lacking in exactness. Each author has gathered historical material as an incident to other work, but the problem is deserving of intensive and continued effort. The human interests involved are considerable, for in these areas of small population every meadow and every small area of good pasturage is important. The investigator is ever confronted with questions: Has the formation of arroyos been wholly adverse to man or productive of good? If desirable, can former conditions be restored? How can existing property, fields, buildings and even towns be best protected against encroachment of the ever-widening channels? A proper solution of the practical problem will rest on considerations based on our theory of the cause of this erosion. If overgrazing or other artificial factors are the cause, regulation and a few simple structures may restore the conditions of the past. If erosion is the result of climatic change, a swing in the climatic cycle may at some future time restore the alluvial floors of the valleys without human intervention. The present need is for more facts in order that one or another of the proposed theories may be established. With the date at which cutting began definitely fixed and the date of introduction of livestock also fixed, a much better judgment as to the influence of overgrazing can be made. These historical data must be gathered locally for the many individual streams, and it is hoped that the large group of scientists interested will collect and publish the facts.

KIRK BRYAN

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

FRANCIS HENRY PARSONS

THE death of Francis Henry Parsons on July 25 at the age of seventy years removes one who had a lifelong interest in the advancement of science. Though he left no written contribution to scientific literature, his work as librarian successively of two scientific collections is of undoubted importance.

His fifty-two years of government service comprised work in the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, the United States Naval Observatory, and the Library of Congress. While in the Coast Survey, 1873–1894, he was made chief of library and archives, and assembled, from the scattered field parties and vessels, a library of from 12,000 to 15,000 volumes which is especially valuable for its source-material.

As assistant in charge of the Smithsonian Division of the Library of Congress, 1900–1925, he augmented the collection of transactions of learned societies and academies already gathered there, until, at the time of his retirement, it comprised 450,000 volumes. The significance of the collection is not, however, in the number of volumes, but in the nature of the material to be found there, which is unequalled in this country, in resources for the research student.

While others will build upon this foundation and will make it more widely known, Mr. Parsons's years of earnest and constructive work will remain a contribution of permanent scientific value.

H. W. PIERSON

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PHYTOGEOGRAPHIC EXCURSION

IN 1908, at the International Geographic Congress in Geneva, A. G. Tansley, of England, proposed that the plant geographers and other interested botanists should get together for an extended field trip. The British vegetation committee, which was approached with the proposition, favored it. They made plans to receive the visiting botanists and in 1911 conducted them through England, Scotland and Wales on what was officially called the "First International Phytogeographic Excursion" (I. P. E.).

The second excursion was held in the United States in 1913. Then came the war and the third was not held till 1923. A neutral country, Switzerland, was chosen as the field.

The fourth International Phytogeographic Excursion was held this past summer from July 2 to August 24 in Sweden and Norway. The excursion began in Lund (South Sweden) on July 2 and continued northeasterly for eight days toward Stockholm. On July 10 began the excursion through Middle and North Sweden. In Middle Sweden interest centered upon the vegetation of the Archipelago off Stockholm, the coniferous forests and the moors. The scientific institutions in Stockholm and Uppsala were also visited and the places associated with the work and life of Linnaeus.

The route from here lay northward to Abisko (Lat. 68° N.), where five days were spent at this most northerly station in Sweden. At this point commenced the Norwegian section of the trip which lasted for three weeks and ended on August 22 in Oslo. On this date the party left for Sweden and after two days spent in and around Gothenburg, adjourned for the summer on August 24.

The Swedish botanists were hosts for the excursion and under their able secretary, G. Einar Du Rietz, should be congratulated on the efficiency with which the excursion was conducted. The Swedes set an example as guides and hosts which other nations must find hard to equal.

Twenty-eight botanists representing the following 15 countries (exclusive of Sweden) were present for all or a part of the excursion: