do not show that the writer of the critique is, or ever was, a member of this society, or that he ever has contributed of his time, effort or money to its upbuilding. Most of the workers in crop plant genetics, in which this critic is engaged, are active members of the American Society of Agronomy. The question naturally occurs as to why a complete outsider should be so concerned about the society and the report of its committee.

(6) "Apparently the agronomists are no longer content to permit the cultured to determine good usage in American speech. Hereafter these matters are to be more democratically decided. The ignorant minority must prevail in language as in politics, and illiteracy is to displace culture."

Probably the American electorate will not be greatly concerned about the above assertion that the "ignorant minority" holds the offices and makes the laws. No more, probably, will American agronomists be concerned that their motives are aspersed, their intelligence derided, and their culture denied. In a previous similar diatribe[4] by this critic a group of university workers was held up to ridicule. They composed the Committee on Social and Economic Welfare of Scientific Men of one division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and were engaged in formulating a code of ethical standards.

It always is an interesting adventure in philosophy to speculate on the influences which so exalt the ego as to produce and motivate these self-appointed monitors. Specifically, what are the educational and cultural backgrounds which led to this assumption of adequacy to speak for a cultured majority against an "ignorant minority"?

May a scientific setting without adequate background sometimes tend toward acute megalomania?

CARLETON R. BALL

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY

REPORTS

THE HARVARD MUSEUMS

ON November 1, 1927, Mr. Samuel Henshaw resigned as director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology after many years of service marked by unflagging industry and self-sacrificing devotion to the fulfilment of his ideals of what the museum should be. He has been very properly appointed director emeritus by the corporation. Thomas Barbour was appointed director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology and of the University Museum.

In his first annual report, Dr. Barbour states that, with the aid of voluntary subscriptions on the part of several friends of the museum, it has been possible to make a number of changes and improvements. By flooring over most of the galleries in the exhibition rooms and by rearranging the exhibition collections a number of new and most commodious laboratories and studies for the staff has been made. This has allowed the expansion and rearrangement of most of the collections of invertebrates and has served to make the research collections much more useful and accessible. Perhaps no collections are now more convenient to investigators. Due allowance has been made for expansion for years to come.

The exhibition rooms have been redecorated and the exhibits in large degree rearranged but as yet only in part relabeled, while great quantities of material unfit either for exhibition or study have been discarded. Several rooms previously devoted to the storage of what might be called obsolete material have been cleared out and are now useful and constantly used laboratories.

The exhibits now consist of:

A hall of marine mammals, chosen to show adaptations to aquatic life of several of the principal mammalian orders.

A synoptic collection of most of the well-known North American birds, using almost entirely material from the Greene-Smith collection. In this room the portrait of Audubon by Healy has been hung, as well as plates from Audubon's elephant folio, contributed by Dr. John C. Phillips and others. The collection illustrating avian architecture is also to be found here.

A room displaying some of the less well-known domesticated animals and specimens selected to show variation under domestication, Mendelian inheritance, albinism, melanism, etc.

A large room devoted to marine faunal associations, selected types from the deep sea, the Gulf Stream and other oceanic environmental areas.

A room devoted to birds and mammals characteristic of Australia, Madagascar and other insular faunae.

The Indo-Asiatic room is essentially unchanged, except that the material is rearranged and, thanks to Dr. Theodore Lyman, a beautiful case has been built for the two superb tigers.

The South American room and the African room each contain some new material, while the old North American room has been rearranged as a Holarctic room, the Holarctic area being more truly a single zoological entity.

[4] J. H. Kempton, "Scientors Appear in the Southwest," SCIENCE, n. s., 66 (1711): 354–355, October 14, 1927.

It has been felt that the characteristics of these geographic areas can best be illustrated by the use of mammals and birds, so that but few invertebrates and no fishes or reptiles have been used in these displays.

The great systematic mammal hall has been considerably rearranged and plate glass has been substituted for the older small panes in many cases.

In the gallery of this hall an entirely new synoptic collection of birds has been selected to show the principal representative types of the several groups with their skeletons in many cases. Mr. Griscom has prepared excellent descriptive labels for each family.

The old hall devoted to corals has been entirely rearranged as an Alexander Agassiz Memorial Coral Reef room, in which Mr. George Agassiz has placed a tablet with this wording:

To
ALEXANDER AGASSIZ
1835–1910
who developed this museum
founded by his father
and
who devoted much of the latter portion
of
a varied and preeminent
scientific career
to the study of Coral Reefs and their faunae
this room is dedicated

Here are to be found the beautiful models of the coral islands, Borabora and Funafuti, and a selection of fish and invertebrates characteristic of the coral reefs.

In one room, by assembling all the mounted reptiles formerly scattered about in several exhibits, it has been possible to make a reasonably adequate synoptic collection of reptiles and a less adequate synopsis of the amphibia. No alcoholic reptiles remain on exhibition.

The same thing has been done with respect to the fishes. By this means it has been possible to remove all the myriad bottles of shrunken and discolored alcoholic fishes from exhibition. The species formerly exhibited have been discarded and those which were valuable have gone to the study collection.

The last hall of this floor is devoted to a carefully selected synoptic series of all the invertebrate groups. Since nearly every member of the staff joined in selecting types for this collection it is probably unrivaled for completeness and is especially adapted to the use of undergraduates taking the introductory courses in zoology.

The paleontological collections are still in process of rearrangement and much new vertebrate material, useful for teaching, will be installed during the next few months. In the meantime these collections are as yet only in part open to the public. When completed the most striking exhibit will be the Pleistocene group from the Argentine Pampas. This will consist of three of the large ground sloths, a glyptodon and toxodon. They are all perfect specimens and no restoration of any part has been made. Other noteworthy exhibits will include a group of saber-tooth tigers, two of them complete skeletons, the large collection of Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Tertiary fish, and a nearly complete specimen of *Dinichthys terrelli* now being reconstructed. There will be a systematic invertebrate room in which the collections of trilobites and cephalopods are particularly complete.

SPECIAL ARTICLES

A DETERMINATION OF THE ATOMIC WEIGHT OF NITROGEN OCCLUDED IN FERGUSONITE

IN 1890, while working on the occurrence of nitrogen in uraninite, Hillebrand[1] made complete analyses of many samples of the mineral. From the data furnished, it is interesting to calculate the strikingly constant ratio between nitrogen and uranium oxide (UO_2) in the various samples. That Hillebrand was aware of this constant ratio is made evident by a brief reference to it in the article cited; however, he attempted no explanation of it.

Calculations made on uraninite from Norway:

Place	% N	% UO_2	Ratio N/UO_2
Annerod	1.23	48.25	.0255
Elvestad (a)	1.28	50.97	.0251
Elvestad (b)	1.28	50.83	.0252
Skraatorp	1.05	44.57	.0236
Huggenaskilen	1.08	43.56	.0248
Arendal	1.26	44.71	.0282

Because of the constancy of the ratio shown here, it occurred to us that there might be some relation between the origin of the nitrogen and the other elements present.

The periodic table was examined, and it was observed that there was a possibility for a relationship between potassium and nitrogen, potassium undoubtedly being one of the radioactive elements.

So far none of the alkali metals have been found to emit α-particles; however, it may be that α-particles are emitted but are too slow for detection. At any rate, R. J. Strutt[2] found that several beryls had a helium content far greater than that expected from the

[1] U. S. Geo. Sur. Bull., 78: 43, 1891.

[2] *Proc. Roy. Soc.*, A, 80: 587, 1908.