

include lines of equal annual change in blue. The extreme values of the annual change in D are met with on the Canadian border on the Atlantic coast, where westerly declination has an annual increase of 6', and in the S.W. in Texas and California, where easterly declination has an annual increase of 3'. Inclination is increasing as much as 7' a year in the extreme south of Florida, whereas in the extreme north, on both the Atlantic and Pacific shores, it shows an annual fall of 1'. H is falling throughout the whole of the United States, the annual decrease varying from 10γ in the extreme north to 120γ in the extreme south. The volume contains a great mass of magnetic information in a convenient form.

C. CHREE.

Directions for a Practical Course in Chemical Physiology. By Prof. W. Cramer. Third edition. Pp. viii + 119. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917.) Price 3s. net.

"THE text of this edition is (apart from a few verbal alterations) identical with that of the second edition. The changes in the external appearance of the book have been made with the object of keeping the price as far as possible at its former level." So runs the preface, and that being so, any extended notice of this book is unnecessary. The second edition was fully reviewed in NATURE for March 25, 1915, and we then took occasion to point out what we conceived to be its defects. These defects still remain, but, in spite of them, the work has been a success, seeing that a new edition has been necessary after so short an interval.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

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Reconstruction Problems and the Duty of Science.

It is sufficiently obvious that the problems of reconstruction following the war will tax the intelligence and good will of mankind to the utmost. It is also certain that mistakes made during this period will have more serious consequences than similar errors in a period of less social plasticity. By the same token, wise moves will produce greater and more permanent good. Never before, perhaps, has the obligation to choose between good and evil been quite so insistent, or the danger of a wrong choice quite so perilous.

Already we observe several groups of people preparing to deal with this situation. Their methods are diverse, and their aims more or less conflicting. Upton Sinclair sends us the first number of a new periodical, devoted to social justice. Yesterday I attended a meeting in which college students were invited to consider the ethics of Jesus as a foundation for the new democracy. The speaker spent some time in explaining to us that the movement, which is a national one, was neither pacifist nor pro-German. Business men, we read in the papers, are inviting the Germans to consider the conditions under which it will be possible to resume commercial relations. All these move-

ments, and others, invite public discussion, and are beneficial to that extent at least. Underlying the Christian and Socialist propaganda is the entirely right feeling that mankind must agree on some system of ethics, some basic philosophy, which will make for co-operation and human welfare. It is possible that there is more than one such system which would fairly serve our purpose; but it is certain that we must, in the main, agree. The very existence of democracy implies some such agreement, and its failures result from the partial lack of it.

So far, I think scientific men can reasonably, indeed enthusiastically, go with the religious and radical groups. We are all seeking an absolutely necessary basis for conduct. Yet at this point, where we seem unanimous, grave possibilities of conflict arise. The scientific man is obliged to ask: What will be the consequences of the doctrines we propose to adopt, and how will they harmonise with general law? There was a time when it was generally agreed that illness was due to evil spirits, and in a certain sense the facts were as postulated. Yet the total ignorance of the nature of those "spirits," of bacteria, left man in a very defenceless position. Nature penalised him, and she always does, for his ignorance, not asking whether he "ought" to have known. So it must always be, and mere good intentions or pious motives, without wisdom, avail us nothing. They may avail less than nothing if they create an impression that our problems have been met, when they have only been evaded. This is clearly seen by the ablest representatives of most movements, but not so clearly by a large portion of the rank and file. It is because it is so easy to allow emotion to crowd out intellect, and then to lead it to waste its energies in uninformed sentimentalism, that unpatriotic motives have sometimes been ascribed to those whose love of their country and their fellows was actually keener than ordinary. Such injustice is naturally resented; but it remains a fact that there are many who for various reasons are particularly interested in preventing the great volume of hope and good will from turning the wheels of reform. To such all ineffective efforts afford "aid and comfort."

While the scientific fraternity, thus confronted with a perplexing situation, is making up its mind how to act, what may be considered a perfect manifesto on its behalf has come from an unexpected source. The *New Republic* of February 16 prints the report on reconstruction by the Sub-committee of the British Labour Party. The concluding passage of that report reads as follows:—

"The Labour Party is far from assuming that it possesses a key to open all locks, or that any policy which it can formulate will solve all the problems that beset us. But we deem it important to ourselves, as well as to those who may, on one hand, wish to join the party, or, on the other, to take up arms against it, to make quite clear and definite our aim and purpose. The Labour Party wants that aim and purpose, as set forth in the preceding pages, with all its might. It calls for more warmth in politics, for much less apathetic acquiescence in the miseries that exist, for none of the cynicism that saps the life of leisure. On the other hand, the Labour Party has no belief in any of the problems of the world being solved by good will alone. Good will without knowledge is warmth without light. Especially in all the complexities of politics, in the still undeveloped science of society, the Labour Party stands for increased study, for the scientific investigation of each succeeding problem, for the deliberate organisation of research, and for a much more rapid dissemination among the whole people of all the science that exists. And it is perhaps specially the Labour Party that has the duty of placing this