LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Meteorological Conditions of a Blizzard.

I AM glad to see Mr. Bostwick's protest against the current use of the word "blizzard," and agree with him that the British Isles, excluding mountains like Ben Nevis, cannot produce the conditions for a real blizzard.

There can be no comparison between the phenomenon as it occurs in North America and the polar regions and the very mild imitation commonly called a blizzard in the English daily Press. In most cases the latter consists of a mixture of snow and rain, perhaps not amounting to more than 0.10 in. in all, and a wind not exceeding a strong breeze.

The only approach to a blizzard in the S.E. of England during the last fifty years was on January 18, 1881. On that occasion the dry snow and the gale were present, but not the low temperature. Much inconvenience was caused by the drifts and stoppage of traffic, but hundreds of thousands of persons probably made their usual outdoor journeys on that day in their usual clothing without danger, a thing they could not have done had the third condition of a really low temperature been fulfilled.

W. H. DINES.

Benson, Wallingford.

Economic Work of the Geological Surveys.

THE note on Sir Robert Hadfield's address to a Committee of the Advisory Council for Scientific Research, given in NATURE for May 25 (vol. xcvii., p. 264), suggests that the speaker was ill-informed as to the recent history of the Geological Surveys of our islands. The activities of what Sir Robert Hadfield styles "the Geological Survey" have naturally been "restricted" as regards Ireland, since the Geological Survey of that country was placed under the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction so far back as 1905. So soon as the need for more detailed information as to our mineral resources became apparent, through the pressure of military operations, the staff in Ireland was devoted to the preparation of a reference index to all known mines and mineral localities in the country, and the inquiries that are almost daily dealt with already show the utility of the material thus brought together.

The remark quoted from Sir Robert Hadfield's address as to the basis on which our knowledge of Irish minerals rests must surely refer to some officer in England. The Department of Agriculture in Ireland employs, in addition to the staff of its Geological Survey, an officer entitled the "Economic Geologist," possessed of special mining qualifications, whose advice is always at the service of those who may be desirous of developing mineral industry in the country. Surely the combined work of the Geological Surveys and of the mining officials already employed in the

public service should obviate the creation of a new "Central Imperial Bureau." The deficiency of information has long been due to public ignorance of the value of the material brought together by public servants, an ignorance unhappily shared by many who pose as mine prospectors.

GRENVILLE A. J. COLE.

Geological Survey of Ireland,
14 Hume Street, Dublin, May 27.

ANTARCTIC PHYSIOGRAPHY.¹

DR. GRIFFITH TAYLOR, physiographer to the Commonwealth of Australia, accompanied Capt. Scott's last Antarctic Expedition as its chief physiographer, and in this interesting volume he records his experiences, gives brief summaries of his observations and conclusions, and describes the daily life and incidents of the enterprise. His scientific results will be given more fully and connectedly in the special volumes on the work of the expedition. His narrative is mainly of interest as a preliminary statement of his conclusions, and for his racy account of the

FIG. 1.—Photo from the ship of Cape Evans, January 26, 1911. The Tunnel Berg appears on the right. Behind is the dark line of the Ramp, and twelve miles away the cone of Erebus with a small steam cloud. From "With Scott: The Silver Lining."

life of the expedition and pleasing picture of the good humour and happy comradeship between all its members.

Dr. Taylor's chief contributions to the history of the expedition are his accounts of the voyage from New Zealand to Macmurdo Sound, of the winter's life at the base there, and of the two expeditions under his command to the mainland on the western side of Macmurdo Sound. During his sledge journeys in that area he was able to supplement the observations of Ferrar, David, and Mawson, and by combining all the materials available has produced the most detailed map of any part of eastern Antarctica. It is an area of special interest, as the glaciers descend towards the coast through a series of remarkable valleys which notch the edge of the Antarctic plateau. Dr. Taylor's party followed the Ferrar Glacier

¹ "With Scott: The Silver Lining." By Dr. Griffith Taylor. Pp. xiv+464. (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1916.) Price 18s. net.