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INTERNATIONAL CHEMISTRY¹

CONTENTS	
International Chemistry: Professor Austin M. Patterson	531
The Formal Opening of Darwin's House at Down: DR. HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN	536
Scientific Events:	
Research Reserves in the National Forests; Expedition for the Study of Gorillas; The Aeronautic Meeting at St. Louis; The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Carnegie Institution of Washington; The Non-resident Lectureship in Chemistry of Cornell University	538
Scientific Notes and News	541
University and Educational Notes	544
Discussion:	
The Fall Zone Peneplane: Dr. Henry S. Sharp. Mortensen's Cidaroidea: Dr. Robert Tracy Jackson. Cosmos Unlimited: Professor J. G. Porter. Chemical Training: Professor Marion Talbot	544
Special Correspondence:	
Opportunities for Research Offered at the Biological Laboratories of the Bureau of Fisheries: HENRY O'MALLEY	547
Scientific Books:	
Freeman on Hydraulic Laboratory Practice: Dr. Herbert N. Eaton	549
Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:	
An Improved Thermopile Vessel for the Electrometric Determination of the Volume Flow of Blood; An Enclosed Drop Method of Recording Volume Flow of Fluids by Oil Displacement: Professor Robert Gesell	550
Special Articles:	
Loveland Loess—Pre-Illinoian, Pre-Iowan in Age: Dr. Frank Leverett. On the Rotatory Power of Serum: Dr. P. Lecomte du Noüy. Inheritance in Lettuce: Dr. Charles E. Durst	551
The National Academy of Sciences	554
Science News	x

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Scientists have always been internationally minded. Roger Bacon spent many years in Paris. Copernicus, a native of Poland, lived in several Italian cities. Robert Boyle's winter in Florence appears to have given him his initial interest in science. In the last century, as the result of Liebig's initiative, students from all countries migrated to the chemical laboratories of Germany. In times of peace, at least, seekers for truth have paid little heed to political boundaries but have gone to sit at the feet of the masters. wherever they might happen to be. Moreover, in earlier times the savants of different countries were eager to meet and to hear from one another's lips the descriptions of new discoveries. The Royal Society of London, which was founded in 1660 at the suggestion of a German residing in that city, from the beginning adopted a policy of hospitality to all nations. One of its first fellows was a foreigner, another was the first secretary, and the foreign correspondence of the society led to its well-known journal, the Philosophical Transactions.

Time has brought changes. None but the students in backward nations need travel abroad to receive good scientific instruction. A multitude of books; and periodicals bring us far more information than any one person has time to read. Strong national organizations have sprung up for science in general, for individual sciences, for specialties in each science. Of these, chemistry has its full share. To-day we are seeking in international intercourse not so much news and instruction, although that still has its place, as some effective means of coordination. It is as if we had built separately, with constant interchange of plans, important scattered units, which still need to be tied together into a common structure.

Briefly, what can international organizations hope to accomplish? It seems to me that their possibilities for good lie chiefly in two directions: first, carrying out projects which smaller organizations can not undertake successfully; and second, promoting a great number of personal contacts between individuals of different countries.

Permit me to sketch for you the main developments in international chemistry in the last forty years. In 1889 an International Congress of Chemistry was held at Paris in connection with the exposition of that

1 Presented before the Cincinnati Section American Chemical Society on March 13, 1929.

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