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The Neutrality of Science

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The Neutrality of Science

To the Editor of *Metallurgical & Chemical Engineering*

SIR:—Many, many lamentable things have happened in the "World War" which is desolating Europe, but one of the most unexpected, to scientific men, has been the regrettable action taken by the British Iron and Steel Institute, in London, on May 14th last. At the meeting on that date the Council of the Institute put the following resolution before the members present, which was "carried unanimously":

"That the names of all alien enemies be struck off the list of members of the institute, and that steps be taken to amend the by-laws so that they provide for the future that, in the event of war existing between this and other countries, citizens or subjects of which are honorary members or members of this Institute, such honorary members or members shall *ipso facto* cease their membership."

Being a born Englishman, the undersigned may not lightly be charged with anti-British sympathies; being also a member of the Iron and Steel Institute, he may be granted the right to express publicly his disapproval of the above action. But speaking from the broader standpoint of a believer in the international character of science and the salutary saneness of the scientific spirit, he wishes to voice his deep regret that such a dignified Institute, such an honored and honorable society, should stain its annals by an act of such lamentable folly.

In this pandemonium of strife, collapsing of the safeguards of civilization, reversion towards primitive barbarism, where shall the seeds of future peace and harmony be found if the fraternity of scientific brotherhood and mutuality is also swept into the abyss? There must and there will come an "after the war," when reconstruction of the desolated earth will be the common task. Then conquerors and conquered must and will work towards a common end, and then will come the need of mutual co-operation and re-established goodwill. And where could a better starting point be found than in the fraternal bonds of international scientific co-operation?

Alas, our ideals are being shattered and our hopes falter when we contemplate the short-sighted action of the venerable Iron and Steel Institute. All honor to Professor Turner, who raised a protesting voice in the discussion, telling them that they would live to sorely regret their hasty action.

The writer believes that he voices the sentiments of the majority of members of the Iron and Steel Institute in America, in deploring this ill-advised, short-sighted, and altogether regrettable action. He believes, further, that this would be the nearly unanimous view of American scientists in general. The escutcheon has been blotched. Members of the Iron and Steel Institute in Great Britain repent your haste, rescind the action, and wipe out the blot.

Lehigh University.
June 15, 1915.

JOSEPH W. RICHARDS.