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The Neuro-embryologic Study of Behavior: PROFESSOR G. E. COGHILL 131

Scientific Events:

The International Ornithological Congress; The First Ten Years of the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station; The Cost of German Medical and Scientific Periodicals; The Financial Situation of the Department of Agriculture; The Chicago Meeting of the American Chemical Society 138

Scientific Notes and News 141

Discussion:

The University of California Botanical Garden Expedition to Western China and Tibet: DR. T. H. GOODSPEED. *Sodium Tetrathionate and Methylene Blue in Cyanide and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:* DR. JOHN H. DRAIZE. *The Occurrence of Isodes auritus Neum. in North America (Oregon):* DR. C. B. PHILIP. *Protective Amputation of Limbs by Stagomantis Carolina:* DR. C. C. GUTHRIE 144

Special Correspondence:

The Races of Mankind: HENRY FIELD 146

Reports:

The Long Beach Earthquake: H. O. WOOD; J. P. BUWALDA; PROFESSOR R. R. MARTEL 147

Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:

A Method of Mounting Maps: VINCENT M. THROOP. *A Color Chart for Geneticists:* DR. EDGAR ANDERSON 149

Special Articles:

A Group of Chemicals Active in Increasing Tissue Permeability and Enhancing Certain Infectious Processes: DR. ALBERT CLAUDE. *A Phytophthora Disease of Snapdragons:* DR. M. R. HARRIS 151

Science News 6

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THE NEURO-EMBRYOLOGIC STUDY OF BEHAVIOR: PRINCIPLES, PERSPECTIVE AND AIM¹

By Professor G. E. COGHILL

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EMBRYOLOGY as a scientific method arose in the domain of morphology. Although there were early physiological and chemical observations upon the embryo, these were relatively casual. It was in the interest of explaining the structure of the animal body that embryology acquired a technique of its own and attained to the dignity of a biological science. Embryology as a growing science, however, is now through and through physiological. Witness, for example, the experimental schools of Spemann, of Harrison, of Child, and the tomes of Needham on "Chemical Embryology." Embryology has in fact gone afield to explore every nook and cranny, every crook and turn of the developing organism experimentally, physiologically, chemically; and even the problem of animal behavior is now being attacked by numerous investigators with the method of this

originally morphological science. It is this latter field of investigation that engages our attention at this time.

The behavior of embryos is not of exclusively recent interest. Movements of snails within the egg were studied by Swammerdam; mussels and oysters, by Leeuwenhoek (1695). Even earlier than this (1651) William Harvey gave an account of movements of the chick during the early days of incubation. After Harvey, however, a century elapsed before the next important contribution was made on the movements of the chick embryo. This was by Beguelin (1757), to whom is accredited the notable accomplishment of keeping the embryo alive in the opened egg for fifteen days. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century, von Baer (1828) experimented upon the sensitivity and contractility of the fetal membranes of the chick, although it remained for Vulpian (1857) to establish the distinction between

¹ Address of the president of the American Association of Anatomists, Cincinnati, April 13, 1933.

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