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The American Medical Association:

Better Health for America: DR. NATHAN B. VAN ETTEN 581

Work of the American Medical Association 585

Scientific Events:

Advisory Research Council of the Chemical Society, London; Field Work of the U. S. Geological Survey; Symposium on Quantitative Biology of the Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor; Honorary Degrees Conferred by Princeton University; Recent Deaths and Memorials 589

Scientific Notes and News 591

Discussion:

What Is a "Pre-Amerindian?": DR. WM. DUNCAN STRONG. *Annual Honorary Junior Membership Awards:* DR. OTIS W. CALDWELL and PROFESSOR KARL F. OERLEIN. *Peace Resolution of the American Association of Scientific Workers:* DR. R. W. GERARD; PROFESSOR FRANCIS BITTER, PROFESSOR WALTER B. CANNON and OTHERS 594

Scientific Books:

Cultural Development: PROFESSOR ROBERT H. LOWIE 598

Special Articles:

Relative Overgrowth of the Central Nervous System

in Vitamin A Deficiency in Young Rats: PROFESSOR S. B. WOLBACH and DR. O. A. BESSEY. *Effects of Steroid Glycosides and Cortin on Insulin Convulsions and Blood Sugar:* PROFESSOR RAYMUND L. ZWEMER, KERMIT L. PINES and BERTRAND E. LOWENSTEIN. *A Physiologically Active Principle from Cannabis sativa (Marihuana):* PROFESSOR A. J. HAAGEN-SMIT and OTHERS 599

Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:

On the Use of Chick Embryo Cultures of Influenza Virus in Complement Fixation Tests: DR. CLARA NIGG, JAMES H. CROWLEY and DORIS E. WILSON 603

Science News 8

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BETTER HEALTH FOR AMERICA¹

By Dr. NATHAN B. VAN ETTEN

NEW YORK

BETTER health for America is the objective of the organized medical profession, which I have this year the honor to represent. Organized medicine is devoted to the public service and always has been in America since the first hospital was organized 188 years ago in Philadelphia for medical service to the sick poor. Today 117,000 of the physicians of the United States provide service to people of all social economic levels. These servants of the sick are on call twenty-four hours of every day.

Although the census taker insisted on recording me as working forty hours a week, there have been few days in the last fifty years in which I have not spent more than twelve hours in the service of people who

asked for it. Beginning as a general practitioner with surgical training and a generous exposure to medical education, here and abroad—a fortuitous circumstance through the medium of an epidemic of typhoid fever—the demands of other infectious diseases and many calls to obstetric service gradually shaped my course into the field of internal medicine. This very ordinary experience has been shared by thousands of physicians who have been making available this type of public service with considerable satisfaction to the American people.

Organized medicine has been trying for the last ninety-four years to inspire all its members, who represent 85 per cent. of the active practitioners in the United States, with high ideals and with a sense of their responsibility for good public service. It has often been obliged to censor the conduct of members who have been involved in quackery or questionable

¹ President's address before the American Medical Association at the ninety-first annual session, New York, June 11, 1940.

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