

As for the French Sahara, it is much less a desert than is generally supposed. Water seems to be everywhere present at no great depth, and an oasis is easily formed by the boring of an artesian well. Hundreds of such fertile spots have been made, and French Engineers are still busy in this profitable enterprise. As regards the comparative dimensions of these European claims to African territory, it may be briefly stated that England holds about two million square miles, mostly good territory; France about two and a half millions, largely desert; Germany about one million, much of it of little value; the Congo State one million, generally available; Portugal half a million, much of it excellent; and Italy about one-third of a million, embracing probably much good land. If it now be asked what steps are being taken by European nations toward the control of their African possessions, it may be answered that these claims as yet exist largely on paper only—the “keep-off” warning of the watch-dog

—but that much is being done to render them actual. Steamers are now navigating the Zambesi and the Congo, fortified trading-posts exist along these rivers, and a railroad is being built from the mouth of the Congo to its navigable upper reaches. A second railroad, to run from Mombasa, in British East Africa, to the Victoria Nyanza, was inaugurated August 26, 1890. It will be supplemented by steamers on lakes Victoria Nyanza, Tanganyika, and Nyassa, and possibly by railroads between these lakes. A third and more ambitious project is entertained by France, that of building a railroad from Algeria to Lake Tchad, across two thousand miles of desert. A route has been selected for this road, which is to start from Constantine and Biskra in Algeria. It will, when built, doubtless become the channel of an extensive commerce, from the old oasis and the new ones that are being formed, and from the Lake Tchad region of the Soudan. — *Charles Morris, in Lippincott's Magazine.*

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE present age has outlived the sanguine hopes once expressed for the regenerating influence of scientific study upon the education of boyhood. He must be superior to reason or experience, who still believes that natural science will transform learning from a pain to a pleasure in boys' eyes. Here and there, perhaps, a boy of special capacity will spend days of patient pleasure in a laboratory. But the majority of boys have cared for science as much or as little as for other subjects; they have certainly not cared for it more. No mistake could well be more serious than the enforcement of natural sci-

ence, except within definite limitations of time and subject, upon the attention of boys. Natural science possesses no special charm for most boys. It happens too often that the boys who distinguish themselves in natural science are the same who distinguish themselves in other subjects; and the reason is not that they are good at science, but that they are good boys. It would seem proper to determine the position of natural science in the public schools by two considerations, which will be generally accepted. One of these is that all boys should in their school life pass through an elementary discipline