

# SCIENCE

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## THE FACTOR OF SAFETY IN RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

ONCE in the drear dead days unfortunately still fresh in memory the head of a great institution for the aid of education wrote, with reference to research, these words: "In the last two decades more sins have been committed in its name against good teaching than we are likely to atone for in the next generation." Evidently the time of reformation had not arrived when this disparagement was uttered, for some ten years later the same pen recorded history as follows: "Much of that which has gone on in American universities under the name of research is in truth only an imitation of research."

To some of you, more than commonly zealous in support of investigation and with a background of rural experience, these words may come with memories of the odor of new mown hay and visions of waving yellow fields and the reflection that excessive heat sometimes causes mental aberrations. For the quoted passages could have come only from an annual report, naturally written just after the end of the fiscal year; but unfortunately for this simple explanation, the fiscal year of the institution in question does not end in June, and the derogation of research was conceived in the cool gray days of autumn. Moreover no charge of alienation of reason could be brought against the author of these rebukes that would not lodge with equal justice in other quarters. The chief executive of another great institution which has done and is doing as much in the field of research as any of its kind in America voiced a similar sentiment thus: "Quite too much attention is paid to those who when they make some slight addition to their own stock of information fancy that the world's store of

<sup>1</sup> Address of the President of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, March 29, 1922.