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ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE¹

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As honorary chairman of the centenary celebration committee of the Franklin Institute, I have been appointed—with no subject assigned—to address you, a circumstance which permits me to deal generally with the past period of one hundred years of the life of the institute. Before doing this, I should like to refer briefly to the significance of such an occasion as this, the bringing together of so much scientific talent and eminence in research as is evidenced in the names of the speakers who are to address the sections, according to the carefully prepared program. The institute is indeed fortunate in having on the list not only many of the most distinguished in our own land, but also exceptional representation from over the seas, the whole forming a body of scientists and engineers such as is seldom if ever brought together on like occasions. The impressive list of representatives of universities and colleges everywhere, the body of leaders in science who are listed as delegates from the learned and professional societies and the numerous company of those from the great industrial organizations together form a gathering of high standing in science, in research and in the technical work which characterizes the age in which we live.

One might wish to be able to add that the age is equally well characterized by the application, in all the activities of life, of at least a semblance of the scientific method of discerning truth from falsity. But there is a strong survival of prejudice, of bigotry and of medieval ignorance in relation to the simple facts of life and existence in this world of ours; a clouding of mind only to be removed by more universal teaching of scientific principles, not alone in physics and chemistry, but in such subjects as biology and its kindred branches, in economics and even in politics and government. The advanced medical investigator still has to deal with the unreasoning prejudice of the anti-vivisectionist, it may be, or vaccinationist, or other anti-what-not, and the usual quackery to be found in the fanciful names for fanciful practice. The naturalist is even at this day threatened, in his conclusions and teaching, by the anti-evolutionist and his kin.

Fortunately, the more fundamental studies of physics, chemistry and the mechanic arts are not so banned or obstructed. The beneficial results are more immediate or direct, and less likely to cast doubt on the

¹ Address at the Centenary Celebration of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, on September 17, 1924.