# SCIENCE

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MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to the responsible editor, Prof. J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

## *THE WASHINGTON ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.*

THE scientific community of Washington is engaged in modifying its organization. The matter is of general interest, not only because of the importance of the body of investigators there assembled, but because the problems they are attempting to solve are analogous to the problems which confront the national scientific associations. There was a time when the American Association was the only scientific body of national scope, and, though it began as an association of geologists only, it gradually expanded in respect to subject-matter so as to provide sections for all important branches of scientific work. Of late years there has been a strong tendency toward independent organization of bodies of workers in various fields, and a score of national societies devoted to special subjects have sprung into existence, with the result that interest in and attendance on the meetings of the American Association have flagged.

In Washington the original organization was the Philosophical Society (1871), and its scope was as broad as science. Owing to peculiarities of its rules and customs, differentiation could not readily be accom-

plished by division into sections, and, as the scientific body grew, the students of special subjects organized separate societies, the Anthropologists in 1879, the Biologists in 1880, the Chemists and Entomologists in 1884, the Geographers in 1888, and the Geologists in 1893. The interest drawn toward these associations tended naturally to narrow the field of the Philosophical Society, and the only subjects remaining in its exclusive possession were physics, mathematics and astronomy.

There should be noted, however, an important difference between the National and Washington conditions. The American Association, although started by specialists, became a somewhat popular body and was peculiarly effective as an instrument for enlarging and extending popular interest in research. The special societies afterward organized are for the most part comparatively exclusive, being composed of experts and dealing with technical subjects. The Philosophical Society, on the other hand, had no popular tendency; it limited its membership narrowly, and excluded the press and public from its meetings, while several of the newer, specialized societies assumed popular functions. Their membership is practically open to all persons having sufficient interest to desire to enter, and the members are free to bring their friends to the meetings. The Geographic Society has gone much further than this, and courts a popular membership, to which it gives a generous course of illustrated lectures as compensation for annual dues.

Soon after differentiation began in Washington it became evident that divided interests were likely to affect unfavorably the general influence and external relations of the scientific body. Publishing through many channels, official and unofficial, Washington research makes comparatively little impression on the distant public, and even in our own country the fact is hardly realized that Washington is one of the world's chief centers of scientific investigation. Lacking a unified organization, workers in science were unable to secure for their collective opinion, as to matters of public policy affecting science, the consideration to which it was entitled. An effort was made in 1882 to unite all the societies by making them sections of an Academy, but the Philosophical Society, having the whole field of science within its designated scope, was unwilling to recognize the specialized societies as coördinate, and the project was abandoned. In 1888 a federation for business purposes was effected, under the title of the Joint Commission, and this has continued to the present time. At first it was a committee of delegates, but it was afterward enlarged so as to include the executive boards of all the societies. It published a joint directory of the membership, conducted courses of popular lectures and assumed various minor functions. In 1896 it became an instrument for the expression of the opposition of scientific men to the anti-vivisection bill, then pending in Congress, and it also officially endorsed the proposal of the Secretary of Agriculture that the scientific bureaus of the Department of Agriculture be placed under a 'Director,' who should be a scientific

man with status independent of politics. In the mode of procedure adopted by the Commission in attempting to influence legislation it was thought to exceed its constitutional powers, and the criticisms which ensued were among the influences which determined the societies to a reconsideration of the general subject of their federation. Much attention has been given to the matter during the past winter, with the result that a 'Washington Academy of Sciences' has been determined on, which shall be the federal head of the existing scientific societies. It is to have no control over the 'affiliated societies,' which retain their autonomy, but its members are to be chosen exclusively from the membership of the societies, its vice-presidents are to be nominated by the societies, and it is to have charge of all matters affecting the general and collective interest of their membership. Great pains has been taken in the selection of its nucleus, so that it shall be a thoroughly representative body from the start. The Joint Commission, itself a body of 96 persons, has by ballot chosen from the full membership of the societies 75 men, the criterion of selection being 'original research or scientific attainment,' and the nucleus of 75 is to organize the Academy and enlarge its membership. The policy of the new Academy and the choice of functions to which special prominence shall be given are yet to be determined; but its progress will be watched with interest and expectation, especially by those who appreciate the importance of the problem to be solved by the national organizations.

## *THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.**

### FINANCES.

THE unexpended balance at the beginning of the fiscal year July 1, 1896, as stated in my last annual report, was $57,065.78. Interest on the permanent fund in the Treasury and elsewhere, amounting to $56,400, was received during the year, which, together with a sum of $6,128.71 received from the sale of the publications and from miscellaneous sources, made the total receipts $62,528.71.

The disbursements for the year amounted to $58,061.99, the details of which are given in the report of the executive committee. The balance remaining to the credit of the Secretary on June 30, 1897, for the expenses of the Institution, was $61,532.50, which includes the sum of $10,000 referred to in previous reports, being $5,000 received from the estate of Dr. J. H. Kidder, and a like sum from Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, the latter a gift made personally to the Secretary to promote certain physical researches. This latter sum was, with the donor's consent, deposited by the Secretary to the credit of the current funds of the Institution.

This balance also includes the interest accumulated on the Hodgkins donation, which is held against certain contingent obligations, besides relatively considerable sums held to meet obligations which may be expected to mature as the result of various scientific investigations or publications in progress.

The permanent funds of the Institution are as follows:

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| Bequest of Smithson, 1846.. | | $515,169.00 |
| Residuary legacy of Smithson, 1867..... | | 26,210.63 |
| Deposits from savings of income, 1867..... | | 108,620.37 |
| Bequest of Jas. Hamilton, 1875.. | $1,000.00 | |
| Accumulated interest on Hamilton fund, 1895..... | 1,000.00 | |
| | | 2,000.00 |

*Abstract from the report of S. P. Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, for the year ending June 30, 1897.