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VITAMINS IN THE FUTURE¹

By Dr. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS

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AMONG the dusty reprints which I treasure is a yellow-backed one from the *Journal of Physiology* bearing the date of December, 1911, in which Casimir Funk first proposed the name "vitamine." As I had at that time been working with Vedder for more than a year on "the beriberi-preventing substance," I may, in a sense, claim to have been one of the midwives in attendance at that historic birth. Vedder and I were among the first, if not the first, authors to take up the use of the term in our first joint paper, published somewhat belatedly in 1913. In 1916 my testimony in refutation of the claims of the manufacturer of a

cure-all was part of the first court record in which the term appeared. As the years have overtaken my plodding feet, the number of scientific papers which employ the word "vitamin" has grown from a paltry two or three to some thousands annually.

I have recently been reading some medical biographies and particularly Clapesattle's story of the Mayos. There one notes that, although Pasteur indicted the atmosphere as a source of infective organisms in 1864, although Lister announced his method of antiseptic surgery in 1867 and had achieved international acclaim for his work by 1879, Will Mayo appears to have graduated in medicine at Michigan in 1883 with only a superficial knowledge of Listerism and scant conviction of its merits. It was not till

¹ Address on the occasion of the presentation of the Charles Frederick Chandler Medal of Columbia University, February 26, 1942.

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