

consideration? His finding that some salts are non-musical can be explained in this manner. If the length of the resonant column is long, the addition of salt or solid to the liquid below will cause only a relatively small change in the length of the resonant column. If, on the other hand, it is short to begin with, and has its length decreased by one half, a change of one octave will occur.

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BANANA STOWAWAYS

SOME time ago a couple of strange "mice" with prehensile tails, were brought to the laboratory from a neighboring grocery store. They proved to be Marsupials from some one of the Central American States, and belong to the genus *Marmosa* sp. A visit to the store resulted in the discovery of three more of this marsupial family making five in the single bunch of bananas. They were fed on grasshoppers and bananas and lived until the cold weather came on, when proper food could be secured no longer.

Many animals are imported in banana bunches and many insects, snakes and rats have been collected in the fruit commission houses, but this is the first time in the writer's knowledge that Marsupials of this genus have been included in the list of stowaways.

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ON THE VELOCITY OF SOUND

IN an article entitled as above and published on page 381 of *SCIENCE* for October 21, 1927, an error was made in the value of a constant in the last line of the article. This line should read

$$V = 331.4 \left(1 - \frac{4.45 \times 10^{-3}}{d \cdot n^{53}} \right) \frac{\text{meters}}{\text{sec}}$$

P. I. WOLD

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SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Navigator. The Story of Nathaniel Bowditch. By ALFRED STANFORD. New York: William Morrow & Co. pp. 308. \$2.50.

IT is only an occasional book in the field of general literature that threads its story about the life of a scientific man. When such a contribution comes from the press it is a pleasing diversion from the technical aspects of one's subject and even from the more conventional types of scientific biography. Such a book is "Navigator" by Alfred Stanford, a recent Amherst graduate.

To one who is interested in things of the sea and

the nautical aspects of a brilliant career this novelized sketch of the earlier days of Nathaniel Bowditch, of Salem, will prove a pleasing book.

It is more than a narrative of events in the life of a singular man. It is a book that wrests from the obscurity of eighteenth century science, a reticent but extraordinary personality.

To all who "go down to the sea" in ships, the name Bowditch is tantamount to Hoyle and "The American Practical Navigator" originally by Nathaniel Bowditch is the recognized American epitome on navigation which has for so long been printed and reprinted by the Hydrographic Office that the number of its editions is now almost legion. If the aim of Mr. Stanford's book had been to show how and why this celebrated epitome of navigation came to be written, he could not have more strikingly portrayed his character, but his aim has been more than this. It is obvious that the author has solicited a wider circle of readers than mathematicians and astronomers by making human his unique character and detailing his varied experiences rather than his mathematical contributions.

Those who knew Bowditch more seriously through the authentic memoirs or the traditions of Salem's nobility, may find not altogether pleasing the intimacies of imagined conversations or descriptions of conjectured conduct, yet it is surprising and indeed gratifying, to find how consistent with fact is the main artery of events in this kaleidoscopic picture.

So far as the problems of the eighteenth century are concerned, Stanford has shown himself well informed. A scientific mind cringes a bit at the indiscriminate use of "straight line" for a "great circle" course to shorten sailing distances and the spelling of Laplace's celebrated work as "Mechanique Céleste." One might moreover gain the impression that a ship's position could be determined from lunar observations with a far greater degree of accuracy than was ever achieved in practice.

On the other hand, one should not minimize Bowditch's notable contribution to "lunars" in a day when chronometers were scarce and often wanting entirely in a ship's navigating equipment. While the author may have played up (or down) to romance with all allowable license in a book purporting to be founded on fact, he has not obscured the Salem lad's love of figures as the *motif* of his career, nor has he failed to make mention of the high honors gained by his mathematical and astronomical attainments.

The final chapter is indeed a dramatic ending, and the more captivating for the knowledge that it is substantially according to fact. Rumor states that Captain Bowditch gained one glimpse of shore or of a familiar coastal light that piloted his landfall on the