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ENTOMOLOGY¹

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CONSERVATISM of thought is justified up to a certain limit. Beyond that limit it is harmful. And it is just the same in everything. Conservatism in medicine has delayed the adoption of many useful ideas, but at the same time it has prevented the general adoption of many foolish ideas. Conservatism in education is perhaps the greatest stumbling-block to progress. Science has had hard work in its efforts to establish itself in educational curricula. Granting that it is now so established, conservatism still plays a most important part in the determination of the relative values of the scientific subjects taught. And in each science, conservatism—custom—still insists that certain aspects shall be stressed and certain others slighted.

Thus it is in zoology. In the teaching of this subject, since it began to be taught in the colleges and universities, entomology, by far the most important part of this science, has been slighted. In terming entomology the most important part of zoology, I do not wish to underestimate the very great value of those zoological studies that relate to how we as animals ourselves came to be; but to the dominant place that the class Insecta holds in the whole animal kingdom.

I see the time coming, however—perhaps it is almost here—when the full importance of entomology will be realized and when those educational institutions which long ago uncloistered themselves from the dominance of the dead languages and higher mathematics will still further broaden their teaching to rank entomology as a study of prime importance. Many things encourage me in this conclusion. A striking phrase has recently come to my attention. It was written by a professor of zoology in one of the most important universities in the United States—a man of broad training, a man of the present dominant school in zoological instruction. It reads as follows:

In time this may become the age of man, the most highly developed mentally of the vertebrates, but at present he is only beginning to dispute the ascendancy Arthropod series.²

In these words Dr. Allee has very cleverly put a rapidly growing idea and one which for all these years

¹ Presidential address, Fourth International Congress of Entomology, held at Ithaca, N. Y., August 12–18.

² W. C. Allee, "The Evolution of the Invertebrates," Chicago, 1926.

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