

# SCIENCE

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## THE BEGINNINGS OF PHYSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

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THE distinguished society of which this gathering represents a chapter has for its main purpose the exploitation of scientific research.

Every interested person who has survived the sixth decade of life must remember that time when the term "research" was the exclusive shibboleth of a very small fraction of the world community whose individuals were scattered singly or in tiny groups throughout civilized lands, who were unknown by and without influence upon the great public whom they served.

To-day the word is in the mouth of the man on the street, and every newspaper typesetter is familiar with its letters.

This extension of vogue is, of course, due to the common knowledge that it is through research alone that the vast acceleration in the accumulation of bodily comforts, of mechanisms for the control of natural forces, of means for the prevention of human ills has been made possible.

One salutary fruit of the world war has been the popular apprehension that its most infernal agencies on the one hand and its saving graces on the other all were born in the laboratories of science. Man bows to power and gladly contributes to the means for its acquisition.

The very popularity of the theme under discussion is fraught with danger to the fine essence on which its flavor depends. "Research" implies not only a problem but a mind—a certain type of mind. So modern is the content of the term that the English language has failed to develop a graceful name to characterize its votary who is, above all, a truth-seeker.

"Investigator" is clumsy; "researcher" is crude; the French "savant" is inadequate; the German "Forscher" seems more fit. It would be a boon should some student of language fish out from our linguistic melting pot some characterization, brief, smooth and descriptive.

It is a type of mind that is to be defined, not talent or genius, but an impulse to wonder, to inquire and to understand. When the problem is solved its spell is broken; "practical" results have no interest except as demonstrations of the abstract truth and progenitors of new phases of thought. The urge of the in-

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