EDUCATIONAL DARKNESS AND LUMINOUS RESEARCH

By Dr. OSCAR RIDDLE

Carnegie Institution, Station for Experimental Evolution, Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y.

I

Almost any group of scholars would agree that during the past fifty to one hundred years research in the natural sciences has provided truth and principles which are capable of transforming earlier and popular views concerning nature and man. Yet, despite the surpassing fruitfulness of this era of research, it may well be that if or when later generations of man should care to form an estimate of our present generation, they will marvel less at this brilliant research than at the depths of our present educational darkness—less at the intellectual achievements of an amazing century of science that has disclosed the basic facts of man's own nature and man's place in nature, than at our present educational programs which essentially fail to give the new truth and principles to this generation. It is in the field of biology—the life-sciences—that this failure is so flagrant and conspicuous; and it is the truth and principles of this same group of sciences that could otherwise contribute so greatly to the mental and physical well-being of the present generation of mankind. These remarks will therefore deal with certain aspects of this flagrant failure of our educational program to comprehend and teach life-science.

In the course of this discussion it may become apparent that the same familiarity with life-science which is required for modern intellectual life, for good citizenship, for progressive agriculture and husbandry, for better health and for preservation against many diseases, will automatically supply that better knowledge which this audience well knows is needed also to save many thousands of lives from cancer.

II

To every one it is evident that only the primary and secondary schools of a nation have opportunity