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SCIENCE, SCIENTISTS AND SOCIETY¹

By Professor M. G. MELLON

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THE subject selected for this address—"Science, Scientists and Society"—is indeed formidable, at least to any group assembled for an occasion such as this. On the one hand, the range is nearly limitless; and, on the other hand, time and the ability of the speaker are definitely limited. Then, too, triteness is a handicap, for often equivalent subjects must have served many a commencement speaker needing a non-committal title for his remarks.

Nevertheless, the choice was made deliberately, since previous addresses by chemists before this academy have all been very general in nature. Formulas and equations, the chemist's indispensable form of sign-writing, have been almost entirely avoided. In following this precedent it seemed wise to reject as possible subjects various aspects of analytical chemistry, my

¹ Address presented by the retiring president of the Indiana Academy of Science at the fall meeting, October 30, 1942.

principal field of research. In a more positive direction, the choice was made because of a feeling that what is most fundamental in science for a chemist is equally fundamental for other scientists. Whatever interest the discussion may have, therefore, should be general.

THE PROBLEM

Many years of teaching and research have aroused a personal desire to know, as far as possible, the essence of the scientific activity to which most of us are devoting our lives. Just what is science? Is it a kind of religion, sufficient in itself as a way of life in modern society? If all were trained in science, would we be able to live together happily thereafter? Possibly what I have in mind may be clearer in the form of another question—What does science mean to me? Obviously, the answer to be proposed is entirely personal. My only justification for presuming to present it is the

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