

# SCIENCE

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## THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION— PARENT OF AMERICAN SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

You have been invited here to-day to discuss the future of an institution which was given to this country by a native and resident of another; an institution which enjoys the protection of the United States government and is yet a private organization; an institution which inspired the orderly development of American science and which, as long ago as 1850, made youthful American an international patron of thought and knowledge.

James Smithson was an Englishman. He was the natural son of the Duke of Northumberland and a direct descendant through his mother of Henry VII, King of England. Embittered by the bar sinister on his name, this gentleman of the eighteenth century was yet great-spirited enough to devote his life to the service of men. A chemist and mineralogist of repute, he was admitted to the Royal Society at the early age of twenty-two. "Every man," he said, "is a valuable member of society who, by his observations, researches and experiments, procures knowledge for men." Acting on this principle, he devoted his attention with equal thoroughness to the small and the great, the practical and the cultural. His chemical papers are numerous and fine. He discussed the origin of the earth, and he improved oil lamps. Yet for all his labors, fame mocked him. The years brought him only bad health and painful infirmities. Broken in body and mind, he sat down in 1826, at the age of sixty-one, to make his will, and because in that act he held true to the ideals which had inspired his life, he gained for himself an immortality which seemed to have escaped him.

James Smithson had never been in the United States. He lived in a day when Englishmen prophesied the collapse of this government; in a day, also, when great philanthropic foundations were rare. Yet he bequeathed, subject to the life interest of his nephew, his entire estate of half a million dollars "to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

Smithson died in 1829, but the estate did not revert

<sup>1</sup> Address of the chancellor of the Smithsonian Institution at a meeting called to consider plans for the extension of the work of the institution, held in Washington on February 11, 1927.



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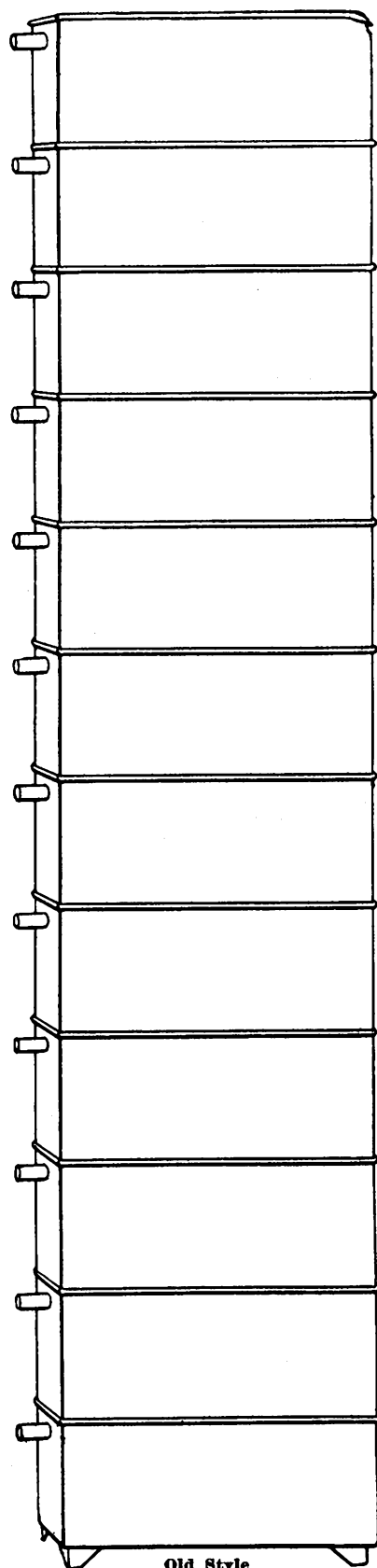
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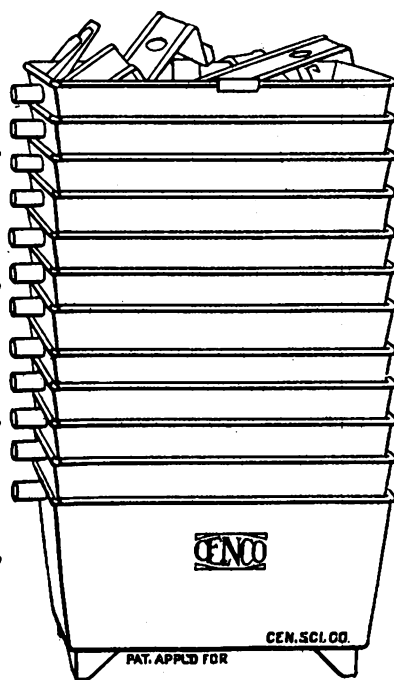
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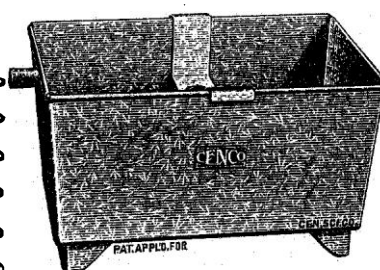
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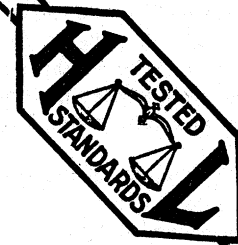
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