

geology, as well as the common land of general periodical literature. The index of advances in physics required by a geologist will differ materially from that which meets the needs of a physicist.

JOHN W. EVANS.

Imperial College, South Kensington, June 12.

In the very interesting and important leader of your issue of June 9, dealing with the co-operative indexing of periodical literature, attention is mainly confined to the natural sciences, but whatever is said as to the necessity for some new co-operative effort there in order to render more accessible the contributions in what you call the non-homogeneous class of periodicals, the need is even greater in another field of knowledge. May I venture to point out that in the field of one of the political sciences, if history and its allied subjects can be included in such a term, co-operation is even more urgently needed, and may be profitably undertaken along similar lines and in close concert? In very few fields of historical investigation do workers possess the advantages that are afforded by comprehensive bibliographies of recent publications, and practically nowhere are there to be found abstracts such as are familiar to their colleagues in chemistry, physics, and other natural sciences. The "Lists of Writings on American History" that have been published since 1902 under the auspices of the American Historical Association, and the bibliography of "Publications relating to the History of Canada," published at Toronto, show that it is entirely practicable to undertake such work with success. At the approaching conference of Anglo-American Historians, to be held in the University of London on July 11-16, various schemes for co-operative effort are to be considered, and among them may possibly be projects for co-operative lists of periodical publications. It is hoped by many of those who are taking part in the conference that some concrete results will arise from these discussions. May I, therefore, suggest that when any steps are taken to summon a conference such as you propose for the extension of the bibliographical equipment of the sciences opportunities should be afforded to the historians to take part? It would be an inestimable boon if the principle of co-operative and co-ordinated action on common lines could be extended as widely as possible in the fields where the scientific method can be profitably employed.

ARTHUR PERCIVAL NEWTON.

University of London, King's College,
June 18.

I HAVE read with great interest the leading article on "Co-operative Indexing of Periodical Literature" in NATURE of June 9.

I have never been concerned with any work involving indexing of scientific periodicals, and those which have been my business, dealing with the classics, Oriental subjects, and bibliography, are essentially of the "watertight" character which present a much less serious problem to the student.

I think, however, there is one class of publication to which I should direct attention in connection with the subject of indexing for the use of present and future students, namely, official publications (Parliamentary papers, Stationery Office publications, reports of committees, etc.), which contain a great quantity of material which must necessarily be of value to investigators in various lines of research, and the lack of a clue to them is serious, especially as they are, from their quasi-anonymous

nature, difficult to discover in the ordinary library catalogue.

If any conference such as that suggested in your article were called, I hope it would consider the indexing of these as well as of periodicals in the strict sense of the word. I do not think that any endowment will be forthcoming from public funds, but librarians in Government Departments and other Civil Servants with bibliographical interests would probably be willing to help in the work of compilation. I should certainly be prepared to make myself responsible for slips analysing the papers laid before Parliament by the Foreign Office.

June 11.

STEPHEN GASELEE.

W. Warde Fowler: A Personal Appreciation.

ALL who know his "Tales of the Birds" will deplore the loss of this gifted observer and writer. My review—three and a half pages long!—of his charming booklet, "An Oxford Correspondence of 1903," under the title "Oxford on the Up Grade," in NATURE, June 16, 1904, was the beginning of an all too infrequent correspondence. He was good enough to write that I had entered into the spirit of his views more than any other critic. They certainly appealed to me at the time; and to-day, when mere memorising and over-examination—including psycho-analysis—are becoming more and more of a curse and subversive of all mental progress, they merit the most careful consideration. Warde Fowler had cast off the blinkers worn usually by the literary man and could see widely. He could console his pupil's father for the son's failure in the I.C.S. examination by saying, "Never mind; he will do good work in life as soon as he recovers from the effects of his education."

In a postscript to his last letter to Jim Holmes, his young correspondent, he remarks:—

I agree with what you said in your last letter about Greats. We had better grow our own plants instead of introducing exotics; but we must take care that our own plants get a real chance of coming to perfection.

Here the Oxford position is stated in a sentence; but the newer Universities are still more open to the implied criticism—as in all of them far too many things are attempted and the plants consequently are of stunted growth. In the interval, there has been advance at Oxford but not on an even grade; and the beer-point of enthusiasm (see my review) is not yet reached. So ineffective is the influence of its environment, that a professor, who over a long period had shut up the instruments of research in glass cases, into whose lap a great fortune had been dropped, could die recently without benefit to the University.

Take, too, his interesting quotation from Roger Ascham's "Scholemaster":—

"All such Authors as be fullest of good matter and right judgement in doctrine be likewise always most proper in wordes, most apte in sentence, most plain and pure in uttering the same."

On this he makes the comment:—

If I am not mistaken, this would have delighted Darwin.

This is not only a just recognition of Darwin's literary gift but should serve to confound Sir A. Quiller Couch and all those who presume to scoff at the literary shortcomings of scientific workers—without recognising how few literary men can be plain or pure in their utterance and how few either have