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<i>Investigations on the Bacteriology of Epidemic Influenza</i> : DR. PETER K. OLITSKY and FREDERICK L. GATES.....	159
<i>A Garden for the Propagation of Tropical and Subtropical Plants</i> : DR. DAVID FAIRCHILD .....	166
<i>Scientific Events</i> : <i>The Carnegie Corporation; The Proposed Reorganization of Federal Health Activities; The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology; The Japanese Medical Commission; The British Association for the Advancement of Science; Spencer Fullerton Baird</i> .....	168
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i> .....	171
<i>University and Educational Notes</i> .....	174
<i>Discussion and Correspondence</i> : <i>The Starch Grain</i> : DR. HENRY KRAEMER. <i>What is a Plant?</i> PROFESSOR GEORGE W. MARTIN. <i>Musca Linnaeus, 1758, and Calliphora Desvoidy, 1830</i> : DR. C. W. STILES. <i>That Chemical Cramming Match</i> : DR. W. J. HUMPHREYS. <i>Warning</i> : DR. JOHN M. CLARKE .....	175
<i>Quotations</i> : <i>The New Frontiersmen</i> .....	176
<i>Scientific Books</i> : <i>Gordon's The Mineralogy of Pennsylvania</i> : DR. GEORGE F. KUNZ.....	177
<i>Special Articles</i> : <i>A Pocket Dissecting Scope</i> : PROFESSOR ELMER GRANT CAMPBELL. <i>A Simple Recording Spirometer</i> : PROFESSOR J. R. SLO-NAKER .....	179
<i>The American Association for the Advancement of Science</i> : <i>The Biological Sciences; Social and Economic Sciences; Historical and Philological Sciences</i> .....	181

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## INVESTIGATIONS ON THE BACTERIOLOGY OF EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA<sup>1</sup>

EPIDEMIC influenza has been recognized for centuries, now under one designation, now under another. According to the exigencies of the period it has had a wide or a more restricted distribution: in early times human transport carried the pestilence slowly and over limited areas; in modern times, in a world knit closely together with frequent and rapid transport, it passes quickly from continent to continent.

The source of origin of the epidemics is still under discussion, and it remains for future study to determine whether the spread takes place from a single focus or from many foci of epidemicity. History traces the outbreaks of many epidemics to regions of Eastern Russia and Turkestan; but indications are not wanting that influenza smoldered in many endemic centers preceding the pandemic of 1918. Whichever of these divergent sources of origin proves to be the true one, certain undiscovered but essential conditions must be regarded as combining to convert endemic inactivity into epidemic spread.<sup>2, 3</sup>

### THE EPIDEMIC OF 1918

The epidemic outburst of 1918, which was of unparalleled severity, coincided with the exigencies of the Great War so that the full weight and force of modern methods of clinical and bacteriological study could not quickly be brought to bear upon the disease. In many instances also investigators were further handicapped through failure to distinguish the primary infection from the frequent secondary pneumonias of common bacterial origin, or were prejudiced in their views by the general acceptance of Pfeiffer's bacillus as the bacterial in-citant of influenza.

<sup>1</sup> From the Laboratories of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, N. Y.

<sup>2</sup> Pearl, R., *U. S. P. H. S. Report* No. 548, 1919, xxxiv, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> Flexner, S., *SCIENCE*, 1, 317.

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