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SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND SOCIAL RELATIONS¹

By B. E. SCHAAR

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

WITH rare exceptions, society owes a tremendous debt to science. The exceptions are concerned wholly with misapplications of the results of scientific discovery and not with the discoveries themselves.

The immediate task of the worker in pure science, and the term is used with full recognition of the fact that there is no sharp line of demarcation between pure and applied science, is the discovery of new principles, including very broadly in that term fundamental laws, atoms, molecules and their relations to one another and greater refinement of existing knowledge of those subjects. His concern is primarily with the advancement of knowledge *per se*, with satisfying his own curiosity regarding the nature of things, usually with no thought to the practical purposes to which his work may be applied nor to monetary con-

¹ Address as retiring chairman of the Chicago Section of The American Chemical Society, September 23, 1932. sideration. The worker in applied science, on the other hand, finds himself concerned with application of known principles to the production of commodities which are to be marketed, consequently, also very broadly and with many exceptions his ultimate goal is profit either to himself or to his employer.

The chemist has been able to make a much greater contribution to the welfare of mankind than other scientific men, because his field is fundamental, dealing with matter in its endless variety. Although it is hardly necessary before a group of chemists to mention specifically many of the countless examples where the influence of the chemist is felt either directly or indirectly, some few may be cited in order to indicate the present relation of the chemist to society. These may be grouped broadly into two classes, the first including substances which are utilized directly by the body, such as foods, drugs, cosmetics, etc., and the

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