INDIVIDUALITY AND SCIENCE

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The presidency of the American Association for the Advancement of Science is both an honor and a punishment. The first year the president has merely to preside and look intelligent, or as intelligent as possible, at a plenary session of the association. The second year he has the punishment of a Binet test in a formal address before a formidable audience of his peers and peeresses.

Some of the former presidential addresses of the association have given a review of the research activities of the speaker; some have discussed the broader aspects of science. I shall attempt to combine these two methods and after briefly discussing some investigations in which I have had a share, shall say something of the relations which science may have to human welfare.

In looking over my past research activities, the one idea which impresses me most is the individual diversity among the living organisms which I have used as objects of study. Our first published investigations had to do with a group of lower fungi which can be included in the name of Bread Molds. Among these we discovered that growths which looked alike might differ in sex and in a wide range of chemical responses.

Another example of cryptic chemical differences

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1 Address of the retiring president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dallas, Texas, December 29, 1941.