

# SCIENCE

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## THE ESPECIAL VALUE OF RESEARCH IN PURE CHEMISTRY<sup>1</sup>

My colleague, Dr. Cattell, having considered the broad topic of the value to a democracy of research in pure science, I welcome the opportunity to take up for a few moments one of the subdivisions of his field, in order to point out somewhat more fully the especial importance of research in chemistry.

Let us, therefore, first pass rapidly in review a few of the contributions which chemistry has made or is now making to the health, happiness and material prosperity of our country, that we may be able more accurately to assess its value to the community, gain a better appreciation of the debt we owe it, and accord to it that position of high honor and dignity which is its just due.

In the reports of the Twelfth Census of the United States it is written that

Probably no science has done so much as chemistry in revealing the hidden possibilities of the wastes and by-products of manufacturers. This science has been the most fruitful agent in the conversion of the refuse of manufacturing operations into products of industrial value. Her fairy wand has only to touch the most noisome substances, and the most ethereal essences, the most heavenly hues, the most delicious flavors and odors instantly rise as if by magic.

Whether this is a wholly overdrawn picture or not will appear in what follows.

Dealing with the ultimate constituents of our material universe, their combinations and transformations, it is chemistry that

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered on the occasion of the establishment of the Willard Gibbs Chair of Research in Pure Chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh, October 26, 1915.