

# SCIENCE

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## CONTENTS

<i>The Call to Public Health</i> : PROFESSOR WILLIAM T. SEDGWICK .....	193
<i>Appropriations for the Department of Agriculture</i> .....	202
<i>Commander Peary's Expedition</i> .....	205
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i> .....	206
<i>University and Educational News</i> .....	208
<i>Discussion and Correspondence</i> :—	
<i>The Annual Appropriation for Salaries of the Instructing Staff at Bryn Mawr College</i> : PROFESSOR DAVID WILBUR HORN. <i>Airships, Past and Present</i> : DR. CLEVELAND ABBE, JR. ....	209
<i>Scientific Books</i> :—	
<i>Thomson's Heredity</i> : J. P. McM. <i>Swift on Mind in the Making</i> : PROFESSOR EDWARD L. THORNDIKE .....	210
<i>Botanical Notes</i> :—	
<i>Recent Systematic Publications; The Development of a Great Journal</i> : PROFESSOR CHARLES E. BESSEY .....	213
<i>Special Articles</i> :—	
<i>Typhoid Fever and the Purification of Public Water Supplies</i> : PROFESSOR W. T. SEDGWICK and SCOTT MACNUTT .....	215
<i>The Thirty-eighth General Meeting of the American Chemical Society—II.</i> : B. E. CURRY .....	216

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## THE CALL TO PUBLIC HEALTH<sup>1</sup>

ONE of the most fruitful sequels of the scientific age has been the new and higher valuation which it places upon ordinary human life.

As long as this present every-day world and this ordinary human life were held, whether by ancients or by medievals, to be merely the prelude to another and a better, any serious struggle for longevity, any earnest plea for health for health's sake, fell upon deaf ears. As long as a sick man or his friends could honestly exclaim in the face of sickness or death, "I know that if my earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved I have an house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens," disease and death lost their terrors, and even became almost attractive.

Ideals of this kind, full of hope and rich in encouragement for weary mortals, ought never, and need never, to have been divorced from perfect joy and satisfaction in this present life. It was the refusal to consent to any such separation that brought on the warm springtime of the Renaissance after the winter of the Middle Ages. And it must be reckoned the colossal blunder of theology and ecclesiasticism that in their reaction to the Renaissance they blindly turned their backs upon this world and fixed their gaze upon a distant and an unknown world of which they dreamed much but knew little. It was well that theology should urge man on to the ultimate and the ideal, but it need not, in doing this,

<sup>1</sup>The annual address in medicine, Yale University.

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