

SCIENCE :

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JOHN MICHELS, Editor.

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In a recent Government publication, prepared by Professor F. W. Clarke, S. B., of Cincinnati, we find the following paragraph relating to the purchase of scientific apparatus, which may be studied with profit by the manufacturers:

"Some years ago Congress passed an act authorizing schools and colleges to import apparatus free of duty. This act is not so widely known among teachers as it ought to be, nor do those who know it fully realize the saving in expense which it implies. Goods bought of a local middleman cost their European price, plus a heavy duty and the expense of transportation, with a large profit to the dealer over and above the sum of the foregoing items. A school, by importing its apparatus directly, can save the duties and the local dealer's profit—a retrenchment of from forty to fifty per cent. A hundred dollars thus expended on a direct foreign order will buy as much material as a hundred and fifty laid out at home. A knowledge and an application of these facts will enable many a school to do far more in the way of laboratory work than is considered possible now. To be sure, it is desirable that home trade should be patronized, but not in such a way as to cripple science. The present duties bring in but a trifling revenue to the government and might be abolished without injury to any one. If this were done, our schools and colleges could afford to buy more goods of American dealers; the latter, with larger sales, could ask more reasonable profits; and so both buyer and seller would be benefited.

This paragraph once more revives a question which we trust will not be dismissed until some practical decision has been arrived at. Congress has abolished the duty on scientific apparatus and instruments, in the interest of colleges and other rich corporations, but, demands of the poor student, a tax of fifty per cent. upon every instrument purchased by him.

Such a discrimination in the collection of duties is neither just nor reasonable, and appears to have failed even in achieving any good results in the direction anticipated. On the contrary, it has crippled the busi-

ness of the American manufacturers, and forced them to charge exorbitant prices on the limited sales they could make under such a system.

We fully concur in the suggestion made by Professor Clarke, that, as these duties bring in but a trifling revenue to the government, they might be abolished, and that without injury to anyone.

We are also glad to find Professor Clarke, while speaking as the representative of the class most benefited by this discriminative legislation, taking such a liberal view, and advocating its entire abolition.

We are unable to offer the view that "the trade" may take on a measure which will bring them in open competition with European manufacturers, possibly they may require to be educated to an appreciation of a course, that will ultimately result in a condition of business, which will be beneficial to their best interest.

With the abolition of the discrimination in favor of colleges, etc., and of all duties on scientific instruments, the first result would be to equalize the prices of such manufactures, irrespective of the place where they are made. Universities and colleges in such a case could afford to buy of the domestic manufacturer and would doubtless do so. The one point that would have to be considered in such an open market, would be that of *quality*, and the American manufacturer of scientific apparatus has nothing to fear on that head, while with larger sales more reasonable profits could be accepted; thus both buyer and seller would be benefited. We trust that the next Congress will take some action in this matter, and place scientific apparatus and instruments on the free list of the tariff, and thus remove an obnoxious tax on knowledge, and increase the facilities for the acquisition of scientific and technical education among the masses of the people.

WE are informed that Dr. T. Sterry Hunt, of Montreal, and Professor James Wall, sailed for Europe on the 10th instant, for the purpose of attending the International Geological Congress, to be held at Bologna, Italy, on the 26th of September. We have written to Dr. T. Sterry Hunt, who is both a subscriber and contributor to this journal, to send us a report of this meeting, and have no doubt that we shall be thus enabled to place before our readers a reliable account of the doings of this Congress.

WE understand the Edison Light Company has been notified that the French Government, after inspecting all the electric lights in the Paris Electrical Exposition, has selected the Edison Company to light the Grand Opera-house of Paris with the Edison electric light. The Edison Company will ship the necessary electrical machinery to France by the next French steamer, and will light up 800 Edison electric lamps in the opera-house on Oct. 7.