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NATIONAL PRESTIGE IN SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT¹

IN our development and application of scientific principles, the intensive factor of publicity is by no means to be ignored. It may be magnanimous to give others full credit for what they have done and to belittle our own achievements, but it is hardly fair to the nation as a whole so long as public opinion continues to be so strongly influenced by publicity. We are familiar with the prestige in pure and applied science enjoyed by Germany prior to the war and many of us are familiar with her methods, some of them entirely legitimate by every standard, others entirely indefensible by any standard. We envied Germany her diligent, productive scientists, smiled at her many false claims to superiority and originality, contributed rather freely to German scientific literature, with some qualms of conscience and pretty generally despised German technologists for their piratical methods. "How do they ever get away with it?" we asked ourselves and let it go at that. It never occurred to many of us to assert our scientific independence as a matter of national duty and Germany was rapidly attaining the leadership she craved. In penance we now burn our German books and studiously avoid reading anything in that language. We are surprised to find how well we can get along without anything in that language and for how little we are really indebted to that nation.

Still it is well worth while to trace out the underlying principles and to apply them to the enhancement of our national welfare. In her

¹ Since this article was prepared (in September) there has appeared in SCIENCE a letter by Professor E. B. Wilson on "Insidious Scientific Control." It appears highly desirable to give this matter immediate and careful consideration to the end that our technical and scientific societies may take effective action in the near future.

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