FORTY YEARS OF PLANT PHYSIOLOGY

SOME GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

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Fifty years ago the work in plant physiology was changing from the old to the new. Those who were interested in the subject were concerned chiefly with the nature of the response of Mimosa or similar plants to stimuli of various sorts. In the main, they were not interested at all in any practical or applicable results that might accrue from their investigations. At about the time of my entrance into the field, the conflict between the purist and the practical man was at its height and was being waged bitterly. It is said that some purist when asked of what practical value his findings were in the field of science, replied, "None whatsoever and if I had thought before undertaking the work that they would be of any practical value, I would never have undertaken the investigation." Such a happening may be somewhat exaggerated, but it, nevertheless, illustrates the state of mind of some of the individuals who waged this bitter conflict. This condition illustrates the same spirit that was expressed by the so-called "malefactors of great wealth" who are reputed to have said that "the public could be damned" as far as they were concerned.

The public, rightly or wrongly, may eventually reach the stage where the workers not only in plant physiology, but also in most other lines of scientific work, must show that the results of their labors will contribute to the happiness or advancement of man-
Editor's Summary