

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1921

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THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF ANTHROPOLOGY TO OUR NATION¹

THE last few years have taught American scientists the lesson of service to our nation in time of crisis. It had seemed to be a condition of our American civilization that the vast bulk of our people spent their energies solely on their private interests. Most of these private interests were producing things demanded and sold in the market, hence were esteemed at all times of practical value. A science which did not benefit commodities hawked and sold in the public market was given only scant passing notice. This condition has had much to do with the slowness of certain sciences in developing their practical phases. But in our time of national peril it was demanded of every science that to the utmost limit of its practical possibilities it be useful to the state. So great was the impetus given to the development of the practical side of scientific research that in pragmatic America of this hour a science which can not develop its practical side of service to its nation and to its day can not long retain respect among other sciences.

It is probably true, as Earl Gray said, that nationalistic statesmen are largely opportunists who see only a little way ahead, and who are entitled to congratulate themselves if they steer their powerful nations safely among the rocks and bars which appear unexpectedly in the uncharted course along which they sail. A long look at nations as they have come and gone reveals the tragedies of the opportunist statesmen. In modern times the nations of the old world seem to have had their courses quite largely projected into the future by the inevitable continuity of a long historic past. Yet we now see their statesmen too were largely

¹ Address by the vice-president and chairman of Section H (Anthropology), of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Chicago, December 28, 1920.

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to The Editor of Science, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

Science

53 (1364)

Science **53** (1364), 147-170.

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Science (print ISSN 0036-8075; online ISSN 1095-9203) is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005. The title *Science* is a registered trademark of AAAS.

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