BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

By J. SCOTT MacNUTT.

The youngest of the professional societies at the Institute, the Biological Society, has good reason to be proud of the continued growth and prosperity which it has enjoyed since its founding a little over two years ago. An informal dinner held in the Union in December, 1907, by students and instructors in Courses VII, XI and V, suggested the need of a permanent society to plan and carry on such meetings. A society was therefore formally organized Jan. 7, 1908, and held its first regular dinner Feb. 19. From the very first, the interest shown by students and instructors in the Departments of Biology, Chemistry and Sanitary Engineering indicated that a real social need had been filled. At the first dinner, Professor W. T. Sedgwick, Head of the Department of Biology, addressed the Society on "The Outlook for Biology and Sanitary Engineering in the Twentieth Century." At the second dinner a thoroughly enjoyable lecture was given by Mr. Wm. Lyman Underwood on "Canoe and Camera in the Wilds of New Brunswick," illustrated by remarkable colored views. The first term of the Society's activity closed with an illustrated lecture on "Typhoid Fever" by Mr. Geo. C. Whipple, I, '89, the prominent consulting sanitary engineer. This was the occasion of the first public presentation of the diagrams and other substance of his then just completed and now well-known book, "Typhoid Fever."

The above speakers and subjects are fairly representative of the varied and interesting meetings which the Society enjoys. The object in arranging the social meetings, which are always made the occasion of dinners, is two-fold: to give members and their friends opportunities to hear informally prominent biologists and sanitarians, and men from various branches of professional life related in any way to the work of the Department of Biology, and, also, to provide evenings of good fellowship and recreation

The Biological Society, though primarily intended to promote interest in the subjects of biology and sanitation, at the same time ranges over a wide field of professional interest and attracts men from many directions. This follows naturally from the fact that a considerable number of men from other departments take courses in Biology. There is a large and growing membership of men from the Department of Sanitary Engineering, and the Chemistry Department is well represented.

In addition, there are a number of associate members from other courses who are attracted by the entertainments and the chances to hear good speakers on subjects of general and professional interest. By drawing a considerable number of its members from outside of the Department, the Society has, without detracting from the interest due the other professional societies, provided a common meeting ground for men of related courses and interests, and has also grown to be very enjoyable cosmopolitan in character.

No more is needed to show the prosperity and spirit of the Biological Society than the recent banquet on the occasion of Professor Sedgwick's departure for six months in Europe. Addresses by prominent men, guests of the Society, from both within and without the Institute walls, music by the Society "Philharmonic" orchestra, and a clever vaudeville, were received enthusiastically by a gathering of over one hundred men. On this occasion the Society presented to Professor Sedgwick a gift to accompany its "Au-Revoir," a handsome pair of field glasses.

The Society now has a membership of 50, and the officers for the term are as follows: President, G. T. Palmer, VII, '09; Secretary, J. H. O'Neill, XI, '10; and Treasurer, W. F. Wells, VI, '10.

Looking back on a two years' career which has proved in every way entertaining and profitable, the Society beholds the prospect of ever-increasing interest and growth in the Departments of Chemistry, Sanitary Engineering, and Biology.

GENERAL BIOLOGY

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who cannot pursue biological work further, but desires to gain a general insight into this field of science. It is somewhat strange that biology should not be required of all students of the Institute, as are the companion sciences of chemistry and physics. No study can have a broader cultural value than one which deals with the relation between the living and teh non-living world, with the problems of organization and the division of labor, as manifested in the living machine, with the inter-relations of competing and co-operating individuals, and the gradual unfolding of the organic world in the great process of evolution. Nor can any science boast so direct and vital an application to the practical conduct of life, which is the ultimate aim of education.

Theoretical Biology. The course in Theoretical Biology is given to students in Course VII. in the fourth year, in order to bring them in touch with the more important phases of advancing research in biological theory. It is designed to give an intelligent comprehension of the general trend of present-day research, such as a biologist in any field should possess, and to interest the exceptional man in the pursuit of investigation for its own sake. In the first term attention is devoted chiefly to the individual organism. The physical and chemical bass of protoplasmic action are discussed, modern theories of response are reviewed and considerable attention is given to the problems of development, regeneration and regulation in general. Correlation and variation are the last subjects considered in the first half of the course. In the second half year all the time is devoted to the evolutionary process. The work of Darwin and his percursors is described, the evidence for organic evolution is reviewed in detail, and the newer theories of species formation, under the influence of various external and internal factors, are discussed.

GRADUATE LETTERS

Some twenty years ago I had to decide what course to select in pursuing knowledge. I decided on chemistry and got a good start along that line when one day I happened to go over to this Biological Laboratory to consult with Prof. Sedgwick about my eyes, with which I was having some trouble. (The reason I went was because Prof. Sedgwick in his talk to freshmen gave them to understand that he would be glad to give free advice to the halt and blind.) The strangest thing about it all was that after I was properly fitted to glasses I could see Biology in larger letters than Chemistry—so this change of heart came with the change in vision—a larger horizon as it were, and I made the transfer.

Course VII under Professor Sedgwick and largely through his personality and association has done much for me in a general way. I have felt and shall feel through life that it was our very greatest privilege to have been under his guidance and to have felt his broad influence and truth seeking spirit.

SIMEON C. KEITH, JR.

The value of my course at Technology is not confined to the instruction that it afforded in the specific subjects undertaken. Of immensely greater value is the knowledge that it imparted of how to observe and to learn. The work that I am following is, nearly all respects, entirely foreign to that pursued at the Institute. Less than 10 per cent of the required subjects in Course VII. are at present of direct utility, yet if I were to direct the course of a young man for the engineering profession, I would place him under the influence of the broad ideals of instruction in Course VII.

After all, the real problem is to teach the student how to study, to observe, and to think logically. Give him these factors as a basis and he will readily absorb the details of any specialty and, morever, will absorb them in a far more purposeful way than he possibly could if his course of study were confined entirely to ready-made details.

GRADUATE LETTERS

The training which I received in the Biological Department of the Mass. Institute of Technology has been a constant advantage to me in later work.

It served as an excellent preliminary education for a medical course at John Hopkins' University, and since then has been especially valuable in the particular field of medical research that I now am engaged in. My energies at present are directed towards determining underlying causes and methods of treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and chronic joint diseases; and the fundamental principles of biology, physiology, chemistry and bacteriology which were taught in the biological course at the Institute have been the greatest service in interpreting the obscure and confusing variety of symptoms and manifestations that are met with in these poorly understood diseases.

Very sincerely yours,
HERMAN W. MARSHALL.

My Dear Professor Sedgwick:—

In reply to your letter of March 1st, I wish to say that I couldn't have filled my position successfully had it not been for the all-round character of the Institute training.

The body of information in the courses offered has always been of practical use, in suggesting resources for subsequent work. The admirable co-relation of subjects in Course VIII intensified, for me, the interest in each course, because it enabled me to approach it from a broader point of view. The laboratory and other manual work that paralleled the lecture, class-room and reference exercises gave me a "know how" not to be acquired in any other way, and, best of all, I have learned patience with hard work and faith in its efficacy when cheerfully and honestly done.

Sincerely yours,
ANNA B. GALLUP,
Children's Museum, Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.