

Certain questions relating to national endowment of research in this country, and their importance.

In reply to your able critic (W. S. N., in *Science*, vii. No. 165) of my letter bearing the above title (No. 164), permit me to refer him to my articles upon science and the state, recently published in *Mind in nature*, of Chicago, and, if his interest carry him that far, to do me the simple justice of re-reading my letter in *Science* which prompted his questions,—questions which I will here endeavor to answer for him.

In the first place, let me most emphatically reiterate my opinion, that I am fully in favor of the government endowing researchers in civil life, as well as affording the proper opportunities for the successful prosecution of the labors of those scientists upon their own rolls. May I ask my critic to again peruse that paragraph in my letter that is completed with the following words, "I stand on the side of the King of Denmark, in his principle as applied to Tycho Brahe," and then ask himself if my being interrogated as to my convictions upon the question as to whether or no it devolves upon the government to aid researchers in civil life was necessary; and I think he will find, upon reconsideration, that there is no difference of opinion between us upon that point.

As to the proper ones who should receive such aid from the government, either in civil life or the services, let my critic place the correct construction on the word 'demonstrated,' when I say in the sentence he quotes from my letter, "of those persons in her employ who have from time to time demonstrated their fitness to perform certain work," and I must believe we will agree here also. Mind you, I am not in favor of promptly affording assistance to any one and every one, or to him who suddenly springs up, and exclaims, "Lo! I am a scientist, I can write a book, I believe I am an investigator and a genius." My advice to such a person would be, 'Demonstrate it, my good friend.' As to the amount of assistance the government should render to those exceptional persons in this country who have demonstrated their peculiar fitness to prosecute certain lines of research with marked success, I concur fully in the opinion of Professor Huxley, who says, "Now, the most important object of all educational schemes is to catch these exceptional people, and turn them to account for the good of society. No man can say where they will crop up; like their opposites, the fools and knaves, they appear sometimes in the palace, and sometimes in the hovel. But the great thing to be arrived at, I was going to say the most important end of all social arrangements, is to keep these glorious sports of nature from being either corrupted by luxury or starved by poverty, and to put them into the position in which they can do the work for which they are specially fitted." I quoted these excellent words nearly three years ago in the New York *Medical record*, and again in my article upon science and the state in *Mind in nature*: so there is some danger of their becoming immortalized, though I considered them immortal when they were first penned. I will say, however, that, if occasion requires, I will quote them again,—quote and quote, till they become even the battle-cry of the socialists themselves.

Regarding the progress of our nation, from an evolutionist's point of view, as I do, I must consider,

from the very limpets in our fauna, through every atom we lay claim to, our bodies and brains, our minds and our works, our institutions and industries, our opinions and our language, nay, through our very government itself,—I must consider, I say, the whole as one glorious growth and development. During this growth, that limb of the common tree which bore the crop of American scientists undoubtedly did encroach upon the government service; and to the extent of this encroachment only do I "claim a monopoly of talent in government employ."

It was from this broad basis that I attempted to write my letter upon national endowment, and I feel pained that I should have failed in anybody's eyes. My suggestions for a scientific corps for the army and navy, my papers upon science and the state, were prompted solely through the same sentiment.

Is it too much to hope that some such re-organization as the department of science that I have elsewhere suggested, may some day be an idea realized, or do I peer too far into the future, when I see other zoölogical stations scattered along both of our extensive coasts, repeating, and repeating again, the magnificent national work that has been accomplished by the staff at Wood's Holl? Or, scanning the horizon still farther, is it too much to hope that somewhere in the dim future that change may come o'er the dream of the official mind, and it, too, see the grand natural law that the nineteenth century has wrested from nature's secrets, and that the principles of evolution which are becoming more clearly defined for us every day be turned to practical use, and a little bending of the twigs be done by the government, to the extent of utilizing these evolved products for the nation's good? Then those who have demonstrated their peculiar fitness will be taken up by the government as one of her most powerful weapons; and room will be found for their strength, in this very department of science, these zoölogical stations on our coast, and similar zoölogical and meteorological stations established, as they should be, at suitable points all over our broad empire.

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Fort Wingate, N. Mex., April 8.

The American ornithologists' union code and check-list of North American birds.

By an unfortunate oversight, the committee of the American ornithologists' union on classification and nomenclature of North American birds omitted to recognize in the preface of the 'Code and check-list' the important aid rendered the committee by the gentlemen invited to share in its labors. Dr. L. Stejneger, Dr. C. H. Merriam, and Dr. T. N. Gill were present at numerous meetings, participated in the discussions, and are entitled to grateful recognition by the committee for their services.

Dr. Stejneger not only gave valuable assistance to the subcommittee on species and subspecies, particularly in relation to questions of synonymy, but was also present by invitation at most of the meetings of the whole committee, took an active part in its discussions, and contributed valuable assistance in the formulations of the 'Code,'—assistance which the committee is glad to gratefully acknowledge.

COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION ON CLASSIFICATION AND NOMENCLATURE.