

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1920

CONTENTS

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| <i>The Research Spirit in Everyday Life of the Average Man: DR. JOHN C. MERRIAM</i> | 473 |
| <i>Doctorates conferred in the Sciences by American Universities in 1920: CALLIE HULL</i> | 478 |
| <i>The Low Temperature Laboratory of the Bureau of Mines: DR. R. B. MOORE</i> | 483 |
| <i>Scientific Events:—</i> | |
| <i>Phosphates in Morocco; The Pasteur Institute of Paris; The British Ministry of Agriculture; Collection of Birds of the California Academy of Sciences; The Geological Society of America</i> | 484 |
| <i>Scientific Notes and News</i> | 487 |
| <i>University and Educational News</i> | 490 |
| <i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i> | |
| <i>An Unfavorable Spawning Season for Mullet: DR. C. H. EDMONDSON. Remark on Family Names: COLONEL THOS. L. CASEY. Research Problems "assigned to" University Professors and their Students: PROFESSOR C. T. BRUES</i> | 490 |
| <i>The Laws of Hybridizing discovered by Richard Diener: L. J. C.</i> | 492 |
| <i>Special Articles:—</i> | |
| <i>On the Relationship between Freezing Point Lowering, Δ, and Specific Electrical Conductivity, K, of Plant Tissue Fluids: DRS. J. ARTHUR HARRIS, ROSS AIKEN GORTNER, JOHN V. LAWRENCE</i> | 494 |
| <i>The American Association for the Advancement of Science:—</i> | |
| <i>Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Council: PROFESSOR BURTON E. LIVINGSTON.</i> | 495 |

THE RESEARCH SPIRIT IN EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE AVERAGE MAN¹

RESEARCH has been considered generally as a phase of effort quite distinctly set off from the natural course of human interest. It is my purpose to discuss the spirit or attitude of investigation as normally involved in the everyday working plans of the average person.

Of the significance of research in all fields of our endeavor the extraordinary advances and applications of science in the recent war have not left the world in doubt. For nearly half a century Germany had been known as a nation given to investigation in a great variety of little explored subjects, and governed in considerable measure in accordance with the results of such researches. The strength of German military organization, backed by scientific and economic interests welded into one powerful instrument, brought to all the Allied Powers full realization of the need for a supreme effort of intellect in many kinds of scientific and economic operation previously unknown. The result of this reaction was a stupendous contribution to application of research. Incidental failures, due to unpreparedness and to lack of organization, may not detract from the importance of what was thus produced.

No less clear is now in post-war reconstruction the evidence of need for entirely new views of old knowledge, for immediate answer to old questions not yet solved, and for quick results of investigation on problems of construction never before encountered. As had been predicted, we find ourselves to-day going forward to new plans of human organization, but more unsatisfactorily prepared for the complex situations of the new era than we

¹ Delivered as the address of the retiring president of the Pacific Division, American Association for the Advancement of Science at Seattle, Washington, June 17, 1920.

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to The Editor of Science, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

Science

52 (1351)

Science **52** (1351), 473-496.

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Science (print ISSN 0036-8075; online ISSN 1095-9203) is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005. The title *Science* is a registered trademark of AAAS.

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