

# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 1887.

THE MEETING JUST CLOSED in New York, of the American Association, has been generally voted a success. The attendance was not so large as had been hoped, but the character of the papers was satisfactory. Against the ordinarily large attendance at the meetings held in Eastern cities, there were this year registered not many over seven hundred. This may have been due partly to the late announcement of the place of meeting, and to a slight change from the usual date, — two circumstances which may have rendered it impossible for many to change their summer plans so as to allow of a week's visit to New York. The fear of hot weather in New York City has not been fulfilled. The next meeting of the association will be held at Cleveland, O. An invitation from Toronto unfortunately came just too late to allow of its being accepted. A list of the officers for the next meeting will be found in another column. In the general meeting of the association a few important resolutions were passed. The association expressed its opinion that the efficiency of the United States Geodetic Survey would be greatly increased if a superintendent were appointed who was thoroughly trained in the methods of geodesy; and it was resolved to ask the President of the United States to appoint a scientist to this position, instead of the present superintendent, who was only temporarily appointed. The second resolution which was passed by the association refers to the establishment of a bureau of standards, in which standard measures of electricity, heat, weight, length, etc., may be obtained. A motion of Prof. Cleveland Abbe was passed, requesting Congress to have an index of the publications of the Signal Service published. Scientists would be gratified if Congress should make a reduction in the tariff on scientific books and instruments.

THE SUBJECT OF MEDICAL LEGISLATION is attracting the attention of both the medical and legal profession throughout the country; and while it is generally conceded that the laws have in the past, either by reason of innate defects or their non-enforcement, permitted the practice of medicine by quacks and charlatans of the most pronounced type, still there is a sentiment, which is growing, that the State can go too far in its restrictions and exactions. This sentiment forms the basis of an address, entitled 'State Control of Medicine,' which was read before the Monroe County Medical Society by its president, Dr. Louis A. Weigel, the full text of which is published in the July number of the *Medical Press of Western New York*. In his opening remarks, Dr. Weigel says that it is usually considered absolutely necessary that there should be medical legislation to protect the public against quackery and imposture; that the lives of the people are directly endangered by incompetent and ignorant charlatans; and that it is the duty of the State to exercise a paternal control over its subjects, and dictate to them whom they shall employ when sickness invades their homes. He proposes in this address to investigate the practical results obtained by State interference in medical practice, and endeavors to show that no law has yet been passed which has had the slightest effect in suppressing quackery or protecting the community against imposture. The report of Drs. Dunglison and Marcy, a committee of the American Academy of Medicine appointed to ascertain the practical working of laws regulating the practice of medicine in the United States, is referred to at length by Dr. Weigel. The facts presented by this committee were obtained by correspondence with physicians in the various States and Terri-

ories. In New York the law has been inefficacious. From Michigan the answer came that the entire good of the law has been to give lots of quacks a legal standing. In Tennessee any and all may set up for physicians, and starve or make money, as the people decree. After referring to other States, the president says, "If any further proof of the inefficiency of legal enactment to suppress charlatanism is needed, I am at a loss to know what additional evidence I could present that would be more conclusive." He firmly believes, that, if no attempt at medical legislation had ever been made, the profession to-day would be held in higher estimation by the people, and occupy a still loftier position than now obtains. It is somewhat singular that the remedy for all this, in accordance with the view of Dr. Weigel, should be more legislation; and yet that is practically the outcome of what he proposes. He says that every year the multitude of medical colleges throughout the land send forth a large contingent of half-educated stupidity, endowed with the coveted half-yard of parchment, which a confiding public accepts as a guaranty of competency. It certainly has no standard to go by. The remedy for this suggests itself. The teaching and licensing bodies must be separated. The suggestion here made by the doctor is not a new one in this State, and is practically in operation in other States. It is more than probable that the next New York Legislature will be called upon to enact some such law as this. While theoretically it seems to be what is needed, we have never been able to see how it can be practically accomplished in this State without the danger of making it a political measure.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION.

### Section A.

THE Mathematical Section was without a vice-president through the absence of Professor Ferrel of Washington, who had been elected to that office, but at the opening meeting of the association the vacancy was most satisfactorily filled by the election of Prof. J. R. Eastman of the Naval Observatory. A further consequence of this change of officers was that there was no vice-presidential address in Section A, which therefore held no meeting on Wednesday afternoon. On Thursday morning, however, the section convened with a fair attendance, including at times a number of ladies, who apparently did not find the abstruse subjects discussed at all beyond their comprehension or interest. Several papers were upon what is known as 'personal equation.' One by Professor Eastman called forth remarks by Professors Hough, Harkness, and others, from which it appeared that there is still considerable uncertainty in the matter; it being by no means sure that the results derived from the personal-equation machine are comparable with the personal error of actual observations, nor that the error is the same for light and dark illumination. Professor Eastman concluded that many of the Washington observations on record can only be made valuable after a further discussion of the personal equations involved. Mr. Farquhar criticised Mr. S. C. Chandler's conclusions in regard to the dependence of personal equation upon the stars' velocity. Mr. H. B. Fine gave a general proof that the singular solutions of differential equations of the second order have always a tangency of the second order with the consecutive curves in the system to which they belong.

Professor Harkness's interesting paper on the visibility of objects seen with a telescope was an account of the result of some experiments on the distance at which objects become invisible when viewed through small holes of different sizes. It incidentally brought out the fact, that, when the image of the object fills the pupil of the eye, further magnification is of no value, and led to the