

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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## Stockholm International Conference on the Exploration of the Sea.

MR. KYLE'S letter in the current number of NATURE is interesting as an expression of individual opinion as to the proposals of the Stockholm Conference, but it may be doubted whether he succeeds in his aim of conducing to "greater clearness on the points at issue."

I do not know to what extent Mr. Kyle is authorised to represent the British delegates who attended the Conference. They remain silent, while he replies—interpreting their report. In one place he tells us that "this [hydrographical] work was not intended to hinder the further prosecution of strictly biological research"—for which assurance I hope biologists will be duly grateful—and further on he says that "the areas of investigation will assuredly come under re-consideration." Will the delegates endorse that? Re-consideration of certain points was exactly what I asked for (see NATURE, p. 78).

But whether authorised to speak for the delegates or not, Mr. Kyle is certainly not entitled to say that I do not fully appreciate, and have not fully weighed, the Stockholm report. I have weighed it over and over again, and still adhere to my statement that it does not contain a definite programme of biological work. The sections Mr. Kyle quotes and refers me to (I., II., IIIa., IIIb., &c.) consist merely of statements of a quite general nature as to what is "desirable"—admirable sentiments which are neither new nor definite, but have been before the public for some years, and are in the main agreed to on all sides. We looked for something more from this Conference under the heading "programme" than pious wishes of the same unexceptionable nature as—that it is desirable to have full information about everything. If Mr. Kyle is satisfied with a "definite programme" of this nature, I am not; and, moreover, I think we have reason to believe that *the delegates themselves are not*. What are we to understand from their ominous silence; and what is the meaning of the following remarkable statement in the protocols of the Committee No. II. (see Report, p. 1v.)? "It is thereupon expressly stated on different sides that a more precise and detailed elaboration of the biological programme is desired." And then further on: "such a detailed elaboration of the programme is rejected. This document is agreed to in the more general form in which it has been proposed, in order that *unanimous* acceptance of it may be arrived at." It is evident then that some of the delegates felt the same want of a more precise and detailed programme that I do. It would be interesting to know if the biological delegates played the part of the eleven obstinate jurymen who had to be convinced in order to secure unanimity. At any rate, this reference to the words of the report must effectually dispose of Mr. Kyle's contention that the programme is sufficient. It was evidently *not sufficient* in the eyes of some of the delegates themselves.

Finally, Mr. Kyle asks if I can show a more definite programme. There can be no great difficulty in that, but I would rather it came from those who were officially appointed to draw it up; and I hope that those delegates who evidently had something of the kind in their minds will publish it. It will be too absurd if any idea of official reticence is allowed to deprive independent biologists of such ideas and advice as the delegates can furnish, whether unanimously or no. If, however, our official representatives do not speak, I shall probably publish soon a detailed programme I have had in my mind for some time in connection with the work of the Lancashire Sea Fisheries Committee.

It is unnecessary for me to answer the latter part of Mr. Kyle's letter, which deals with Mr. Allen's criticisms, and contains a curious caricature of the work of the Marine Biological Association. But however much I may differ from the rest of Mr. Kyle's remarks, it gives me pleasure to agree most cordially with the sentiment expressed in his final paragraph.

Liverpool, December 16.

W. A. HERDMAN.

## Meteorology at the Berlin Geographical Congress.

IN the report of the Geographical Congress at Berlin (NATURE, vol. lx. p. 633), it is said that the last meeting

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of the Congress was to have been addressed by Prof. Hergesell, but as he had somewhat rashly made an ascent in a balloon the previous day, the Congress had been formally closed before he returned to Berlin.

In justice to my colleague, the President of the International Aeronautical Committee, and to maintain the customary accuracy of NATURE, I beg to correct this statement by saying that although Prof. Hergesell, in my stead, did make a high balloon ascension with Dr. Berson, and so co-operated in the eighth international ascent of balloons on the Continent, yet he also presented his paper to the Congress at the appointed time the next day.

It may be well to explain that with the idea of extending the sphere of geography, it was arranged to have recent results of the exploration of the atmosphere brought before the Congress by members of the Aeronautical Committee. Accordingly, Prof. Hergesell, of Strassburg, spoke of the instructional balloon ascents in Europe, in which, unfortunately, England has not participated; Prof. Assmann, of Berlin, described the scientific balloon ascents executed by the German Aeronautical Society; M. Teisserenc de Bort, of Paris, explained the work that he has been doing with *ballons-sondes* to get information about the high atmosphere; and I myself gave an account of the use of kites in America to study the meteorological conditions of the lower mile or two of air.

A. LAWRENCE ROTCH.

Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory, Mass., U.S.A.

December 1.

I AM happy to hear that Prof. Hergesell returned to Berlin in time to read his paper. My mistake is due to hearing it officially announced in the morning that it was feared he could not return in time, and to the report in a Berlin newspaper that he had not returned. It was of course impossible for me to attend all the meetings, and in summarising so vast a programme as that of the Seventh International Congress, some mistakes are sure to be made. It is almost unnecessary to add that no aspersion on Prof. Hergesell was intended, the completion of an unexpectedly prolonged experiment is worth more to science than the reading of many papers.

THE WRITER OF THE REPORT.

## Shadows of Insects.

I HAVE only just seen the letter of your correspondent (Capt. D. Wilson-Barker) in your issue of the 7th inst. on the subject of "Butterfly Shadows."

The habit he observes in the butterfly of always adjusting its position after alighting, I have also frequently remarked in the ordinary garden fly and bluebottle. They are fond of congregating on shrubs or ivy in bright sunlight, whence they make short excursive flights in the air returning as nearly as possible to the same place; but no matter which way they are turned when they alight, they immediately readjust their position, and will always be found with their heads directed to the same point of the compass.

I have constantly observed this habit of theirs, but have never seen it mentioned in any natural history. It seems hardly likely that in the case of flies the practice can have anything to do with *shadows*.

WM. PARKINSON.

Deerhurst, Coventry Park, Streatham, December 15.

## Mosquitoes and Malaria.

IT may be of interest to record the fact that though during the months of June, July and August I collected and examined about 300 mosquitoes in this town, I only came across one specimen of the spotted-winged mosquito which is described as the malaria-conveying species by Major Ross. The majority, quite 75 per cent. of the specimens captured, were the harmless grey kind, the rest being chiefly the equally harmless tiger or brindled species. The single spotted-winged specimen I found in my house on a mosquito curtain. The rarity of its occurrence will, according to Major Ross's theory, account for the comparative absence of malaria in Singapore.

An account of this was given in the *Straits Times* of Sept. 4. A selection of the three species caught in the town of Singapore, together with about three other species from the neighbouring jungle, were sent in August to the British Museum, where they await further examination.

R. HANITSCH.

Raffles Museum, Singapore, November 24.