

found and the other circumstances as related by Professor Very, but he added a statement with regard to a bright flash of light which he had noticed in the sky during the evening of October 7. His description, however, was only that of an unusually brilliant shooting star. A meteorite of the size of this specimen would surely have illuminated the region over many square miles with almost the light of day, judging from the reports of known meteorites which have been seen to fall, but no such occurrence was reported from Norwood. If the falling of a meteorite was the cause of the broken bars, the mass has not yet been found, or at any rate it was other than the specimen described by Professor Very and seen by me.

The circumstantial nature of the observations made by the several persons who had to do with digging up the "meteorite," as quoted in the article to which reference is made, are not as conclusive to me as they are to Professor Very, through scepticism engendered by the falsity of nearly all of the many reports that have come to my office during the past sixteen years in which people have described "meteorites" that they "had actually seen fall" at their feet or on the lawn in front of their houses, or in the road, or in some other very near-by place. On request, samples of some of these "meteorites" have been sent in, one of them proving to be a piece of fossiliferous limestone; another a bit of furnace slag, another a glacial boulder of trap rock, another a glazed stone that had been used in the wall of a limekiln, another a glacial boulder of quartzite covered with a film of limonite. The list might be extended almost indefinitely, but it is not worth while. In almost every case mentioned, the mass when found "was so hot that one could not bear his hand on it."

EDMUND OTIS HOVEY

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: May I trespass on your space for a word of explanation? A series of public lectures on human sense-or-

gans recently delivered by me in Boston has given occasion to a number of newspaper reports. Most of these reports are entirely erroneous and misleading. None of them have been published with my sanction, but, on the contrary, quite against my wish. I am therefore not responsible for either their form or content.

G. H. PARKER

QUOTATIONS

THE SERVICE PENSION OF THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION

AN official action taken two months ago, but only now publicly announced, by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching seems to have certain ethical aspects that deserve consideration, not only from members of the teaching profession, but also from the public at large. Those aspects will, I think, become sufficiently apparent from a brief recital of the facts in the matter.

Upon its incorporation in 1906 the foundation announced that it would grant retiring allowances to teachers in accepted institutions upon two grounds—old age and length of service. The conditions relating to the old-age pension are not relevant to the present communication. The rule relating to service pensions reads as follows: "Any person who has had a service of twenty-five years as a professor, and who is at the time a professor in an accepted institution, shall be entitled to a retiring allowance"—computed in a specified manner. Between April, 1906, and November, 1909, many university teachers and many governing boards based definite plans and actions of their own upon the supposition that, so far as its resources extended, the Carnegie Foundation would do what it had announced that it would do. The expectation of a service pension was, in some cases, named among the inducements offered men who received calls to institutions upon the "accepted list" of the foundation; it was in other cases a motive for the refusal of otherwise advantageous calls to institutions not upon the foundation. In instances either known or reported to me, teachers nearing the time of eligibility for a service pension have in a great variety of ways altered their plans,

modified their domestic arrangements, made personal sacrifices, in order that, with the aid of the pension, they might be able to retire and carry through without distraction some project of study or of literary production. Some, expecting an early relief from all teaching duties, have foregone leaves of absence which they might have claimed; some have taught in summer schools or night schools who would not otherwise have done so; some have made investments or taken insurance with express reference to the time of their prospective retirement. After institutions, families and individuals have thus, for nearly four years, been permitted and encouraged by the Carnegie Foundation to be vitally influenced in the conduct of their affairs by an expectation based upon the foundation's explicit announcement, the entire system of service pensions is now abruptly abolished, "except in the case of disability unfitting" the applicant "for work as a teacher as shown by medical examination" —which, of course, is purely a disability pension.

The question whether the scheme of service pensions for professors under sixty-five and in good health was originally a wise one I do not here discuss; it is a question of policy concerning which a good deal might be said on either side. But two considerations in the matter seem so plain as to afford no ground for differences of opinion. One is that, unless the Carnegie Foundation is to be guilty of an act of bad faith it should promptly supplement its recent action by the proviso that at least all persons within ten years of the time of eligibility for a service pension, under the old rule, may still claim such pension when their time comes around. The other patent fact is that, unless so supplemented, the latest action of the foundation must hereafter render impossible any confidence in the stability of policy of that corporation. In the federal act of incorporation by which the foundation received legal entity two classes of prospective beneficiaries are specifically distinguished and equally emphasized: college teachers "who by reason of long and meritorious service or by reason of old age, disability,

or other sufficient reason" shall be deemed entitled to pensions. The service-pension feature has similarly been especially emphasized in the public reports and explanations of policy of the president of the foundation. A body which at a moment's notice abandons one of the two purposes constituting its proclaimed *raison d'être* is equally likely to modify the other to any assignable degree.

I can scarcely suppose that any one will think it relevant to note that the foundation has always retained the power to alter its rules "in such a manner as experience may indicate as desirable." All public bodies, doubtless, have such power to amend their regulations; but it is not commonly conceived that the power can justly be exercised in such a way as to have a retroactive effect, or to nullify equities acquired or expectations reasonably aroused by virtue of the previous regulations.—Arthur O. Lovejoy in *The Nation*.

THE PRINCETON GRADUATE COLLEGE

YESTERDAY's decision by the Princeton trustees seems to have met the question immediately at issue in a way both happy and just. Few details are as yet published, but the main points are clear. Two gifts for the endowment of a graduate college had been offered, one apparently conditioned upon a site on or near the campus, the other contemplating a location at a distance from it. There were also questions about the control of the new institution by the academic governing body of the university. Because it was found impossible to unite the two foundations, or otherwise to reconcile the differences about administration, the larger gift was withdrawn. While regretting this, and hoping that an adjustment may yet be found, the trustees distinctly uphold President Wilson. He was right, they decide, in insisting upon a proper university control of the proposed graduate college, and upon its being absorbed into the common academic life at Princeton. Yet they distinctly refer to "dissensions" in the faculty and in the governing board which it will be the duty of the trustees to grapple with in the near future. Thus the particular dispute