

remove the swollen vegetable from the water and permit it to remain at room temperature for twenty-four to thirty-six hours *it will return to its anhydrous state*. This phenomenon, it seems to me, stamps the anhydrous product as an entirely different product, structurally, from the fresh product, but does not necessarily indicate any lowering in food value. In other words a fresh vegetable holds its water much more tenaciously than does a dehydrated vegetable which has had its water removed and has subsequently been immersed in water and made to assume a form closely approximating that of the fresh vegetable. Is the failure of the anhydrous vegetable to retain its water to the same degree as the fresh vegetable due to the fact that the drying has brought about some change in the colloids of the vegetable cells which lowers their power to hold water? Or does the removal of salts through the "soaking" process lower the imbibition power of the colloids? Or is there some other answer? An explanation from our friends the physical chemists would be in order.

The above phenomenon was called to my attention by Mr. Charles Denby of the War Trade Board and Mr. Daniel Moreau Barringer both of whom are much interested in the general problem of food desiccation.

PHILIP B. HAWK

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,  
PHILADELPHIA

#### NONSILVERABLE CONTAINERS FOR SILVERING MIRRORS

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In connection with recent contributions to your columns under the title "Nonsilverable Containers for Silvering Mirrors" the writer may be permitted to record an observation made several years ago. This was that silvering solution could not be made to deposit on black amorphous selenium, although it coated the walls of the glass vessel in which the piece of selenium was placed. The converse of this experiment, namely silvering a piece of glass in a vessel lined with selenium, was not tried, but would appear to offer the solution of the problem of a container that will not attract silver.

HERBERT E. IVES

#### AD REM OF A HISTORY OF SCIENCES IN THE UNITED STATES

IN the long years of my labors in scientific reference work I found myself greatly hampered by the lack of an available source history of the different branches of sciences, especially of the exact sciences, in the United States. There are three important contributions in this field, all written by the late George Brown Goode: "The Origin of the National Scientific and Educational Institutions of the United States," 1890; "The Beginnings of Natural History in America," 1886; and "The Beginnings of American Science," 1887. Nobody who is acquainted with these papers can withhold his admiration for Mr. Goode's painstaking work, but after all they are only stepping stones and cover only a limited period, and serve merely, as it was contemplated by Mr. Goode, as an outline.

The more interested I became in the matter the more I found myself impressed by the idea to see that this great lacuna should be filled. The best channel through which to accomplish this seemed to me to lay the matter before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, have it discussed there in its entirety, and if possible undertaken by the association or under the auspices of the association. The outbreak of the world war made it seem advisable to me to postpone my plan. A year or two ago I broached the subject with Dr. L. O. Howard, the permanent secretary of the association, who fell in with the idea and expressed his willingness to submit my suggestion to the committee on policy, whenever I should be ready to present it in concrete form. Last October when the end of the war seemed to be only a matter of months I thought the time had come for action. Therefore, I addressed on October 25th the following communication to Dr. L. O. Howard:

Dear Sir:

There is as yet no history of sciences in the United States showing the important and far-reaching participation of our men of science in the general development of science. Now seems to be the proper time to seriously consider such an undertaking, as the great world war has changed and

will change not only political history but science to such an extent, that a genetic and historical survey is imperative. Therefore, in my opinion, the period to be dealt with should begin with the earliest original contributions of American men of science to the different fields of knowledge and close with the beginning of the world war. What is achieved during the world war marks a beginning of a new epoch in our national scientific life and should be treated later on.

As the American Association for the Advancement of Science is the representative scientific body of the United States, it is only proper that the history of sciences in the United States should be undertaken and edited under the auspices of the association.

Therefore, I beg to ask you as permanent secretary of the association to submit this proposition at the next meeting of the association and have it voted upon.

If the association should vote in favor of the motion the next step would be to consider how to proceed in this matter. In regard to this I wish to make the following suggestions, either of which should be carried out.

The first one would be to appoint a historical committee for this special purpose, in which each section of the association should be represented by one member, in addition to which three members at large should be appointed by the president. The president and the permanent secretary should be members of this committee ex-officio. The president acts as presiding officer of the committee, but might delegate any member of the committee as acting chairman.

The second suggestion would be to add a new section called "The Historical Section," and let them formulate a plan and submit it to the association. This section should be a permanent one, having the same organization as the other sections. Its purpose should be to promote the study of the history of sciences in the United States.

This second suggestion should be voted on even if my plan for a history of sciences in the United States undertaken under the auspices of the Association should be vetoed.

In a personal interview Dr. Howard kindly informed me that he would submit my letter to the committee on policy which was to meet in November in Baltimore. As several members of the committee were unable to attend, the meeting was not held and the question came up before the committee on

policy during the recent meeting of the association. At this meeting of the committee it was decided to propose, among others, the following change in the constitution: that a new section, called section K:<sup>1</sup> "Historical Science" be formed. This proposed change is to be voted on at the next meeting of the association in St. Louis, December, 1919.

I sincerely hope that the association will vote in favor of it. I want to raise only one objection, and that is the designation of the proposed section. "Historical science" seems to me not very appropriate and really covers an entirely different subject, or is at least open to doubt. In my opinion the wording "historical science" would rather refer to history as science, which is a cultural science, while the new section "K" should deal with the history of the different branches of exact sciences. In my suggestion submitted to the association I proposed as the name of the new section: "Historical Section." An afterthought shows me that this designation may be subjected to the same criticism. Therefore, I propose now as the proper designation of section "K" the name: "History of Science," which would express the contemplated work of the section without any doubt: "To promote the study of the history of sciences in the United States."

On the main point of my suggestion in regard to a "history of sciences in the United States undertaken and edited under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science," the committee has taken no action.

This gives me a certain liberty of action. I hope that this question may be aired at the next meeting at St. Louis; meanwhile I would like to bring the matter to the attention of our scientific men and institutions, and a discussion of the project in the columns of SCIENCE would be very welcome to me.

FELIX NEUMANN

ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

<sup>1</sup> Owing to a division of several sections a new lettering of the sections has to be adopted.