

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 1917

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BOTANY AS A NATIONAL ASSET¹

It seems timely to consider the relation of botany to national welfare, when all the sciences are being called upon to render such service as they can in the development of national resources, both material and intellectual. As botanists we realize the important points of contact between our science and human welfare, but the relation between the science of botany and these contacts is not generally appreciated. I am not concerned at present with our usefulness so much as with our reputation, which is in danger of limiting the development of both our science and our service. My attention has been called to this situation in two ways.

1. An increasing number of students of a practical turn of mind are being attracted to the physical sciences because such training is understood to connect definitely with practical activities of various kinds. These sciences are to be congratulated upon having established this connection in such a way that the general public can see it. This has not been accomplished by slighting the fundamentals, but by showing that the fundamentals must underlie all rational practise. Failure to establish this connection in the case of our science means that botany is in danger of being regarded by the general public, and by students who simply record public opinion, as the least practical of the sciences. This attitude is the result of various causes, but chief among them are the attitude of professional botanists, and the fact that the

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

¹ Address of the president of the Botanical Society of America, New York, December, 1916.