

Libby devotes a part of each period, say, twenty minutes of the hour, to a colloquium or critical discussion of the nature and application of the subject under consideration. In this way scientific technic is deliberated upon in all its aspects. These lectures are being delivered from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday of each week of the present university semester, in the Fellows' Room of the Mellon Institute.

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NOTES

THE will of the late Miss Janet Williams, of Frederick, Md., contains a bequest of \$30,000 to Hood College, to create and maintain an astronomical building in memory of her father, John H. Williams, to be known as the Williams Observatory.

FESTIVITIES are being planned for this spring in honor of the founding of the University of Padua in 1222. Professor Lucatello, the rector of the university, is in charge of the arrangements.

THE Japanese ambassador at Vienna has presented the sum of 6,500,000 crowns to the university as a personal donation in tribute to the scientific work being done there in spite of the unfavorable circumstances.

DR. CLARENCE C. LITTLE was elected president of the University of Maine on April 7. Dr. Little graduated from Harvard in 1910 and received the doctor's degree in 1914. In 1916 he became an assistant dean of Harvard College and research fellow in genetics for the Cancer Commission of Harvard University. Since his discharge from the army as major he has been research associate in the Station for Experimental Evolution of the Carnegie Institution.

DR. D. S. ROBINSON, assistant professor of philosophy at University of Wisconsin, has accepted the professorship of philosophy at Miami University. Dr. E. B. Powell has held the chair of philosophy since 1905 and resigns the chair at the close of this year to devote his time to writing.

JOHN ARTHUR RANDALL, secretary of the Advisory Board of the General Staff of the War Department, has been appointed president

of Rochester Mechanics Institute. Mr. Randall was selected by the trustees to continue the development of a technical educational program containing liberal components.

DR. GEORGE THOMAS, formerly professor of economics in the University of Utah and since 1921 superintendent of public education in Utah, has been installed as president of the university.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

POPULAR SCIENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: I am very much interested in Dr. Slosson's letter about popular science writing which appears in SCIENCE for March 3, just received. Since some of my own information and experience is along this line it may be worth while for me to make some additional comment.

I think that I can see a large number of conditions involved in the fact mentioned by Dr. Slosson that there is a dearth of popular science writers in this country, but I shall only discuss one or two of them. First and foremost is the malodorous condition of the popular science field which for some time has been so largely and so conspicuously occupied by fabricators, exaggerators, emotionalists, ignoramuses and exploiters that many people of training and ability hesitate to enter. Furthermore if an entrance is attempted by use of an informative article of clarity and real merit the author may have the humiliation of seeing his work rejected for that of some irresponsible clown or gaudy sentimentalist who is successful in assembling a group of highly stimulating words ("lots of pep") which may or may not have some relation to fact.

Even more important than such discouragement to potential writers is the effect of lax, inaccurate and falsified statement of scientific material upon the reading public. I am sure that for a period of fifty years more hoaxes have been perpetrated by newspapers in the name of science than in any other way. As much as thirty years ago most intelligent people were suspicious of material presented by the public press as science. In the last

twenty years this suspicion has been more than justified and many intelligent readers say they either do not read or do not believe the stuff peddled as science by most newspapers. Under such conditions why should the reading public take any interest in popular science writing? For killing this interest the press services, feature syndicates and syndicated newspapers (aided and abetted by renegade scientists and pseudo-scientists) are to blame rather than individual newspapers. This is partly because of commercialized ideas of service, partly because of the mass of material handled and partly because of remoteness from contact with the reading public.

The lack of interest in scientific matter is also probably increased to some extent by the fact which Dr. Slosson mentions as making it appear strange, *i. e.*, the increased teaching of science in our schools. The well informed student is thereby made more critical of the material presented. At the same time his parents become more cautious in reading or referring to it because they fear his ridicule when some point is raised involving inaccurate or garbled press reports.

In my own case I admit very freely that I am fully in sympathy with the man who hesitates to try popular science writing because of its unsavory reputation. I sometimes have a very distinct feeling of disgust when I find an article which I have tried to compose accurately and which I have taken especial pains to verify, printed in close proximity to one of the florid, vacuous, or untruthful type. On the other hand there is a lot of satisfaction when it gets on the editorial page in dignified company, as sometimes occurs.

For nearly three years our institution has been sending out to a number of California newspapers (our present mailing list is fifty-three) biological feature articles written by myself. These have been sent at intervals of one or two weeks free of charge, partly as a matter of experiment but mainly as a sort of university extension activity. We are convinced that the service has educational value and that it is helping to popularize true science. I have myself been surprised at times by the interest expressed in certain articles

by people whom I would not have expected to read them, much less express appreciation of them. I have personally interviewed about sixty editors and have had interesting correspondence with others. A large number have shown such interest in my material that I am convinced that the general public is interested in good stuff if properly presented. If eight or nine out of every ten editors express interest in carefully verified scientific material written in popular (non technical and simple and direct) style I am inclined to think that a similar percentage of intelligent readers will do so if one will take time to gain their confidence.

I appreciate the difficulties confronting Dr. Slosson and Science Service and, like him, I am impatient at delay but when I think about how badly the American public has been served in regard to scientific news I realize that it will take long and hard work by a lot of people to get popular science writing on a basis to inspire confidence. There is always the risk that one who finds he can write in popular style will become more interested in the popular side of it than in the science (truth telling) side of writing and will become unreliable, as has often occurred in the past. Hence it is quite evident that the great need is not only for writers of popular style, of scientific training and ability, but also of high ideals of service which can not be broken down under the stress of temptation.

SCRIPPS INSTITUTION FOR
BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

W. E. ALLEN

TWO NEW WESTERN WEEDS

DURING the past year two plants, which threaten to become weeds of some importance in the arid and alkaline regions of the West, have been received from the western states. One of these is *Bassia hyssopifolia* (Pall.) Kuntze, a member of the family Chenopodiaceae, originally described from the region of the Caspian Sea. It apparently has never been recorded as occurring in this country. The first collection was made at Fallon, Nevada, July 28, 1919, by Ivar Tidestrom (No. 10755), and a considerable amount of material for distribution has recently been sent me by F. B. Head-