The Claims of Science

The Congress of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Sydney, to which a good deal of our space has already been devoted during the past few days, is an event of interest not only to the inhabitants of New South Wales but to the people of other parts of the world. The Congress has been able to attract a number of distinguished scientists from various parts of the world, and its proceedings have been a source of great pleasure and enlightenment to all who have attended.

Although in theory a distinction is properly maintained between the various branches of science, universal experience affords countless instances of the merging of the one into the other. In the case of the Congress, it has been found necessary to set a limit to what is practical in science and what is not. Some of the most outstanding achievements of the Congress of the last hundred years have been due to the experimental work of biologists in the laboratories, brought into operation by the use of the new tools developed by biologists. The Congress has already reached an advanced stage of development. It was the labors of Steinbeck and his co-workers that established the principles of the theory of evolution, and the requirement of these investigations has been to show how the results of research can be applied to the practical needs of science.

For the general encouragement of science, or more properly speaking the co-operation of sciences, the need of a free and unobstructed application of human knowledge or human industry might be cited to show the results of research can be applied to the practical needs of science.

In the case of the scientific application of knowledge, there are a number of instances where the results of research have been applied to the practical needs of science.

Against the usefulness of our universities, it should be noted that the way in which we have been accustomed to think and act is very limited.

The two distinct spots, or may be, parallel movements, which can be discernible in the educational world, there is an increasing disposition so to grade the steps of scientific knowledge.

In this way a growing desire is manifested for the establishment of a higher uniformity in the educational system, both in its general and in its particular stages that are reached.

As an important and perhaps a guiding force, operating both here and abroad, the problem of education is plain in all classes of the community. In this respect something approaching a revolution has taken place. A wide departure from former ideals is one of its results.

The action of those who called the three K's was an efficient body for the average subject of primary education has long been abandoned. It is true that no self-respecting person will now quote with approval Pope's famous line, which was once regarded as a maxim—"The man who is a failure in education is a dangerous thing." The further extension, "Dirt, deep, or taste, not," is a direction in the right line, and direct contradiction to the older maxim that knowledge is power. Finally in this connection, the speaker touched on the need for the University to be used solely for the benefit of the community, and not to be made a step in the progress of science. Education has to a large extent been demystified, so to speak, and the present day is still very much in the hands of the University. But the exclusive heritage of those who were born with the proverbial silver spoon in their mouths is one of the conditions that have led to the present condition of things. Accidents of birth have the effect of variously hindering or facilitating the education of children. Modifications of educational systems have, as their general effect, the lessening, not the increasing, of the advantage that is given by the capity and talent may have a better chance. Possibly an incidental effect has been to make it more apparent to us the utility of education, to which Professor Orme Mason referred at the Science Congress, and the consequences when compared with the previous system would make it more apparent to us the utility of education.