THE TARIFF AND SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: The House Committee on Ways and Means is now holding hearings on the proposed revision of the tariff and is asking all interested parties to appear before it to state their views. Is any one preparing to appear before the committee armed with the necessary facts to show the folly and injustice of the tariff on scientific books written in the English language? Regarded as a means of raising revenue, this tariff is insignificant; regarded as protection, it is an insult. From any other point of view it is simply an oppression suffered by American men of science, whose efficiency is usually impaired besides by incomes insufficient for their needs, and this tariff has for its sole effect to make good scientific work more difficult than it would otherwise be by hindering the ready access to the literature published in another country.

Of course any effort to remove the tariff on English books will be opposed by the publishers of school books, and perhaps also by those who publish popular fiction. The tariff on these classes of books probably does no great harm, and it might be allowed to stand at the present rate of twenty-five per cent.

This being admitted, there arises the administrative difficulty of distinguishing in the custom house between English books which would be dutiable and those which would be on the free list. But this difficulty would not seem to be insurmountable. For example, there is, I believe, a clause of the copyright law which provides for the admission of foreign books to American copyright. Might not the difficulty be met and our object be gained at the same time by the simple provision that all English books which are copyrighted in the United States shall be subject to the present import duty of twenty-five per cent. *ad valorem,* and that all other books may be imported duty free? Under this provision the publishers of school books and popular fiction in America would receive the same protection as at present; while the English publishers of scientific works, for which the demand is too small to be a temptation for reprinting, might be expected to avoid the copyright as an unnecessary expense and a hindrance to the free entry of their books into this country.

R. P. BIGELOW

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Climate. Considered especially in Relation to Man. By ROBERT DECOURCY WARD. 8vo, xiv + 372 pp. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons; London, John Murray, 1908. (The Science Series.)

In 1903 Mr. Ward rendered excellent service by translating and publishing the first volume of Hann's classic "Handbuch der Klimatologie," thus making available to a larger circle of readers the best text-book on the principles of climatology that has thus far appeared. Ward's "Climate" may be regarded as a supplement to the first volume of Hann's handbook, in which the author sets forth clearly and systematically some of the broader facts and relations of climate, primarily for the benefit of the general reader, although the needs of the teacher and student are not overlooked.

The introduction is essentially a condensed synopsis of the first six chapters of Hann's handbook, preparing the way for a better understanding of the chapters which follow. The classification of climatic zones is treated at considerable length, including a discussion on the climatic types resulting from the control of land, water and altitude. Chapters IV. to VI. give an excellent account of the characteristic features of the different zones, and chapter VII. discusses the relations existing between weather, climate and diseases. The three following chapters are devoted to a consideration of the life of man in the three principal zones. In the final chapter the author considers the evidences of change of climate during the historic period.

In the primary classification of climates Mr. Ward wisely adheres to the simple and time-honored classification into three zones—the tropical or warm zone, the temperate or intermediate zone, and the polar or cold zone—

although considerable space is devoted to a presentation of the principal modifications which have been proposed. While there is a great temptation to break away from the established classification and to introduce a scheme more in harmony with the actual conditions in the separate zones, the advantages of the new classifications are not sufficiently great to outweigh the simplicity and established usage of the old. However attractive may be some of the features of the proposed climatic zones of Supan, based upon common characteristics of temperature, rainfall and winds, or those of Koeppen, based upon the relations of plant life to certain critical values of temperature and rainfall of the warmest and coldest months, or of Merriam's biological zones, based upon the distribution of animal life, there are serious obstacles to their general acceptance; they all lack a simple expression for certain definite combinations of temperature, sunshine and winds. The term "temperate zone" is apparently the most objectionable, as the most extreme climates occur within its limits, especially in portions of the northern hemisphere. Still the word well describes the conditions of the zone as a whole, especially in the southern hemisphere. Even in the northern hemisphere fully half the area of the zone has a water surface, insuring temperate conditions. It is only over the continental portions that great extremes of heat and cold occur. Taking the earth as a whole, the terms warm, temperate and cold fairly well divide the climates of the globe into three natural divisions with the tropics and the polar circles as dividing lines. The secondary classification of climates into continental, marine and mountain is simple and practical and has general acceptance.

The author's summary of the characteristics of the three principal zones is especially valuable, as the student will find in these chapters a clearer and fuller synopsis of an abundant literature than is available elsewhere to those who read English only.

Hygiene in the tropics is, according to the author, mostly a question of sanitation, and a rational mode of living, as most diseases only indirectly depend upon climatic conditions. Change of residence, of habits, of occupation, or of food, is usually of more importance than change in atmospheric conditions.

Many problems of great interest relating to the life of man in the tropical, the temperate and the polar zones receive attention in chapters VIII. to X. Such topics as the labor problem and climate, the government of tropical possessions, dwellings in the tropics, race characteristics and climate, climates and crops, mental effects of weather, weather and military operations, are considered, though most of them are necessarily only touched upon. In closing his analysis of the evidences bearing upon the subject of climatic changes in historic times, the author concludes that, "Without denying the possibility, or even the probability, of the establishment of the fact of secular changes, there is as yet no sufficient warrant for believing in considerable permanent changes over large areas"—an opinion shared by most students who have given the subject attention.

Mr. Ward has succeeded in presenting a well-written volume, suitable for the classroom, being methodical in arrangement, and clear and direct in statement. The illustrations are few in number but well selected and neatly drawn.

O. L. F.

Johns Hopkins University,
November 25, 1908

Ex-Meridian Tables. By Lieutenant Commander Armistead Rust, U. S. N. New York, John Wiley & Sons. 1908.

This work is primarily designed to put at the service of the navigator convenient means for reducing altitudes of celestial bodies, when measured within defined limits of hour-angle from the observer's meridian, to the values that they would have if they had been measured at culmination on the observer's meridian, and thus to provide for the application of the simple method of finding the latitude from a meridian altitude, which consists in algebraically adding together the declination and zenith distance of the observed celestial body.

Delambre's equation, in which the whole of the reduction for practical purposes is ex-