

# SCIENCE

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<i>The Advancement of Science</i> : DR. E. P. PHILLIPS .....	1	<i>Special Articles</i> :	
<i>Atmospheric Electricity and Allied Phenomena</i> : DR. W. F. G. SWANN .....	4	<i>On Penicillin</i> : PROFESSOR KARL MEYER and OTHERS. <i>The Reversal of Pneumococcus Quellung by Digestion of the Antibody with Papain</i> : G. M. KALMANSON and J. BRONFENBRENNER. <i>Destruction of Riboflavin by Light</i> : DR. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS and VERNON H. CHELDELIN .....	20
<i>Obituary</i> : <i>Vernon Orlando Bailey</i> : HOWARD ZAHNISER. <i>Deaths and Memorials</i> .....	6	<i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods</i> :	
<i>Scientific Events</i> : <i>The Singer Wildlife Refuge; The Segregation of Bloods; Additions to the Medical Profession; Graduate Courses Given at the Summer Session of Columbia University; The Buffalo Meeting of the American Chemical Society</i> .....	7	<i>Reclaiming Agar for Bacteriological Use</i> : DR. ALDEN F. ROE. <i>Reclamation of Used Agar</i> : HOWARD I. THALLER .....	23
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i> .....	10	<i>Science News</i> .....	10
<i>Discussion</i> : <i>The Four-fold Table and the Heterogeneity Test</i> : DR. GERT BONNIER. <i>A New Theory of the Origin and Nature of Life</i> : A. L. HERRERA. <i>Supposed Extinct Maples</i> : DR. ROLAND W. BROWN. <i>The Objectives of the Scientific Speaker</i> : DR. O. F. EVANS .....	13	<i>Index to Volume XCV</i> .....	i
<i>Special Correspondence</i> : <i>The Full Utilization of Scientific Personnel</i> : PROFESSOR CHAS. H. BEHRE, JR., and OTHERS .....	16		
<i>Quotations</i> : <i>Public Health in Germany</i> .....	17		
<i>Scientific Books</i> : <i>Poliomyelitis</i> : DR. ALBERT B. SABIN .....	18		

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## THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. E. P. PHILLIPS

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IN the evolution of science there have been changing environments which have profoundly influenced the progress of science. The general cultural background of a period, the printing press, the founding of the famous scientific academies in the latter part of the seventeenth century and early in the eighteenth century, politics, philosophical doctrines, geographical exploration, religion, superstition, etc., which, throughout the period of which we have any knowledge, have hastened or hindered the advancement of science. The church has played its part in creating an environment in which science struggled for freedom, though it was not antagonistic to science which

conformed to its teachings. The Mosaic account of Creation and of the Flood, the belief in a geocentric universe with a heaven and a hell close at hand, for example, delayed the progress of geology and astronomy. Science has gradually but relentlessly broken down some of these barriers. Copernicus exploded the belief in a geocentric universe; geologists brought evidence to bear on the age of the earth; Darwin taught us to think in terms of evolution; Pasteur dispelled the darkness and ignorance concerning disease, and Fraser suggested we should reconsider our ideas about many of our beliefs and to look for their origin in the beliefs held by primitive peoples.

Not only have philosophic and scientific thought at various times created an environment which influenced the advancement of science, but mechanical aids to sci-

<sup>1</sup>Concluding part of address of the president of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, June 29, 1942.

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