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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Trends of Modern Biology</i> : PROFESSOR RAYMOND PEARL | 581 |
| <i>Earth Current Observations</i> : DR. L. A. BAUER | 592 |
| <i>Collaborators in the Standardization of Biological Stains</i> : DR. H. W. CONN..... | 594 |
| <i>Scientific Events</i> : | |
| <i>The Ramsay Memorial; The Zeitschrift für Praktische Geologie; Sigma Xi at the University of Idaho; Association of American Geographers; The Ecological Society of America; The American Society of Naturalists</i> | 596 |
| <i>Scientific Notes and News</i> | 599 |
| <i>University and Educational Notes</i> | 602 |
| <i>Discussion and Correspondence</i> : | |
| <i>Relativity</i> : DR. W. J. HUMPHREYS. <i>Tingitidæ or Tingidæ</i> : DR. A. C. BAKER. <i>A Chemical Spelling Match</i> : DR. C. E. WATERS. <i>Muscina pascuorum</i> Meigen in New England: CHARLES W. JOHNSON..... | 603 |
| <i>Scientific Books</i> : | |
| <i>Hornaday's Minds and Manners of Wild Animals</i> : DR. ROBERT M. YERKES..... | 604 |
| <i>Special Articles</i> : | |
| <i>The Power of the Wheat Plant to fix Atmospheric Nitrogen</i> : PROFESSOR C. B. LIPMAN and J. K. TAYLOR..... | 605 |
| <i>The American Chemical Society</i> : DR. CHARLES L. PARSONS | 607 |

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TRENDS OF MODERN BIOLOGY¹

I

AN occasion such as this is thought-provoking. Why should anybody endow a chair of biology? When I began the study of the subject a little more than a quarter of a century ago such things were not done. In most of our large universities biology had a fairly secure position, but in all but a very few of the small colleges, at one of which I am proud to say I had the privilege to study, if present at all it was so distinctly only on sufferance. Much doubt existed and was often expressed as to whether this novel subject had any disciplinary value in the training of the youthful mind, or had any particular cultural worth in the producing of better citizens. Those of us who were irresistibly lured, by the fascination of the wonderful field opened to our vision, to spend most of our time in the biological laboratory, were looked upon by our fellow collegians as queer freaks of nature, and would certainly have been called Bolsheviks had that overworked appellation been current verbal coin in those days. For the subject distinctly lacked respectability. It was thought by those who pursued the classics or other orthodox lines of educational conduct to be a messy business, was known to be smelly, and was generally held to be low. This attitude inevitably called forth a defense reaction on the part of its callow devotees, which resulted in distinctly worse messes and smells than were really requisite for the successful pursuit of knowledge in the field.

Now all this has changed. Biology has come

¹ Papers from the Department of Biometry and Vital Statistics, School of Hygiene and Public Health, Johns Hopkins University. No. 80.

An address delivered at Mount Union College, Alliance, Ohio, October 20, 1922, on the occasion of the dedication of the Milton J. Lichty Chair of Biology in that college.