

SCIENCE

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THE RELATION OF THE LABORATORY TO
MEDICINE¹

CONTENTS

<i>The Relation of the Laboratory to Medicine:</i> PROFESSOR NORMAN MACL. HARRIS	617
<i>Theories of Solutions:</i> PROFESSOR J. WALKER	622
<i>The Coal Production of Pennsylvania</i>	631
<i>The Memorial to Anton Dohrn:</i> PROFESSOR EDMUND B. WILSON	632
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	633
<i>University and Educational News</i>	635
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>Chromosomes and Associative Inheritance:</i> PROFESSOR T. H. MORGAN. <i>The Cotton</i> <i>Worm:</i> JOHN L. RANDALL. <i>The Air Blad-</i> <i>der in Clupea harangus:</i> E. C. S.	636
<i>Quotations:—</i>	
<i>Benzoate of Soda Again</i>	638
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>The Life and Work of Charles Benjamin</i> <i>Dudley:</i> DR. WILLIAM McMURTRIE. <i>Auer-</i> <i>bach and Rotha's Taschenbuch für Mathe-</i> <i>matiker und Physiker:</i> PROFESSOR G. F. HULL	639
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>Concerning a New Arrangement of the Ele-</i> <i>ments on a Helix and the Relationships</i> <i>which may be usefully expressed thereon:</i> PROFESSOR B. K. EMERSON	640

IN addressing so representative a body as this association I can not but feel that I am engaged almost in a work of supererogation when I presume to speak upon a topic so familiar to you all. Despite this feeling on my part, I am led to believe that upon occasion an oft-told tale, if palatably redressed, may prove appetizing enough: I will venture an experiment.

A careful perusal of the pages of the history of medicine plainly demonstrates the long and tortuous path pursued from the ages of earliest record down to relatively recent times. We can see how at one time the noble art was held in the clutches of superstition, its acts governed by a deep-rooted primal belief in demonology; at another time religious doctrines dominated and intimidated progress; and at other periods metaphysical discussions held back advance and even wrecked discoveries. The history of this struggle onwards towards the light of knowledge, marked as it has been by errors and lapses, is fascinatingly punctuated by epoch-making contributions here and there along the line by an occasional genius or hard-headed thinker. It is not to be doubted, however, that had it not been for the wonderful development of the sciences, the modern status of medicine would have been held back for an indefinite period. Our debt to the pioneers in chemistry, physics and biology, and to their successors down to the present moment, is enormous, and we must

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