

northern observatories, was incorrect and unjust, in that it overlooked the case of Dr. C. P. Olivier, for several years an astronomer in the McCormick Observatory. I regret exceedingly this oversight, and I am at a loss to explain it, especially as Dr. Olivier was for a year a member of the staff of the Lick Observatory, and his valued astronomical contributions are thoroughly familiar to me. It is my duty and pleasure to say that the observatory of the University of Virginia, thanks in good measure to the abilities and enthusiasms of Director Mitchell and astronomer Olivier, is as efficient in good works as any existing observatory. It is greatly to be regretted that their financial resources are so limited.

I should like to say that my comments upon the astronomical situation in the southeastern states were primarily not intended to be taken in the negative sense. There was with me the hope that a public expression on the subject might lead to a better realization of existing needs, and to more adequate financial provision in the positive sense.

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TECHNICAL STUDY AT OBERLIN COLLEGE

IN SCIENCE for December 31 I find a note:

It is planned to establish a technical school at Oberlin College with accommodation for about seven hundred students.

This statement is not quite correct. President King has several times proposed, upon his own responsibility and doubtless merely for informal consideration, a plan for technical departments chiefly in chemical engineering and metallurgy. I believe the proposal has not yet come to the faculty for formal consideration, so of course does not have their endorsement. As all matters of internal policy and administration in Oberlin are controlled by the faculty, in accordance with an old vote of the trustees twice recently reaffirmed and now in part of the nature of a contract, it is evident the proposal has not yet taken the first formal step toward adoption. President King, who is one of the staunchest

supporters of this Oberlin system, apparently thinks that it is not yet time for formal consideration of the plan. It has been mooted for two years, and indeed over fifteen years ago something of the sort was suggested, but it has received only individual consideration by members of the faculty. Judging from numerous conversations, I think the faculty, if they are asked to consider it, will decide the plan to be unwise. A general feeling among the faculty is that Oberlin's effort should be centered upon strengthening herself in every way as a college before entering upon university or technical school work.

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URTHER REMARKS ON "THE USE OF THE TERM FOSSIL"

THE short article entitled "The Use of the Term Fossil" published in No. 1330 of SCIENCE seems to have fulfilled the writer's object of stimulating discussion. The first criticism, by Garret P. Serviss, appeared in the *Sunday American*¹ and while approving "poetic license" the author continues the plea for a more careful use of scientific terms by the scientist, as follows:

Half the fogs that trouble the ordinary reader when he undertakes to traverse the fields of science are due to the capricious use of words which ought to have an invariable signification.

In No. 1348 of SCIENCE, under the title "Professor Field's Use of the Term Fossil," Professor Authur M. Miller suggests the following definition: "Any trace of an *organism* that lived in a past Geological Age." He then states that such expressions as "fossil sunracks" and "fossil flood plains" are "illuminating" and "apt" and "are valued contributions to geological phraseology." In a recent contribution by a well-known paleobotanist, we find the term "fossil climate." Would it be considered "illuminating" or "apt" to define paleoclimatology as the study of "fossil climates"? There is a science of words as well as of things, and is it not true that much of the

¹ July 22, 1920.