your notice the pressing danger that before long the districts