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BIOLOGY AND HUMAN LIFE¹

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THERE have been various definitions of biology ranging "from grave to gay, from lively to severe." It has been contemptuously called the study of life with the life left out; the science of dead animals and plants. A professor of Latin once said, "Biology deals with things as dead as the dead languages and not nearly as well preserved." One botanist who resented the forays of the bad zoologists into his preserve defined biology as "botany taught by a zoologist"; and a Scotchman has assured us that "biology is a by-word," thereby suggesting that it is the science of imprecations. But much more severe things are said and thought of biology by those who resent its encroachments into the realm of human life and spiritual values; to these biology is the Judas among the sciences: all the sciences may have forsaken their Lord, but biology has betrayed him.

Biology, or the science which deals with the phenomena of life in general, as contrasted with botany, zoology, physiology and other subjects which deal with various subdivisions of this topic, was brought to this country by Huxley in 1876 and since that time it has grown apace until it is represented in almost every college and university in the land. For a while it was resented by strict botanists or zoologists; still longer agricultural and medical sciences refused to come into the biological fold, but the necessity of a classification that would set off the sciences that deal with living things from those that deal with the not-living has gradually brought it to pass that biology and the biological sciences have taken in all subjects and disciplines which deal with life. And now in turn biologists find that their science is taken in root and branch by an all-consuming chemistry. But until chemistry is able to deal more effectively with such vital phenomena as reproduction and life-cycles, adaptation and evolution, sensitivity and behavior, there is no reason for the biologist to feel that his occupation is gone. Lovatt Evans, in his notable address a few weeks ago before the physiological section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, said: "Physiology is something more than biochemistry and biophysics; it is and will always remain a biological subject." To which I may add my conviction that certainly biology is something more than

¹ An address delivered at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., on the occasion of the dedication of the Shanklin Biological Laboratory, October 12, 1928.

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