We can scarcely refrain from suggesting, in the present depleted state of our Treasury Department, that all revenue laws should be constructed for "spirit" attachments.

G. D. HARRIS
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ALTERNATE BEARING OF FRUIT TREES

IN view of the heightened interest in the alternate bearing of fruit trees and in fruit bud formation it may be interesting to quote the following passage from the *Magazine of Horticulture* for 1847, volume 13, page 438. The note was written by Charles M. Hovey, editor of the magazine, author of several well-known horticultural works, and often called the father of the American strawberry, after a visit to the Pomological Gardens at Salem, Massachusetts, of Robert Manning, one of the most thorough and accurate students of horticulture in the early days when amateur interest in fruits ran high:

> Passing a Baldwin apple tree in full bearing, Mr. Manning stated that it was one on which he tried the experiment of changing the bearing year. It is well known that the Baldwin only bears every other year. To obviate this was the object of Mr. Manning; and, in the spring of 1846, he spent nearly two days in cutting off all the blossoms. It had the desired effect; this year, the tree is completely loaded with fruit. This experiment is valuable, for it shows that, in a large orchard, when the trees, by chance, nearly all fruit the same year, any number of them can be made to fruit in the alternate year simply by the labor of destroying all the blossoms.

HAROLD B. TUKEY
N. Y. AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION,
GENEVA, NEW YORK

THE WRITING OF POPULAR SCIENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In looking through the "List of One Hundred Popular Books in Science" prepared by the Washington Academy of Sciences for the guidance of libraries with limited income, one is struck by the number of foreign books. There are thirty-five British authors, two French (Fabre and Maeterlinck) and one German (Einstein); that is, in searching for the best books on the various sciences, regardless of nationality, it was found necessary to go abroad for 38 per cent. of them.

This is curious since in writing for American readers an American author has a decided advantage in that he understands their point of view and can use more or less local illustrations and comparisons and make allusions to familiar things, which are important factors in the popular presentation of scientific questions.

In spite of this natural handicap on the foreign author, British books form more than a third of this carefully selected list, so it is evident that the British are doing better work in the popularization of science than we are, a conclusion that is confirmed by a comparison of imported and domestic books in publishers' catalogues. We have in this country, for instance, nothing to compare in style of writing and attractive illustrations with the "Outline of Science" edited by Professor J. Arthur Thomson, which is now being published in parts at 1 shilling, 2 pence, as was Wells' "Outline of History." I may add that Science Service, which has been scouring the country for a year for popular science writers, has been obliged to go to England for them in many cases.

This is difficult to account for since our American schools give much more attention to the sciences and to the teaching of English composition than do the British schools and since we have such an abundance of fluent and facile writers in fiction and journalism and since we have a wider reading public than any other country. But it is questionable whether the interest of the American people in scientific questions has kept pace with the growing importance of science in human life. In fact some say that science is losing ground in popular esteem. For instance, Dr. Alfred H. Brooks, of the U. S. Geological Survey, said in his recent presidential address to the Washington Academy of Sciences:

> I venture the opinion that there is to-day relatively less popular knowledge of science and less interest in its methods and achievements than there was a generation ago.

This is a discouraging statement in view of