SCIENCE AND SOCIAL PIONEERING

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The classic tale has man witless until he receives the Promethean gift of fire. Light and fire are the age-old symbols of the mystery of the creative force in man or of what some would call the divine beginnings of man's discovery of a forward way. We talk less of mystery to-day for, if the source of the light of understanding is still unknown, man himself has successfully trimmed the wick. Reflected, dispersed and recombined from thousands of mental and spiritual facets, the light reveals ever-new possibilities of adventure, experiment and stimulating insight for the self-conscious creature, half angel, half brute, who talks endlessly about his elusive destiny. Whatever their own genius may be, all thoughtful persons borrow or reflect enlightening fact wherever they find it, and observe with alternating hope and anxiety the endless search by other men for that object of faith and labor called progress.

Reflecting in this fashion, it seemed to me presumptuous to express only my limited individual opinion in this opening address in an annual exchange between the British and the American Associations for the Advancement of Science. It seemed better to inquire of others what they would choose to say. Because scientists are apt to praise the children of their brains, the views of non-scientists were sought on the contribution of science to social welfare and to that uniquely human process of consciously planned advance across the threshold of experience which we may call social pioneering.

To that end I invited one hundred men who are not engaged in either physical or biological research or teaching to express their opinions. For special rea-