

SCIENCE

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CONTENTS

<i>The Change from the Old to the New Botany in the United States:</i> PROFESSOR W. G. FARLOW	79
<i>The Simulium-Pellagra Problem in Illinois:</i> PROFESSOR STEPHEN A. FORBES	86
<i>Eoanthropus Dawsoni:</i> PROFESSOR A. C. HAD- DON	91
<i>The Yale Peruvian Expedition of 1912</i>	92
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	94
<i>University and Educational News</i>	98
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>A National University at Washington:</i> KEPLER HOYT. <i>Neo-vitalism and the Logic of Science:</i> PROFESSOR ROBERT MAC- DOUGALL. <i>A Protest:</i> DR. HUBERT LYMAN CLARK	99
<i>Quotations:—</i>	
<i>The Efficiency Nostrum at Harvard</i>	106
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Gooch on Chemical Analysis:</i> PROFESSOR H. P. TALBOT. <i>Browning's Introduction to the Rarer Elements:</i> PROFESSOR CHARLES BASKERVILLE. <i>Barrows on Light, Photom- etry and Illumination:</i> DR. E. C. CRITTENDEN	108
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>The Effect of Anesthetics upon Permeabil- ity:</i> PROFESSOR W. J. V. OSTERHOUT. <i>Par- tial Sex-linkage in the Pigeon:</i> CALVIN B. BRIDGES. <i>Relativity and Electromagnetic Induction:</i> PROFESSOR S. J. BARNETT	111
<i>The American Society of Naturalists:</i> PRO- FESSOR A. L. TREADWELL	114
<i>The American Mathematical Society:</i> PRO- FESSOR F. N. COLE	115
<i>The Ohio Academy of Science:</i> DR. L. B. WALTON	11

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THE CHANGE FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW BOTANY IN THE UNITED STATES¹

It is generally known that in the seventies there was a sudden development of the study of botany in this country. Just how and why this sudden development took place at that particular date is, I suspect, not clearly recognized, at least by our younger men. From histories and reports of progress they can learn the main facts, but those who, as students or instructors, have lived through the transitional period when the old botany was changed into the new are in a better position to appreciate the underlying causes. There are, however, few such persons still living and the small number is not wholly due to the normal death rate. The relative number of botanists was smaller then than now and it will not do to assume that this was owing solely to the lack of attractions in the botany of the day. The main reason was that one could hardly expect to earn a living as a botanist. When I graduated from college in 1866 and wished to become a botanist, Professor Gray told me that I ought to study medicine first because the possibility of gaining a living by botany was so small that one should always have a regular profession to fall back upon. In fact, at that time medicine was practically the gate through which it was necessary to pass in order to enter the field of botany. Some years later De Bary told me that, when he was a young man, there was a similar state of things in Germany and, although desiring to devote himself to bot-

¹ Address of retiring president of the Botanical Society of America, given at the Botanists' Dinner, Cleveland, January 1, 1913.