

SCIENCE

Vol. LIX

FEBRUARY 22, 1924

No. 1521

JOSEPH LEIDY, FOUNDER OF VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY IN AMERICA¹

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

Lancaster, Pa.

Garrison, N. Y.

New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Annual Subscription, \$6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

Entered as second-class matter July 18, 1923, at the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

THE JOSEPH LEIDY LECTURE IN SCIENCE UNDER THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA FOUNDATION²

I ASK the indulgence of the members of this gathering in honor of Joseph Leidy and fellow-workers in the fields of science if I present what I have to say in an informal manner, and I trust that you will not for a moment imagine that because it is presented informally, I do not appreciate the honor conferred upon me in asking me to speak on this historic occasion in reference to a man for whom I have such great admiration as for Joseph Leidy. I shall not repeat except in a very general way the homage that was paid to Leidy in the series of important and penetrating addresses which we have listened to today, but I shall endeavor to present a summary, especially along the lines of paleontology and comparative anatomy, of some of the distinctive features of his work in comparison with those of the men who accompanied and immediately followed him, and to show what great results have come from his efforts as a pioneer and as a founder of this most interesting and fascinating branch of science in America.

Leidy started with an entirely new world of life; he soon learned that he could not base his study of American fossils on the work of Erench paleontologists, for the life of our western regions was not known in the Old World. Every specimen represented a new species or a new genus or a new family, and in some cases a new order. Never was there a greater opportunity than was offered to Leidy in this virgin field of our then virgin West. Never was a man more ready to grasp it than that quiet, unpretentious, unassuming, wonderfully gifted observer of nature. It is particularly interesting to review his work, which was written in the exact spirit of Cuvier, and to see his long record of direct obser-

¹ Extemporaneous address at the Joseph Leidy Centenary, Philadelphia, December 6, 1923.

² Two previous addresses have been given in this series: "Heredity and Microscopical Research," by Professor Edward Beecher Wilson, of Columbia University, April 17, 1913; "The Segregation of Genetic Types," by Professor William Bateson, of the John Innes Horticultural Laboratory, January 24, 1922.

Science

59 (1521)

Science **59** (1521), x-196.

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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. 2017 © The Authors, some rights reserved; exclusive licensee American Association for the Advancement of Science. No claim to original U.S. Government Works. The title *Science* is a registered trademark of AAAS.