

SCIENCE.

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TO OUR READERS.

AFTER a brief period of suspension this journal again appears, greeting its readers with the compliments of the season. The interest in its future which has been shown in various quarters during the past few months, convinces its editorial staff that there is room for a journal devoted to the promotion of intercourse among those inter-

ested in the study of nature. The separation of our investigators around many widely separated centres, and the consequent lack of communication between them, increases the necessity of such a journal, as well as the difficulty of adapting it to the wants of all classes of subscribers. The experience of centuries shows that great success in advancing scientific knowledge cannot be expected even from the most gifted men, so long as they remain isolated. The attrition of like minds is almost as necessary to intellectual production as companionship is to conversation. In saying this I am not unmindful that such men as Copernicus, Kepler and Leibnitz were little stimulated by the companionship of other minds while thinking out their great works. But if the age for discoveries of the kind which these men made is not past, it is certain that work of the kind they did can be repeated only once in many generations. What other and less fortunate investigators have to do is to develop ideas, investigate facts, and discover laws. The commencement of this work of development on a large scale, and with brilliant success, was coeval with the formation of the Royal Society of London and the Academy of Sciences of France. When these bodies came together their members began to talk and to think. How imperfectly they thought, and how little they knew the way to learn, is shown more fully by the history of their debates and by the questions discussed at their

meetings than by anything contained in the ponderous volumes of their transactions.

At the present day one of the aspects of American science which most strikes us is the comparative deficiency of the social element. We have indeed numerous local scientific societies, many of which are meeting with marked success. But these bodies cannot supply the want of national coöperation and communication. The field of each is necessarily limited, and its activities confined to its own neighborhood. We need a broader sympathy and easier communication between widely separated men in every part of the country. Our journal aims to supply the want of such a medium, and asks the aid of all concerned in making its efforts successful. It will have little space for technicalities which interest only the specialist of each class, and will occupy itself mostly with those broader aspects of thought and culture which are of interest not only to scientific investigators, but to educated men of every profession. A specialist of one department may know little more of the work of a specialist in another department than does the general reader. Hence, by appealing to the interests of the latter, we do not neglect those of the scientific profession. At the same time, it is intended that the journal shall be much more than a medium for the popularization of science. Underlying the process of specialization which is so prominent a feature of all the knowledge of our time there is now to be seen a tendency toward unification, a development of principles which connect a constantly increasing number of special branches. The meeting of all students of nature in a single field thus becomes more and more feasible, and in promoting intercourse among all such students SCIENCE hopes to find a field for its energies, in which it may invite the support of all who sympathize with its aim. S. NEWCOMB.

WASHINGTON.

SCRIPTORIBUS ET LECTORIBUS, SALUTEM.

EVERYBODY interested in SCIENCE knows what it ought to be, bright, varied, accurate, fresh, comprehensive, adapted to many men of many minds; a newspaper, in fact, planned for those who wish to follow a readable record of what is in progress throughout the world, in many departments of knowledge. It is not the place for 'memoirs,' but for 'pointers;' not for that which is so technical that none but a specialist can read it; not for controversies, nor for the advancement of personal interests, nor for the riding of hobbies. It should not be maintained for the dominant advantage of any profession, institution or place. Wordiness is inappropriate; so, on the other hand, are figures and symbols, unless they are indispensable. Reviews, summaries, preliminary announcements, descriptions, extracts, correspondence, reports of meetings, biographies, should all find a place; but they must be put in the right sort of phrases and paragraphs. 'There's the rub.' Who is to collect, prepare, revise and set forth these accounts of what is going on in the wide domains of investigation? Money helps to secure such articles, but the work must be done 'for love and not for money.' Altruism is called for, the willingness, if not the desire, on the part of scientific workers, even in the very highest classes, to contribute prompt, brief, readable, trustworthy reports of what is going on, with fitting comments.

Scientific men have rarely the editorial instincts or aptitudes, like those of the editors of *Nature*, the *Popular Science Monthly*, the *Journal of Science*. Caution, close attention to details, precise expressions, are indeed theirs, but readiness to collect and impart news, and ability to make use of the phraseology of common life, are often wanting. There are noteworthy exceptions among men of the first rank. Dr. Asa Gray, the botanist, could say what he had

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S. NEWCOMB

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