SCIENCE

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The National Academy of Sciences:

Remarks of the President at the Dinner: DR. FRANK B. JEWETT  401
Abstracts of Papers  403

Scientific Events:
The Exposition of Chemical Industries; The Tropical Flower Garden of the New York Botanical Garden; Reorganization of Laboratory Directors’ Conference; In Honor of Dr. Evarts Ambrose Graham; Nominations for President-Elect of the American Chemical Society; Recent Deaths and Memorials  412

Scientific Notes and News  415

Discussion:

Scientific Books:
Quantum Mechanics: PROFESSOR GEORGE H. SHORTLEY. Uses of Chemicals: PROFESSOR MARSTON TAYLOR BOGERT  420

Special Articles:
The Semiquinone Radicals of Methylene Blue and Related Dyeestuffs: S. GRANICK, DR. L. MICHAELIS and DR. M. P. SCHUBERT. The Metabolism of Glutathione: DR. H. WAELSCH and DR. D. RITTENBERG. Synthetic Alpha-Tocopherol and Nutritional Muscular Dystrophy: DR. STEWARD G. MORRIS  422

Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:
Student Apparatus for Analysis of Respiratory Cases: J. MAX LITTLE and DR. HERBERT S. WELLS  425

Science News  10

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THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE DINNER

Members of the Faculty of Brown University, Members of the National Academy of Sciences and Guests:

The National Academy of Sciences comes to Brown University with greetings to the scientific spirit that has always prevailed within its walls. The basis for this lies in the fact that since the inception of the Academy there has been a continuous liaison between Brown University and the Academy. One of your presidents, Alexis Caswell, was among the founders of the National Academy of Sciences, and members of your faculty have through the years of its existence been elected to membership in it.

In considering what it might be appropriate to say to you on this occasion, it seems to me that the custom established by my predecessors of saying first a word about the Academy, its origin and its functions is in order. This is an old story to members of the Academy and to those who have had close contact with its permanent committee, the National Research Council. To most people, however, it may not be clear as to just what the Academy is.

Although composed wholly of scientists, the Academy is not a scientific society in the ordinary professional sense as is the Physical Society, Chemical Society, etc. It is an organization of limited membership created by Congressional charter (the only one in the field of science) which has certain definite prerogatives and certain definite obligations to the state. These obligations in effect determine the qualifications of those elected to membership.

Principal among the obligations is the one which imposes on the Academy the necessity of giving to the government on request, and without remuneration, the best advice on scientific and engineering matters of major importance. It is this obligation which imposes the double requirement of a membership which covers

1 Autumn meeting held at Brown University, Providence, R. I., October 23, 24 and 25.