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THE EXPANDING HORIZON OF INORGANIC CHEMISTRY¹

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It is doubtful if the history of science has ever experienced a broader and more general advancement in an equal period of time than the world has witnessed during the years 1921-1941. Developments in all phases of science have been startling in their scope, their influence upon modern life and in the possibilities which they reveal for still further advancement.

Chemistry has produced or assisted in the production of its full share in these developments. The various branches of chemistry have been busy in expanding their own fields of endeavor and in contributing, as opportunities offer, to the sum total of human progress. So diverse has chemistry become and so technical in its diversity that no modern tries to keep himself informed concerning the developments of the

¹ President's address, Illinois Chapter of Sigma Xi, May 14, 1941.

science as a whole because the changes come with bewildering rapidity and in overwhelming numbers. The chemist of to-day feels well satisfied with himself if he can keep abreast of advancing thought in the definite field in which lies his major interest. He must of course be at least dimly conscious of the progress made in adjacent fields and in the realms of the sister sciences. But the modern chemist must be a highly specialized worker in an ever narrowing field in order that he may be able to keep up with his competitors whose training is likewise restricted to an intensive study of limited phases of the subject. It is true that we still insist in our graduate training on a suitable background of prerequisites and minor subjects, but it is quite evident that the background is slowly but surely fading into the remote distance. Perhaps at no time in the history of our educational

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