

SCIENCE

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 17, 1893.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

* Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as a proof of good faith.

On request in advance, one hundred copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

(For other letters see page 276.)

POSTAGE ON NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS.

It has always been recognized that scientific research is greatly furthered by the exchange of the various objects with which that research is concerned. For the transmission of objects of Natural History from one country to another, the mails have offered a cheap, speedy and reliable means. Heretofore, through the laxity with which the regulations on the subject have been enforced, it has been possible to enter such objects in the mails of the Universal Postal Union as samples of merchandise and under the rates of postage therefor. From official information lately received from the Post Office Department of the United States it appears that such a rating is entirely unauthorized by existing provisions, and that objects of Natural History may be mailed to countries of the Union only at the rates required for letters. The United States Post Office Department also stated that it had recently submitted a proposition to the countries composing the Postal Union, to modify the regulations so that such specimens might be received into the mails at the same rates as samples of merchandise, but that a sufficient number of those countries had voted against the proposition to defeat it.

This Academy has therefore resolved to address the various scientific bodies, with which it is in communication in those countries whose governments have voted against the proposition, and to request those scientific bodies to memorialize their respective governments in favor of the same.

The Governments of Austria, Bolivia, British India, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Tunis, Uruguay and Venezuela having voted in the negative, this Academy respectfully requests the favorable consideration of this question by scientific societies, and begs that they take such steps as they deem advisable to inform the postal authorities of their respective governments of the manifest advantages to scientific research which would result from the adoption of the proposed modification, and to request those authorities to take such steps as may result in the adoption of the same.

The letter rate for postage (Universal Postal Union) is ten times that required for samples of merchandise; such a rate for specimens of Natural History is virtually prohibitive.

This Academy would respectfully urge upon scientific societies prompt action on this matter if it meets with that approval which we so strongly desire.

ISAAC J. WISTAR, President.

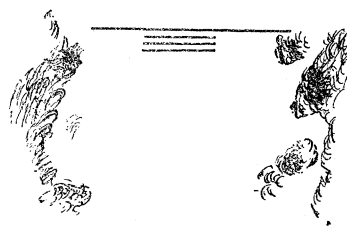
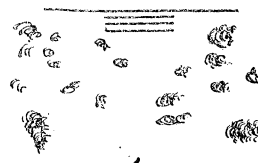
EDW. J. NOLAN, Recording Secretary.

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, November 14.

THE PICTURE IN THE LANDSCAPE.

The inquiry by Waldo Dennis, on page 213, into the causes of the unlike impressions which one receives from a given landscape and from a painting of it, seems to me to explain the subject admirably. He supposes that the reason why the picture appeals to us more than the landscape does is because the picture is condensed and the mind becomes acquainted with its entire purpose at once, while the landscape is so broad that the individual objects at first fix the attention, and it is only by a process of synthesis that the unity of the landscape finally becomes apparent. This is admirably illustrated in photographs. One of the first surprises which I experienced when I began the use of the camera was the discovery that very tame scenes become interesting and often even spirited in the photograph. But there is something more than mere condensation in this vitalizing and beautifying effect of the photograph or the painting. Individual objects are so much reduced that they no longer appeal to us as distinct subjects, and however uncouth they may be in the reality, they make no impression in the picture. The thin and sere sward may appear rather like a closely shaven lawn or a new-mown meadow. And again, the picture sets a limit to the scene, it frames it, and thereby cuts off all extraneous and confusing or irrelevant landscapes.

All these remarks are enforced in the æsthetics of landscape-gardening. It is the artist's one desire to make pictures in the landscape. This is done in two ways—by the form of plantations and by the use of vistas. He will throw his plantations into such positions that open and yet more or less confined areas of greensward are presented to the observer at various points. This glade-like opening is nearly or quite devoid of small or individual



objects, which always destroy the unity of such areas and are meaningless in themselves. The two sketches illustrate my meaning. The upper one is a fair diagram of the average front-yard. It is full of individual trees and bushes, or groups, and the eye is carried from object to object, while the entire yard makes no quick appeal to the mind. One is pleased only with the kinds of plants which he sees. The lower sketch presents a definite area at once to the observer, and the individual plants are of minor importance. Here is a landscape—a picture; there was a nursery.

A vista is a narrow opening or view between plantations to a distant landscape. It cuts up the broad horizon into portions which are readily cognizable. It frames