

It is the intention of the Council of the Canadian Institute to arrange for two short courses of public lectures this winter. One of these courses will be scientific, the other literary. What the Council aims at is to perform somewhat the same kind of work as is done by the Royal Institution and some similar societies in London. The Council asks for the cordial assistance of the friends of the Institute in carrying out this scheme, not only on account of the intrinsic desirability of having such courses delivered, but also because it hopes to be able by means of the surplus of receipts over expenses to add to the amount available for improving the museum and library.

I now propose inviting your attention for a short time to some remarks on the relation between progress in physical science and progress in other departments of thought and action. It is of course impossible for me to do justice to so vast a subject, in the time at my disposal, nor do I flatter myself that I could say very much that is new, if I had time, but I have selected this topic for a few inaugural remarks, because discussion of it, however imperfect, will throw more light on the real importance of societies such as the Canadian Institute than anything else which I could say.

It will in the first place be advisable to obtain a clear idea as to what is meant by the word science. Science originally meant knowledge, but now it means something more. A man may know a great deal about some groups of facts, and yet have no scientific knowledge of them. A savage of three-score-and-ten who has spent his life in hunting will have a great knowledge of animals, but not a scientific knowledge. An accumulation of knowledge becomes a science when it is brought into order by the discovery of great general statements that enable us to arrange the facts, or by the discovery of the laws of certain phenomena. The savage whom I have just mentioned would come to have a scientific knowledge of zoology, if he became able to arrange the animals he knew in certain classes. In proportion as knowledge becomes systematized it becomes science.

In the next place what is meant by physical as distinguished from other science? The physical sciences are those which deal with the material universe; mental and moral science deal with the spiritual universe. The term natural science is now often used as synonymous with physical science. Originally it meant something quite different.