

SCIENCE

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CONTENTS

<i>The Botanical Opportunity</i> : PROFESSOR JOHN M. COULTER	863
<i>Psychiatry and the War</i> : PROFESSOR W. H. R. RIVERS	367
<i>Intellectual Intercourse between Allied and Friendly Countries</i> : GIORGIO ABETTI	369
<i>George Francis Atkinson</i> : PROFESSOR HARRY M. FITZPATRICK	371
<i>Scientific Events</i> :— <i>The Germs of Influenza and Yellow Fever; Lectures by Professor Blaringhem; The National Research Council; The American Society of Mammalogists</i>	372
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	375
<i>University and Educational News</i>	377
<i>Discussion and Correspondence</i> :— <i>On Some Proboscideans of the State of New York</i> : DR. O. P. HAY. <i>Human Flying</i> : PROFESSOR M. E. WADSWORTH. <i>Keeping Step</i> : WALTER MOORE COLEMAN	377
<i>Quotations</i> :— <i>The Organization of Research in Great Britain</i>	380
<i>Scientific Books</i> :— <i>Ernst on Bastardierung als Ursache der Apogamie im Pflanzenreich</i> : PROFESSOR HUGO DE VRIES	381
<i>Experiments on the Action of Mustard Gas on the Cells of Marine Organisms</i> : R. S. LILLIE, G. H. A. CLOWES, R. CHAMBERS	382
<i>Special Articles</i> :— <i>On Herschell's Fringes</i> : PROFESSOR CARL BARUS	385

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THE BOTANICAL OPPORTUNITY¹

WHEN this program was arranged, it was intended to bring to the attention of botanists how they could serve the nation in the crisis of war. Committees had been multiplied to do various kinds of necessary work. The results were not all that we had hoped for, but botanists were beginning to find themselves, and organization was gradually becoming more effective, because the spirit of cooperation was developing. Enough results were obtained to prove that botany could be of great service at a time of national need. The practical results were not so conspicuous to the public in the immediate activities of the war as those of chemistry and physics for example, but they were fundamental and far-reaching, looking to future as well as to present needs. We must recognize that to bring into effective cooperation great numbers of isolated, scattered, and sometimes conflicting units, takes time and a great controlling motive. But we were making progress, not so rapid as the impatient desired, but probably as rapid as human nature permitted.

Now that the emergencies of war have passed, shall we stop this kind of progress? I wish to attempt to answer this question. In doing so, I shall not formulate any plan, any scheme of organization, but shall present in brief general statement what seems to me to be our opportunity. The other speakers upon the program will doubtless present more concrete suggestions, for which I hope my statement may be an appropriate background.

In connection with the period of reconstruction, there has come to the science of botany a great opportunity, and botanists must rise to the occasion. It is a critical time for our science, for we may lapse into our former state and become submerged by more aggressive

¹ Invitation paper before the joint meeting of botanists at the Baltimore meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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