

tional institutions from one another is by no means an innovation, and its legality seems out of serious question. At any rate, the function of the new association is merely, through its secretary, to *inform* members as to where they can *borrow* (if they like) urgently needed research chemicals while waiting for them to arrive from Germany. I have received a number of letters prophesying usefulness for the undertaking.

M. A. ROSANOFF,  
*Secretary*

CLARK UNIVERSITY,  
WORCESTER, MASS.,  
November 20, 1909

#### THE CIVILIZATION OF BOHEMIA

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In the first paragraph of the address by Dr. M. Toch, on the first page of SCIENCE, of November 19, there occurs a certain generalization on the effects of illiteracy in several European countries. The writer says: "In many of the countries of Europe illiteracy is universal"—which, of course, is not correct itself. And this is followed further on, as in illustration of the effects of the illiteracy, by the sentence: "What have those countries like Roumania, Bulgaria, *Bohemia* (italics my own), Hungary, Russia and dozens of others, ever amounted to, and what are their commercial relations with the rest of the world, compared with Germany, France, England or the United States?" Now all I desire is to say a word regarding Bohemia, which is the land of my birth. The inclusion of that country in the above sentence is extremely unjustifiable, for as any statistics on that question, including the data of the U. S. Bureau of Immigration, will show, Bohemia leads all the countries of Europe, including the greater part of Germany, in the lowness of the percentage of the illiterate, these being practically reduced to the defectives. And as to whether that country ever amounted or now amounts to anything in the sciences, arts, industries, etc., it is sufficient to refer to history and to the commercial and tax statistics of the Austrian empire. In view of these facts the above statement must be characterized as a very

loose one and it is regrettable that it found place in this esteemed journal.

ALEŠ HRDLÍČKA

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

November 19, 1909

#### MARS AS THE ABODE OF LIFE

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: On page 339 of SCIENCE I notice "2" has been printed for "r" in the denominator of the right side of the formula in the middle of the page. It reads correctly in my copy of the proof. The thing is evident as a misprint to any mathematician from the deductions—but it may as well be stated.

PERCIVAL LOWELL

#### QUOTATIONS

##### THE U. S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY

THE President's recommendation concerning the Naval Observatory is eminently sound. He urges that the official head of that great astronomical establishment should be an eminent astronomer, and not a naval officer detailed for service for a shorter or longer term. This mode of filling the post of head of the observatory could not have survived so long as it has were it not for the entirely false notion conveyed in the name of the institution. As the President truly says, all the uses of the observatory specifically related to the needs of the navy might be subserved at a small fraction of the cost involved in the maintenance of the Naval Observatory. The part it really plays is that of a great national observatory, and its material equipment is of a character befitting such a part. The President calls it "the most magnificent and expensive astronomical establishment in the world." Alongside its important observational work is carried on the Nautical Almanac, in connection with which the labors of Simon Newcomb and of George W. Hill have made American mathematical astronomy illustrious the world over. The whole of this activity should, as a matter of course, be presided over by an astronomer of the first rank, under a permanent tenure, and not by a man who, in the nature of the case, must be comparatively an amateur, and who is likely to look upon the post as a pleasant berth