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SURFACE TENSION IN RELATION TO CELLULAR PROCESSES¹

THE record of investigation of the phenomena of the life of animal and vegetable cells for the last eighty years constitutes a body of knowledge which is of imposing magnitude and of surpassing interest to all who are concerned in the studies that bear on the organic world. The results won during that period will always constitute, as they do now, a worthy memorial of the intense enthusiasm of the scientific spirit which has been a distinguishing feature of the last six decades of the nineteenth century. We are to-day, in consequence of that activity, at a point of view the attainment of which could not have been predicted half a century ago.

This body of knowledge, this lore which we call cytology, is still with all this achievement in one respect an undeveloped science. It is chiefly—nay, almost wholly—concerned with the structural or morphological side of the cell, while of the functional phenomena our knowledge is only of the most general kind, and the reason is not far to seek. What little we know of the physiological side of the cell—as, for example, of cellular secretion, absorption and nutrition—has only to a very limited extent been the outcome of observations directed to that end. It is in very great part the result of all the inferences and generalizations drawn from the data of morphological research. This knowledge is not the less valuable or the less certain because it has been so won, but simply

¹Address to the Physiological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Sheffield, 1910.

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