

SCIENCE

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THE MESSAGE OF THE BIOLOGIST¹

It is eminently fitting that we biologists, like virile swarm spores, should periodically come together in a holiday spirit of mutual exchange, and after giving and receiving our messages, go back to our life work, reinvigorated and reoriented, to prepare for another brief period of social conjugation.

The messages we send to one another will have little carrying power, and little influence on the receiver, if they are not specific in content, limited in scope, and securely wrapped up in the precise technical terms of our own familiar code.

On the other hand, the biologist would be wholly lacking in social instincts if he failed to recognize that he also has a more comprehensive message for the layman, who is largely dependent on the biologist for his working knowledge of the great domain of nature-life, and by whom the biologist is provided with the necessary means of existence.

This larger message must have a different vehicle. It must first be summarized, digested and metabolized into the vernacular, before it can circulate through the body of social life, reach its terminals, and there accomplish its strengthening and rectifying purpose.

We may well ask ourselves whether we have such a message to give, and if so, what it is, and who, or what, is our authority. And by "we," I now mean all of us, not merely the biologist, but the astronomer, geologist, chemist, physicist and psychologist, for we are what we are to-day because of the underlying community of our methods and purposes, and because, in our concept of evolution, we acknowledge the same mental sovereignty.

This concept, of which we are the trustees,

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section F, Zoology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, St. Louis, January 31, 1919.

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