

Prof. Bayliss's desire for "free import of such apparatus *until* equally good material is to be had cheaply at home" is provided for by the Bill with the exception of the one word "cheaply," and I suggest that he has, perhaps unintentionally, given the impression that a tariff on goods which either are not or cannot be made in this country has been proposed.

The whole question appears to be: Are scientific men prepared to pay more for British-made scientific instruments of approved quality to meet higher wages or the depreciation of foreign currency rather than have the whole industry extinguished in this country?

With the mark at something like one-tenth its pre-war value, it is obvious that no instrument can be produced in this country to compete as regards price with those made in Germany. The Government, through the British Scientific Instrument Research Association, is giving State aid as regards perfecting processes. Sir Herbert Jackson (who is director of the association) is already producing most valuable results; but if financial considerations make it impossible to sell the articles so produced, it does not meet the case.

Quite apart from the danger to the State which will ensue in case of another war if the scientific industry does not exist, surely it must be evident that science cannot develop properly in any country that cannot produce at least the majority of its own scientific instruments.

A much closer combination between scientific and practical men than existed before the war is required. It has already commenced, and I desire to take this opportunity of explaining that the association of which I am president has a technical committee the members of which place their services at the disposal of the scientific world to discuss all questions the solution of which depends on the production or development of scientific instruments.

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minster, S.W.1, May 10.

PROF. BAYLISS'S letter in NATURE of May 6 raises a subject which is of the greatest interest to manufacturers, as well as to users of all classes of scientific apparatus. We do not think that anyone will dispute the contention that scientific workers should have the very best apparatus which is available, and wherever British apparatus is not up to the standard of foreign competitors there is no doubt that the importation of the foreign articles should be allowed. It is, however, quite a different matter when orders are placed by scientific workers, hospitals, etc., with foreign firms on account of the latter being able to quote lower prices than the English manufacturers can do at the present time.

It has recently come to our knowledge that an important hospital supported chiefly by voluntary contributions has placed a large order for X-ray equipment abroad on account of the lower price quoted, not because the staff was of the opinion that better apparatus could be obtained from this source, as, in fact, we were definitely assured that, except for price, our models were preferred. We would ask the committee which was responsible for placing that order whether it had carefully considered the effect of its act, especially should it be repeated to any considerable extent. It is generally acknowledged that, prior to the war, the British manufacturers were not giving to the medical world the very best service, and both medical men and manufacturers

have often asked the reason why. It is too large a question to go into the fundamental reasons, and opinion would no doubt differ as to these; but there is no doubt that in the year 1914 there did not exist a sufficient demand for British X-ray apparatus to allow manufacturers to work on a large enough scale to ensure satisfactory service and economical production. During the war the cutting off of foreign supplies and the increased demand for apparatus enabled the firms concerned to venture on a bolder policy, until by the end of the war there were established in the country adequate manufacturing facilities. After the armistice the Government orders dropped to zero, but the demands for up-to-date equipment from private hospitals, and from foreign quarters which had been starved during the war, were sufficient to fill the gap and to enable various firms to carry on their manufacturing programme without undue alarm for the immediate future.

The past year has been one of great difficulty in the manufacturing world, and, with the publication and issuing of catalogues and price lists scarcely yet complete, a great deal of the heart will be taken out of British manufacturers if they find that, owing to a circumstance over which they have no control, they are going to lose a large part of their home trade. The circumstance to which we refer is that of the rate of foreign exchange, against which tariffs, unless extremely heavy, are of no value whatsoever. It is very difficult to obtain trustworthy information as to the prices at which German and Austrian goods can really be delivered in this country, but in one specific instance we ourselves are being offered one of our staple articles of manufacture at a price which is very considerably below the actual cost of the raw material which we use in the manufacture. Prior to the war the articles were not made in this country at all, and it was only by the employment of considerable, research and a heavy initial expenditure that their production was assured and perfected. We do not think that some scientific workers, medical men, and others quite realise that under present conditions high prices are essential in connection with scientific apparatus as with all other commodities, and that if they wish to obtain really good service from British manufacturing firms it is necessary that the amount of apparatus purchased from them should be considerable. Then when our Colonial and foreign friends come to this country for instruction and advice, and find that instruments of British manufacture are employed by the doyens of the scientific world, our foreign trade will develop, and increased production will then lead to lower prices with better quality.

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REFERRING to Prof. Bayliss's letter on scientific apparatus from abroad, we cannot quite agree with his view that the instruments made in this country are more costly than those purchased from the Continent. We think that when conditions in this country are more settled Prof. Bayliss will find that foreign prices are equal to, if not in excess of, those ruling on this side, owing to the considerable increase in wages and raw materials. At the moment the rate of exchange makes the prices seem low as compared with those in this country, but can Prof. Bayliss obtain delivery at the low prices?

If manufacturers in this country do not receive the