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SOME SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD¹

By Professor L. H. MacDANIELS

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SEVERAL considerations have led me to choose the present title, which I know will appear to many of you, at least at first sight, to be rather inappropriate for presentation before the American Society for Horticultural Science. Among these is the fact that our society is becoming mature. Attendance is now larger and more varied than formerly, and it seems not out of place to consider matters of a general nature rather than to continue the technical discussions of the regular sessions. Not that we should be less zealous of the pursuit of scientific knowledge, but

rather that now we have established our position as a first-class scientific society we can pause momentarily and examine our situation with relation not only to other scientific societies, but to the whole field of knowledge as well.

The subject is certainly timely. With most of the world at war or near war it is all too obvious that our control of physical forces has far outstripped the capacity or at least the will of the human race to manage their affairs in a satisfactory way. Such a statement is trite in view of the many efforts now being made to increase the sense of responsibility among the scientists for the social order. This trend has been emphasized recently by the National Research

¹ Address of the president of the American Society for Horticultural Science, presented at the Philadelphia meeting of the society, December 30, 1940.