

SCIENCE

VOL. 91

FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 1940

No. 2357

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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

New York City: Grand Central Terminal

Lancaster, Pa.

Garrison, N. Y.

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.

THE ROLE OF REFUGEES IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN SCIENCE¹

By Dr. C. A. BROWNE

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SINCE the time of the earliest settlements the flight of refugees from Europe has been a most potent factor in the development of American science. These migrations, which resulted from religious persecution, desire to escape imprisonment or military service, curtailment of political liberties, longing for a more congenial social environment and other causes, have come generally in successive waves of disturbance in which all sorts and conditions of men were affected. While the families of peasants and workmen were chiefly involved in these movements, merchants, physicians, scholars, artists and other groups were also concerned.

¹ The biographical notes on the refugee scientists mentioned in the present sketch were culled from various biographical encyclopedias. The new Dictionary of American Biography with its classified index of celebrities according to occupation and place of birth was found to be especially helpful.

The list of European men of science, who from time to time have sought in America refuge from persecution, is a long one and the stories of their adventurous careers would fill a volume of considerable size. In the present paper a few typical illustrations will be cited from the list of scientists who fled to America in the disturbances of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The earliest conspicuous example of an American refugee scientist is that of John Winthrop, Jr. (1606-1676), who in 1631, because of the persecution of the Puritans in England under Archbishop Laud, joined his father and other coreligionists in the founding of the Bay Colony in New England. "Laud's hand fell heavily on the English Puritans," writes J. R. Green, the eminent English historian. "Thousands of the best scholars, merchants, lawyers, farmers, were flying

Science

91 (2357)

Science **91** (2357), 203-224.

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