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Letters

Francisco Duran-Reynals

The genuinely admirable qualities that characterized the career and personality of the late Francisco Duran-Reynals have been captured adroitly in the beautifully drawn portrait by C. C. Little [*Science* 129, 881 (1959)]. I should like to add still another word in appreciation of Francisco Duran-Reynals, focusing upon a particular aspect of his life.

Francisco loved young people. Many of us came to know this as Jackson Laboratory summer students—even in fields far removed from microbiology. It was a common practice for scientists associated with the laboratory to give talks to the students, and Francisco's lectures were of particularly high quality. Informative and wonderfully lucid, they had an incisive logic and stylistic beauty that made us strain to hear every word.

It seems that he gave to these talks the same type of weighty consideration that would mark preparation of an address to a body of distinguished scholars. One could infer this, of course, from listening to him, but we acquired other evidence. For example, he and his lovely wife frequently invited us to "painting parties" at their house overlooking Bar Harbor. One Sunday afternoon when we came to fetch him, he was in his study and did not want to be disturbed. He was to talk to us the next morning, and we learned that he was terribly worried, lest it not be a success. He had been brooding over the lecture material all day.

When he emerged much later in the afternoon, I remember him taking me aside and commenting with warmth about the beauty of *Pheure exquisite*—the hour before sundown which he loved so well. And, knowing of my own love for sunsets, he suggested I not despair at my impending return to New York City: Manhattan had sunsets, too; it was just that sometimes the tall buildings get in the way.

This consideration for us and our feelings became apparent in other ways, too. On the occasion of an important meeting in New York, some of us came to hear him, and lingering on somewhat gingerly at the end of the session, we wondered whether he would remember us and debated whether or not to greet him. But he spied us. Hurriedly excusing himself from eminent colleagues who had surrounded him, he rushed up the aisle, threw his arms around us, and, launching into exuberant conversation, shepherded us out of the hall. (How many of us today give so much *disinterested* attention?)

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Russell W. Bunting, School of Dentistry, University of Michigan.

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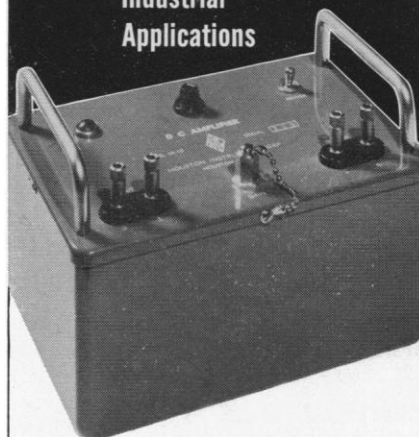
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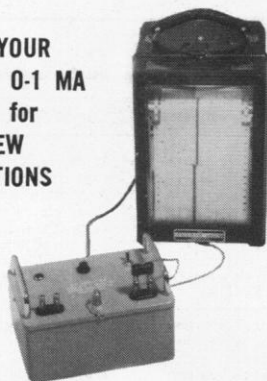
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I do not know the extent of his lecturing at Yale. I do know that Francisco Duran-Reynals was a great teacher and a wonderful human being.

MICHAEL KAPLAN
*Experimental Psychology Laboratory,
Creedmoor Institute for Psychobiologic
Studies, Queens Village, New York*

Balance in Cultivated Ecosystems

In their very interesting article on "Acrolein for the control of water weeds and disease-carrying water snails" [*Science* 129, 335 (1959)], Overbeek *et al.* describe their experiments in ridding irrigation ditches of water weeds and fresh-water snails by the addition of small amounts of acrolein to the irrigation water. They state, "Treated water, when used for irrigation, did not harm crops. Further studies, on possible acrolein residues in crops and on the toxicity of treated water with respect to farm animals, are being made."

It is reassuring to know that attention is being given to possible toxicity to human beings and farm animals. It would be interesting to know, further, if any studies are contemplated on the effect of this treated water on the soil microbiota in the land that is being irrigated. Soil scientists reiterate constantly the importance of the soil fauna and flora in the development and maintenance in good condition of soils. It would be disastrous indeed to discover, after a few years of ditch-cleaning with this highly toxic substance, that the essential soil biota had been destroyed and that permanent or long-term impairment of large areas of irrigated soils had taken place.

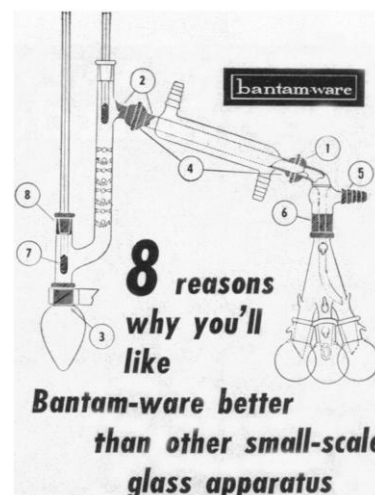
Ecologists interested in the maintenance of a healthy balance in cultivated ecosystems should be much concerned about matters of this sort.

F. R. FOSBERG
Falls Church, Virginia

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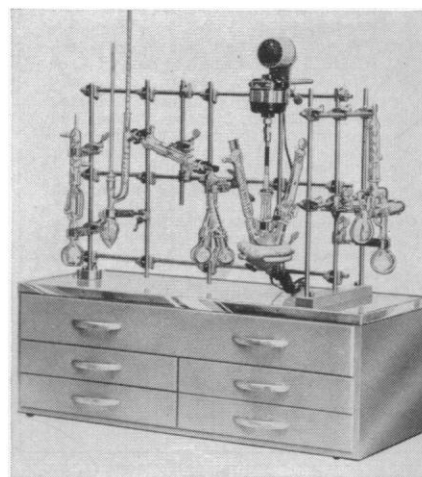
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