

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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British Association; Section A.

As an old member interested in the welfare of Section A, and appreciative of the useful work it has long done in bringing physicists and mathematicians of various kinds together, I want to suggest that the comparatively recent practice of crowding all its multifarious work on to a few days, and getting through it by sitting in duplicate and by hurry, is unsatisfactory. This suggestion is not intended as a complaint, but as a warning that such a method of dealing with Section A must sooner or later result in its disintegration into two or more sections.

So long as it keeps together—and it is much to be desired that it should keep together, so that workers in different fields may hear something of each other's results—it is necessary that it should take all the time allowed to it, and sit as a rule both on Saturday and on Wednesday. The Saturday meeting is especially important. In the old days the mathematicians frequently had an excellent opportunity on that day, of which they took full advantage. So also the final meeting on Wednesday, for some of the papers on minor experimental points, and for such as had been postponed from other days, has also been often quite interesting.

If Saturday is not utilised, some of the senior members are apt to leave at the week end, and the discussions on future days then lack some of their interest and importance.

The only reason for not meeting on Saturday is on account of excursions. It is to be hoped that excursions will not be allowed to ruin the meeting. Saturday excursions are an innovation: they began as visits to works and the like, in the immediate neighbourhood, on the afternoon; and the full-day excursions were kept for the second Thursday.

An attempt was made to diminish the excursions by abolishing the second Thursday, with the unfortunate result that excursions have now encroached on and consumed the Saturday—which is much worse. There are sections perhaps, such as C, and no doubt others, of which excursions are an important feature; but it is not so with A. Let me urge the officers of that section to return to the older practice, and to aim at taking meteorology on Monday, general physics and astronomy on Thursday and Monday, pure physics on Friday and Tuesday, pure mathematics on Saturday, and an overflow, together with experimental papers, on Wednesday. Then allied sections, such as B and G, can take papers of more interest to physicists on the Monday, as indeed used to be, and perhaps is, their custom; and Section L might perhaps then assist Section A with some of the interesting and important papers on details connected with teaching.

Another minor matter is to express my belief that sectional committee meetings would be more convenient, and likely to be better attended, in the afternoon than in the early morning. But on that there may easily be differences of opinion.

OLIVER LODGE.

Fecundity of the Leopard Moth.

A SPECIMEN of the above (*Zeuzera aesculi*) was sent to me by post in a tin box a few days ago from Felixstowe. The moth was dead when it reached me, but had laid eggs in the box. As there seemed to be such a large number I had the curiosity to have the eggs counted, and it was found that there were 725. It is, of course, impossible to say whether this represents the whole family or whether she may have laid some eggs previous to capture.

The relative fecundity of different species of insects in relation to their life-habits is an interesting subject from the selectionist's point of view. The caterpillar of this moth is a wood borer, and the conditions for favourable nutrition may be difficult to find, so that a high fecundity has been developed in order to meet precarious conditions of survival. Other wood borers seem also to lay large numbers of eggs, but I do not know whether the families have ever been counted. As a contribution to the subject this observation appeared worthy of record.

Nairn, N.B., August 10.

R. MELDOLA.

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THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON SCHOOL HYGIENE.

THE Second International Congress on School Hygiene was opened on August 5, and closed on August 10. The papers were mainly practical. At the first congress (Nürnberg, 1904) there was a distinctly greater proportion of research work; but this was due to the fact that the medical examination of school children had been longer established in Germany, Austria, and other European countries than it has been in England. Such scientific investigation as the present congress has evoked is almost exclusively directed towards justifying immediate administrative measures, or developing existing organisations. For example, medical inspection has, in England and Scotland, now all but become a widespread reality, and the hygiene of school buildings and school work has rapidly grown into a speciality. We here indicate the main problems raised for discussion.

(1) *Methods of Medical Inspection.*—The desirability of medical inspection has been assumed at every section. The chief concern is to what extent it shall proceed. Dr. Méry (Paris) maintained that the first examination on entry to school should include (a) an anthropometric record of weight, height, chest measure, dynamometric observations; (b) physiological record of the primary educational senses—eye and ear; (c) a medical record of all the organs—throat, lymphatic system, skin, skeleton, lungs, heart, &c. He insisted on the extreme value of minute thoracic measurements, as shown by insurance results. Experiment has shown that spirometry as a test of lung conditions is not practicable with children. The minute measurements required to establish the "thoracic index" can be carried out only by skilled specialists.

The other papers on medical inspection recommend only a medical examination, conducted strictly in relation to the school-work required. Accounts were given of the methods of report and examination employed in Sweden, Breslau, Wiesbaden, Leipzig, Nice, and other places.

Dr. Clement Dukes (Rugby) gave the results of an elaborate physical examination of 1000 boys of ages thirteen to fifteen. The boys were taken as they entered the public school. This paper is of great practical value. It deals with boys whose home-nature was of the best possible. As tested by Dr. Roberts's standard tables, 522 boys were above the normal height; 113 were average; 365 below normal. In weight, 472 were above normal; 57 average; 471 below normal. In chest measurement, 445 were above normal; 132 average; 423 below. Acquired deformities (such as spinal curvatures, pigeon-breast, bow legs, flat feet) were surprisingly numerous. *E.g.* there were 529 cases of knock-knee; of lateral curvature of spine, 445; of flat-feet, 329. There were 13 cases of eustachian deafness; 19 of aural deafness. Hypermetropia, 40; myopia, 128; astigmatism (considerable), 27. Heart disease, 10. Albuminuria, 157. This is a startling figure. As to puberty, 317 had attained the state between thirteen and fifteen years; in a few cases, not until fifteen. This research is the most elaborate yet published regarding English public school boys. It has an important bearing on the question of environmental *versus* germinal deterioration.

(2) *Effect of School on Health.*—Dr. Hüttl (Prague) records that the upper classes suffer more in nutrition than the lower from bad teeth. Myopia is admitted to be a result of school work. Girls suffer more than boys from spinal curvature. Nervous diseases, headaches, insomnia, night-terrors, are more frequent in the higher classes.

Tuberculosis.—Dr. Oldwright (Toronto) deals with the schoolroom as a factor in tuberculosis. As to