

been obliged to adjust their prices in accordance with the rate of exchange for each country to which they export, and for our country their prices are at present 100 per cent. on average above pre-war English prices. The wages in the German optical industry have increased more than 400 per cent., and are likely to rise still higher. Opticians and mechanics earning the equivalent of 1s. per hour before the war now receive 5s. 6d. and have a working week of forty-eight hours. They are living in a state of semi-starvation, passing through an experience at present much worse than anything we endured in the war, and unless foodstuffs are sent from England and America the Germans may be forced to conditions similar to those experienced by them during the last two years of war, until the next harvest provides better supplies. The low value of German money makes it exceedingly difficult for manufacturers to import raw materials. Many iron and steel works are closed for want of coal, and most of the coal delivered from the mines is what our miners call "dust." The French take the coal and leave the rubbish, "which is good enough for the Germans." Motor lorries are standing idle for want of petrol or benzol; and, for transport, horses are employed instead. Manufacturers do not pay a percentage on excess profits, but have to deliver up the whole of these profits to the State.

I fully appreciate the question which Mr. Baker raises in his letter appearing in *NATURE* of May 20: "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?" Having spent six weeks recently in the German interior and purchased a considerable quantity of optical apparatus, I found it impossible to get the goods exported to England at the rate of exchange, but had to pay English prices in English money; also it was necessary to obtain licences from the German Government before goods could be exported.

The foregoing statements indicate briefly some of the conditions prevailing in the scientific apparatus trade in Germany, and there is evidence of their having to continue for a very considerable period.

I believe our manufacturers have had the opportunity of a lifetime since the armistice, and there is still time to reorganise British workshops to compete successfully with foreigners without State aid, but with courage, capital, and enterprise.

The proposed Anti-dumping Bill is a misnomer. There is no dumping done in scientific apparatus in our country, and never has been any. We could produce quality equal to or better than that of any other nation if we set ourselves to the task. One example during the war—the best aerial photographic lenses were made by an English firm. Germany came second. The tests were made by disinterested officials in the Royal Air Force.

J. W. OGILVY.

Hill View, Westerham Hill, Kent, May 25.

THE letters from manufacturers on the subject of the supply of scientific instruments are interesting and fairly unanimous, but appear to me to miss the whole point of the situation. That is, that after five years' freedom from competition our manufacturers cannot in many classes of scientific instruments compete successfully with German firms.

If the rate of exchange is the cause of the importation of German instruments, what is the cause of hundreds of American microscopes and lenses being sold during and after the war with the rate of exchange adverse to us? The Germans are selling their goods in England at current English rates and above, yet find a ready sale. At first, it is true, some individuals

smuggled in German instruments at mark rates, but as soon as the extent of the demand was realised, German firms put up their export rates to 60–100 per cent. above pre-war rates, to be paid in *English money*, and by some firms payment in advance is insisted upon. This is more than confirmed by Messrs. Bellingham and Stanley in their letter. What more do our manufacturers want?

The German goods are sold simply because they are superior to similar goods produced at reasonable prices in Britain. Mr. B. H. Morphy and Mr. C. Baker state that this was the case before the war, and most scientific workers will tell them that it is so still.

One firm complains of a voluntary hospital buying apparatus cheaper abroad, and thinks that an English firm should have been given the contract at higher rates. Whose money is to do this? I hope that the voluntary subscribers would protest against their money being paid to subsidise British manufacturers.

A small concrete example of what actually occurs may not be out of place. A German diamond object marker before the war cost 10 marks. Early this year I sent to a leading firm of British opticians for one. It arrived, but was absolutely useless, having no spring safety device and no means of screw adjustment, both present in the German one. It cost 1l. 10s. Months later, with considerable trouble, I procured from Messrs. Leitz, of Germany, the pre-war article at 100 per cent. advance, namely, 1l. The German article was bought because it was superior, not because it was cheaper.

It should be borne in mind that some scientific articles, e.g. photographic plates, can be produced well and cheaply here, and need not fear German competition. If, as Mr. Baker states, the profit on other classes of goods is too small, why not allow them to be imported from Germany?

Glasgow, May 21.

J. S. DUNKERLY.

### Cost of Scientific Publications.

LIKE other societies which exist mainly for the publication of the results of scientific research, the Royal Society of Edinburgh finds its activities greatly hampered by the present cost of publication. The statements contained in the leader in *NATURE* of May 6 and in the correspondence which has followed it are fully borne out by the experience of this society. Taking into account all present sources of income and all necessary expenses, it may safely be said that the output of scientific literature must be cut down to fully one-third of what it was in pre-war days.

The point to be emphasised is that publication of scientific results is absolutely necessary for the true development of science. A year and a half ago the council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, on realising the seriousness of the situation, appealed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for an increase in the annual grant solely in the interest of scientific publication. The appeal was unsuccessful, but in reply the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that "he would be ready to reconsider the question along with other similar claims when the financial situation is more favourable."

It certainly seems necessary that suffering societies which publish original memoirs should take steps to press on the attention of the nation and on the conscience of the Government this consideration in the interest of scientific investigation, viz. the provision of adequate funds for the publication of the results of research.

C. G. KNOTT,

General Secretary.

Royal Society of Edinburgh,

22 George Street, May 31.