THE PRESENT STATE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES

By Professor ALFRED STOCK

DIRECTOR OF THE CHEMICAL INSTITUTE, TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE, KARLSRUHE, NON-RESIDENT LECTURER IN CHEMISTRY AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY ON THE GEORGE FISHER BAKER FOUNDATION

In inaugurating the series of lectures which I am to give at Ithaca during the following months, my first thought is to express to Cornell University and to my colleagues in the department of chemistry, at whose head stands my friend Dennis, my sincere appreciation of their invitation to come to the university for this term under the George Fisher Baker Foundation. It is a great pleasure and honor to me to have the privilege of spending a few months with my American colleagues and personally to become acquainted with the country which to-day plays a leading part in the world in technical and economic achievement, and in which scientific work has a more assured position than in any other land.

This residence in Ithaca will for me be quite a decided change from my usual habits of life and it will afford me a desired opportunity of making a quiet survey of the present state of natural sciences and technology which to-day is nothing but applied and utilized natural science.

Is one justified in saying that we are now confronted with a crisis in the progress of the exact sciences and technology, a statement that is often heard or read in these days at least in our disrupted Europe? Are the exact sciences really unable to penetrate to the depths of human understanding? Will technology become the scourge of mankind, will it lead to the destruction of our economic life, to the emherment of the soul? Does salvation lie in recourse to metaphysics or to philosophy?

Natural science, in the modern meaning of the term,
Editor's Summary

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