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THE PRESENT AND FUTURE STATE OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES¹

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ALMOST nineteen years ago I set foot for the first time upon American soil, and it is most interesting, after so long a time, to now renew acquaintance with American life and American universities. Much has happened since my first visit to the United States, and the World War has in many ways revolutionized our ideas, whether for better or for worse. One American characteristic, however, has evidently not changed, and that is your cordial hospitality, which I find to be as warm to-day as it was twenty years ago.

I wish first of all to express my very sincere appreciation of the honor of the invitation to come to Cornell University as an incumbent of the George Fisher Baker Non-resident Lectureship in Chemistry, that splendid endowment which can not be too highly prized, because it affords your students what we in Europe regard as one of the most important features of university life, namely, frequent contacts with investigators from foreign countries and with workers in various branches of science.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation tendered to me by the trustees of this university and by Professor Dennis and his colleagues, and my earlier experience in America convinces me that my stay at Cornell will remain one of my most pleasant recollections.

It has become a custom for your guest to devote this introductory lecture to the presentation of some topic of general interest which is not necessarily related to his later technical lectures, and I have chosen for my subject this evening "The Present and Future State of Our Natural Resources."

This is a question of great general interest, and is one in which the chemistry of our day is deeply involved. Archeologists have distinguished the different principal periods in the history of human civilization in a particular way, and have employed the terms the stone age, the copper and bronze ages, the iron age, etc., expressing in this manner their deep conviction that the state and future of the human race is, at every moment of its history, intrinsically connected with the special position in

¹ Introductory public lecture by Professor F. M. Jaeger, of the University of Groningen, non-resident lecturer in chemistry at Cornell University.

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