

even than this would be a thorough investigation by the various state and provincial game or conservation commissions of the habits of the species concerned, with special reference to food preferences and commercial values.

Protection of those species whose numbers are not yet reduced below a critical point would doubtless be possible and adequate. Conservation of beavers has been successful in such cases. Nature distinctly favors some of the species through their practically inaccessible habitats, or their self-protective instincts. It is evident that protective legislation would consequently vary with the species and with the conditions of its existence in particular localities. Where one mammal may require a five-year closed season, another may need protection during the breeding season only, and for still another, protection may be altogether unnecessary at present.

There is further reason for paying heed to these elements of our fauna. The fact that man is the dominant species does not justify his wanton extermination of any members of the living world around him. It has taken nature geologic ages to evolve these animals, and it is our duty to be considerate in our dealings with subordinate forms of life.

There is no resurrection or recovery of an extinct species, and it is not merely that here and there one species out of many is threatened, but that whole genera, families and orders are in danger.

Dr. Mitchell in a recent number of *SCIENCE*<sup>\*</sup> has forcibly called attention to a number of facts, full of sinister warning to those who dislike to stand by and see the careless destruction of our native fauna. Allow me to quote again for the sake of emphasis:

Each generation is the guardian of the existing resources of the world; it has come into a great inheritance, but only as a trustee.

In the opinion of the writer the intrinsic interest and the humanitarian arguments, as well as the economic one, emphasize strongly the desirability for wise attention to this lesser problem of the fur-bearing mammals, none the less than to the careful conservation of all

the rest of the wild life yet remaining at our disposal.

WALTER P. TAYLOR  
MUSEUM OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY,  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

#### THE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM G. SUMNER

TO THE EDITOR OF *SCIENCE*: A little over a year ago the Yale University Press published a collection of essays by the late Professor William Graham Sumner. It is now proposed to publish another volume to be called "Earth Hunger and Other Essays," during the fall of 1913 or a little later. In connection with this enterprise, I wish, as editor, to bespeak your assistance.

It is desired, in this proposed volume, to collect (aside from more extended matter) all of Professor Sumner's shorter publications. Many of his best and most characteristic utterances were brief articles, struck off on occasion, and widely scattered in newspapers and magazines. We have little trouble in finding his longer articles, but it is difficult to locate many a short and vivid fragment. Since the other volume was issued, not a few suggestions have come to our ears to the effect that another time we should not overlook this or that pregnant utterance—some striking thing which has riveted the attention of our courteous censor, and which he would like to have at hand. Sometimes such a constructive critic can not remember just where or when he has seen such an article, and suggests vaguely that it was "in the papers," or "in one of the weeklies."

Now we want all these scattered materials, and it has occurred to me that suggestions might be forthcoming as to their whereabouts, if our present effort to make a final and exhaustive collection of Sumneriana were announced to your readers. We should be glad to examine any materials that might come within the scope of the proposed volume, and to receive any suggestions, however vague, as to utterances, brief or extended, from the pen of Professor Sumner. Materials sent me in care of the Yale University Press will be acknowledged and promptly returned after examination.

<sup>\*</sup> 1912, p. 353 and following.

As this volume will, in all probability, close the collection of Sumner's printed works in the line of essays and short pieces, those who can assist us in securing available materials will confer a substantial favor.

ALBERT G. KELLER

#### LEST WE FORGET

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: The new administration, with democratic majorities in both house and senate, was entrusted with power in the belief that it will be responsive to the needs and demands of the people. But in the various programs suggested for the amelioration of present-day abuses nowhere has any mention been made of the early adoption of the metric system as an obligatory system in this country, accompanied by the destruction of the old systems. The writer has reached that second childhood when, at the request of his children for aid in doing their "sums," he must again wade through the chapters in the arithmetic devoted to the various tables of hodge-podge units, and he realizes, as never before, the truth of the statement that the whole thing is "a wickedly brain-destroying piece of bondage under which we suffer."

To see young minds eager for the study of live subjects forced to work hundreds of useless problems in this treadmill of heterogeneous dead and dying units is enough to rouse the ire of any one against those selfish interests which are blocking the way of reform.

When we consider the situation candidly we must acknowledge that the matter is one of extreme importance. A great part of the under-weight and false-measure frauds are directly due to our confused system of units, and on the adoption of the metric system under such protective regulations as are in force in Germany, for example, a tremendous saving would be effected in the cost of living to wage earners especially. Can not all scientists, who understand so well the merits of the metric system, rouse themselves and make a strong effort to have the bill passed which has been before congress for many years, backed by the various government bureaus

and reform leagues? It took thirty years to obtain the parcel post; must we wait that long? Or can we not make a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, and get it through next winter?

A. H. PATTERSON

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,  
CHAPEL HILL

#### TO WHOM IS THE ACADEMIC COSTUME WORTH WHILE?

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Even if we disagree on the use of medieval costume in modern institutions as a matter of academic good taste, may we not set our faces against any participation in the decision by a commercial propaganda aiming to extract large profits from members of an underpaid profession?

T.

#### SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

*Cambrian Brachiopoda.* By CHARLES D. WALCOTT. Monograph U. S. Geological Survey, Vol. 51. Part I., Text. Part II., Plates. 1912. Pp. 872, 76 text figures, 104 plates.

The dominating impression which this extraordinary work leaves upon one who runs a hasty eye over its pages and luxurious plates, is that of the marvelous industry and enthusiasm of its author. If the paleontological genius who controlled these facts here assembled had nothing else to do, the wonder might be less. But amid the responsibilities of a great office and affairs of widest scientific concern, the writer of this book seems to let no minutes go to waste which can be made to forward his expositions of that field in paleontology of which he has long been the most effective illuminator.

Here are two quarto volumes devoted, by title at least, exclusively to the Brachiopods of the Cambrian fauna. Nearly twenty years ago students of this multitudinous, variant group of animals believed the sum of knowledge concerning them enough to justify a treatise on the broad lines of their generic characters, so Professor James Hall and his assistant published two big quartos on this subject, therein searching out every nook and cranny that might afford traits of generic sig-