

## Carnegie Institution of Washington

### Dedication of Elihu Root Hall

TO foster its programme for the interpretation of scientific research, the Carnegie Institution of Washington dedicated, on December 8 last, a new wing for its administrative building in Washington. The new wing contains a beautiful auditorium, seating nearly 500 people, and also exhibition halls and additional offices.

Mr. Elihu Root, former Secretary of State, Secretary of War and United States Senator, who from 1902 until his death in 1937 served as a member and later as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Institution, was the directing head of the movement to provide funds for the erection of the new wing, and the new hall has been named after him.

Dr. John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who is retiring on December 31 after eighteen years of service, in introducing Sir Richard Gregory to deliver the Elihu Root Lecture on "Cultural Contacts of Science" (see NATURE of December 17, p. 1059), said that the dedication of the Hall marked the realization of a plan which had been in the mind of Mr. Root and before the Board for many years, as furnishing the possibility of better interpretation of researches conducted by the Institution. "This very beautiful auditorium furnishes an unusual environment favourable for presentation of statements concerning research or for discussion of critical problems touching science. Assuming that the programme of Carnegie Institution of Washington will maintain a pace comparable to that of past years, we may expect future decades to note the continuing importance of this auditorium as a place from which there will be an increasingly significant diffusion of knowledge on subjects relating to science and research."

The most striking features of the Elihu Root Hall are the two huge murals which fill the entire sides of the auditorium and depict heroic figures contemplating the world; figures which symbolize the research workers of the Institution surveying the fields of fundamental research. On one wall is the Atlantic Ocean and on the other, the Pacific. By ingenious use of perspective the scenes give the illusion of standing on a high mountain top and looking out over whole continents and oceans.

Notable, too, is the ceiling of the hall, containing large transparencies of the sun and of the moon in eight of its phases. That of the sun represents a combination of two photographs taken with the spectroheliograph, one of the disk in calcium light and showing sunspots, and the other of the limbs in hydrogen light and showing numerous prominences. Those of the moon are reproductions of photographs made at the Newtonian focus of the great 100-inch telescope at Mt. Wilson Observatory.

The acoustics of the hall have been specially designed to incorporate the latest advances in reducing reverberation and in ensuring the optimum acoustical conditions for human hearing. The architect for the new wing and auditorium was Mr. William A. Delano, and Mr. J. Monroe Hewlett painted the murals on the walls of the auditorium.

The opening of the Elihu Root Hall with its exhibition galleries and offices marks a stage in the

development of the two-fold purpose of the Carnegie Institution, namely, the development of natural knowledge by research and its interpretation to as wide a public as possible. The Institution maintains a staff of research workers in Washington and in the field, who present reports from time to time of their work. These reports take the form of papers presented and discussed at conferences, and the trustees of the Institution provide annually for the printing and distribution of such reports to the principal libraries of the world, where the information they contain is available to all who desire it. Thirty-seven Year Books, comprising sixteen thousand pages of summary reports of work in progress, seven hundred and twenty-eight monographs, aggregating more than two hundred thousand pages, and eleven thousand five hundred papers, represents a mass of scientific data prepared by the specialist for the specialist reader.

The other side of the Institution's activities is occupied with the interpretation of these data and the explanation of their significance to the non-technical citizen. This problem has been approached in various ways: through the schools, the press, the exhibition hall, the lecture platform, the radio and the cinematograph. Simply written articles on current advances are prepared and distributed as separates to schools of the secondary type, and bound volumes of such separates are prepared for their libraries. Suitable articles for newspaper use are also sent out, as well as short notes of 'news' character. The annual exhibitions, consisting of exhibits arranged and demonstrated by the research workers responsible for the investigations illustrated, bring home even more vividly to those able to visit them the significance of recent developments.

The public lectures provided by the Institution consist of two distinct series. One of these series is given during the winter and spring months by the members of the staff of the Institution, who deliver general lectures on the progress of investigation in their own particular fields. The other series was established in memory of Mr. Elihu Root, who was much interested in the idea of arranging special lectures upon the influence of science and research upon current thought. The intention of these lectures is to direct attention not only to the development of science but also to its deeper meaning for life and civilization, and to this end leading thinkers of international repute are invited to Washington to deliver their message.

In addition to these formal lectures, the staff of the Institution frequently give lectures to local scientific and other interested bodies.

The Carnegie Institution of Washington, through its research workers, is contributing substantially to the sum of human knowledge and is also providing for the presentation and preservation of the records of their labours. Further, the Institution has attacked, with marked success, the equally important problem of conveying the import of current scientific developments to a wider public, on the knowledge and understanding of whom depends the future of civilization itself.