FUNCTIONS OF AN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Perhaps you know that there are two chief reasons for a presidential address, reasons that most people are too polite to mention. One is the gracious desire to flatter the president by making him think he is expected to have something to say that will be interesting or instructive to the members, which may or may not be the case at all; the other is to let people know who is the president. When a man is elected to the presidency of a national society he enjoys justifiably a feeling of great pride; he may even experience a degree of inflation, but that soon subsides as he learns that few know and even fewer care who is president. In a country school near my old home, there was a boy well along in the grades who did not know who was the chief executive of the United States. The teacher, wanting to shame or to impress him, told him to go home and ask his father. The boy went and returned. "Well, Johnny," said the teacher, "did your father tell you who was president?" Johnny arose with an obviously triumphant air, as he replied, "I axed paw and he don't know." Johnny was destined to become a political orator with a flair for the dramatic. He indulged in a rhetorical pause before he added: "Paw don't know who is President—and what's more, he don't give a damn!"

Early in the year some friends intimated that perhaps the society would be pleased if I should bring to an end the practice of having annual presidential addresses. In acceptance of this challenge, I seemed to have two choices: one was to allow the custom to lapse forthwith; the other was to deliver an address to end all presidential addresses. It occurred to me that I might do both. The matter to follow, then, will probably not meet the specifications of a presidential address and it may lead to a conclusion that will discourage the desire, at least, for future addresses of a