

The world's intellectual workers are, from the very nature of their lives of thought and study, separated in some degree from the mass of mankind. They feel however not less than others the need of human sympathy and co-operation, and out of this need have grown academies and learned societies devoted to the cultivation of letters and of science. The records of these bodies in Florence, in Rome, in Paris, in London, and elsewhere, are the records of scientific progress for the last three centuries. Such bodies do not create thinkers and workers, but they give to them a scientific home, a centre of influence, and the means of making known to the world the results of their labors.

It was with a wise forethought that more than a century since Franklin and his friends founded at Philadelphia the American Philosophical Society. Its planting then seemed premature, but its vigorous growth during a century has served to show that the seed was not too early sown. This, however, unlike many of the academies of the old world to which we have adverted, had no formal recognition from the state, and there came a period in the growth of the American Union when the need of an official scientific body was felt. Thus it was that nineteen years ago, in the midst of the great civil war, the American Congress authorized the erection of a National Academy of Sciences to which, as an American citizen, I have the honor to belong. The aim proposed in founding this Academy was to gather together what was best and highest in the scientific life of the nation, and moreover, to organize a body of councillors to which the executive authority could always look for advice and direction in scientific matters relating to the interests of the State. In that Academy—at first consisting of fifty, and now practically limited to one hundred members (a number which it has not yet attained)—the domain of letters is unrepresented; while the Royal Society of London is in like manner,—although scholars and statesmen seek the honors of its fellowship,—essentially an Academy of Sciences.

Our infant organization attempts a larger plan, and embraces with the mathematical and physical sciences, letters, philosophy, and history, imitating the Royal Irish Academy, which, like this, is divided into two classes; that of the Sciences, on the one hand, and that of Polite Literature and Antiquities on the other. The Institute of France, made up of five Academies, embraces the Fine Arts in its still wider scheme. The second class of our Society, with its two sections, aspires to cover the same