

dent that man happens to have five fingers on each hand. Counting by tens is a legacy of savagery. If mathematicians had now to devise, *de novo*, a system of numeration—if a new and universal French revolution were to sweep away at one fell swoop all records of the past, and set humanity upon its legs once more on a *tabula rasa* of arts and sciences—there can be no doubt that eight would be the number immediately hit upon by the worshippers of reason as the best possible basis for an arithmetical series. Eight would then be written 10, and 64 would be written 100, while the symbols 8 and 9 would be entirely discarded from the reformed arithmetic. For eight is a good square number, divisible all round, by two, and by four, and halving evenly till it reaches unity, by the successive stages of four, two, and one; whereas ten lands you at once in five and two-and-a-half, which are useless and impossible quantities to deal with practically. But the accident of savage man's predilection for counting on his fingers has burdened us for all time with this clumsy and awkward decimal system: while only the lucky fact

that the Greeks and Romans wore shoes has prevented us from the still more terrible habit of reckoning everything by scores or twenties.

To go a step further back, as an ingenious American philosopher has pointed out, mankind uses decimals instead of octonals to-day because in the progress from the finned fish to the four-limbed amphibian the number of fin-rays on each limb happened to be reduced from eight or ten to five only. Hence most of the higher animals have five fingers or five toes on each extremity; and man in this respect conforms strictly to his early pre-human arboreal ancestor. If that ancestor had had only four toes, like so many quadrupeds, we might now count by eights or sixteens; but the accident of his possessing five digits on each limb has saddled us forever with the foolish custom of reckoning everything either by tens or by twenties. Our most advanced mathematics bear obviously on their very face the marks of their irrational and savage origin, and more remotely recall the evolution of the race from a many-rayed mud-haunting amphibious progenitor. —*Lippincott's Monthly*.

EDITORIAL.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.

IT is interesting to notice the various estimates which are put upon the office of School Inspector in States and Countries where any attention is paid to the education of the people.

In some countries, when an Inspector visits a school, he takes entire charge of teacher, pupils and programme; in other countries he comes as a visitor, taking part in the ordinary work, never interfering with the usual routine, except so far as arrangements are made by the master in charge to afford him increased facilities for in-

sight into the kind of work done in the school. In view of the fact that the master is ultimately responsible for the general well-being of the school, there is certainly an obvious objection to any one taking the control of his work, even for a limited period.

In Britain, at the present time, the question of the inspection of the secondary schools of the country is being warmly discussed; some writers advocate inspection after the manner of the Public Schools, while others are strongly opposed to this view of