

where Professor Nutting saw it. I observed the same thing on that evening at Starr's Point, near Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The same great extent of the display was evident, but the brightness was not equal to that described by Professor Nutting. At intervals the display would vanish, to reappear shortly in as great an extent as before. The focus of the aurora seemed to be near the zenith as Professor Nutting describes it.

The aurora was noticed as soon as it was dark, which in that latitude and at that time was about eight P.M., and lasted for two hours at least; how much longer I am unable to say. The color was uniformly a pearly white; no trace of any other tint appeared.

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#### THE SCIENTIFIC APPOINTMENTS OF PRESIDENT WILSON

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In the published discussions of the wisdom of the president's appointments in the so-called scientific bureaus of the government and especially in those regarding his recent choice of a superintendent for the Coast and Geodetic Survey I have seen no reference to one phase of the subject that seems to me to be, at the present time, of the utmost importance.

Great emphasis is now placed by the president and his cabinet on the necessity for "mobilizing" all of the resources of the country, both material and human, so that these resources shall be instantly and completely available for the defense of the country in case such defense shall be called for and extraordinary measures are being resorted to for that purpose.

Those familiar with the work and history of the service will be inclined to think that in the event of an attack by any great power possessed of a strong navy (we are in little danger from any other) the success of our defense will depend in large measure upon the efficiency of the small corps of men constituting the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. These men have an intimate knowledge of our coast in all its vast extent, of all

the avenues of approach, of obstacles that exist and where such may be easily created, and of the topography of a wide strip of land bordering on the sea, possessed by no other body, and in time of war involving naval attack and attempted landing of troops their knowledge will be invaluable. This fact was fully recognized during the civil war of half a century ago and almost from the beginning the regular operations of the survey were suspended that its officers might be detailed to various military operations on the coast. The superintendent himself personally undertook preparations for the defense of the city of Philadelphia.

Military and naval officers everywhere gave unstinted praise to the work of the officers of the Coast Survey, declaring in many instances that without their cooperation important military operations would have been impossible. Under the conditions of modern warfare, when fighting is directed by maps and charts, the enemy being often so far away as to be quite invisible, it is clear that such services as the Coast Survey can render will be immensely more important than they were during the civil war. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that this small but unique group of highly trained experts under proper leadership should be worth more than half a dozen super-dreadnaughts. One may be rash to compare their possible usefulness with that of the recently organized and mobilized aggregation of assorted geniuses from which the president and the country at large are expecting so much, but some knowledge of the work of the officers of the survey during the civil war and a study of the newly developed methods of warfare may justify or excuse such rashness. These facts alone, without considering others, some of which were presented by Dr. Evermann in a recent number of SCIENCE, seem sufficient to account for the surprise and disappointment that were almost universal among those having knowledge of the situation when the president selected as the head of this, the oldest and one of the most important of the scientific bureaus of the government, not one of a considerable number of men who by reason of their reputation and accomplishments are

eminently fitted for the important office, but one who, though personally quite irreproachable, was totally ignorant of the operations of the great organization which he was called upon to direct and whose previous training and experience are such as to leave little hope that he will ever be able to acquire more than a very superficial knowledge of these operations.

The incident, with others of a similar character recently brought into public notice, serves to illustrate the folly of making appointments to places in the government demanding special qualifications for either personal or political reasons. Happily the practise is becoming more infrequent as administrations come and go and the more the people realize its costly and disastrous consequences the sooner it will disappear entirely.

R.

#### THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

IN view of the critical importance of the issues pending before the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, it is important that a general expression of views by college and university professors be available. The issues relate to the privileges of retirement and the proposed provisions for insurance and annuities which the foundation has offered in their place. The report of the Committee on Pensions of the American Association of University Professors will soon be available. A group of influential universities have published replies to the proposals of the foundation. The undersigned has published in *School and Society* (October 7, 1916) a general review of the ten years of activity of the foundation with special reference to the pending issues. These several expressions indicate a general and emphatic opposition to the steps proposed by the foundation; they enter into detailed consideration of the grounds upon which such opposition is based. Upon the basis of these documents individual opinions are desired indicating how far and in what respects the contentions are approved. Statements of general approval and disapproval as well as of specific positions approved or disapproved will be helpful in reaching a fair indication of

the judgment of those interested. Communications should be made promptly.

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#### QUOTATIONS

##### THE BRITISH COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

THE report of the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research for the year 1915-16 has recently been issued. The sum at its disposal for the financial year 1915-16 was £25,000, out of which £4,250 was granted to the Royal Society. For the current financial year 1916-17 the vote was £40,000, and at the close of the academic year a sum not exceeding £8,000 will have been granted to a number of individual research workers, students and others. In an appendix is the first annual report of the advisory council. It consists of Sir William S. McCormick (chairman), Lord Rayleigh, Sir George T. Beilby, Mr. W. Duddell, Professor J. A. McClelland, the Hon. Sir Charles A. Parsons, Professor J. F. Thorpe and Mr. Richard Threlfall. There are three standing committees—on engineering, metallurgy, and mining, respectively. A sketch is given of government action in the present century previous to May, 1915, when the presidents of the boards of trade and education received a deputation from the royal and other learned societies, urging the need for government assistance for scientific research for industrial purposes, and the establishment of closer relations between the manufacturers and scientific workers and teachers. The government scheme was issued a couple of months later, and the special committee of the privy council and the advisory council itself were thereupon set up. The object of both committee and council was to be the establishment of "a permanent organization for the promotion of industrial scientific research." Thus was recognized the necessity for organizing the national brain power in the interests of the nation at peace. War has remained as much an art as ever, but its instruments are now not only forged by the man of science, but they need a scientific training for their effect-