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THE SCRIPPS INSTITUTION

I hope that you will take me literally when I tell you that I have found the preparation of even this brief account of the Scripps Institution to be a task of extreme difficulty. For it may surprise some of you to learn that there are several quite distinct Scripps Institutions, having but little resemblance to one another.

In the first place, we have the ideal Scripps Institution, a thing without seeming limitations, either as to personnel or physical equipment. It works in accordance with a somewhat inscrutable "program", and has a philosophy and scientific method all its own. The mission of this Institution is to work on a cooperative basis toward a truer understanding of nature, and incidentally to expose the errors of our less favored colleagues elsewhere. This we may also call the "official" Scripps Institution. It is the Institution as portrayed in various published reports of wide circulation.

But curiously enough there exists, alongside of that first Institution — or rather coextensive with it, both in space and time — an Institution of a quite different type. This one is a mighty asset in our local industrial development. It is engaged, in some quite indefinable way, in revealing the economic resources of the sea, in making two fish grow where only one grew before. Its principal mission in the world, in fact, is to help the fisherman, the canner and the Chamber of Commerce. Incidentally, it further serves the general public through the

maintenance of a museum, aquarium and fishing pier. This is the Scripps Institution as portrayed by our local press, the one which is seen through the eyes of our countless visitors.

Finally, as a rather appalling anti-climax, we have the visible concrete Scripps Institution (yes, both the buildings and the pier are concrete!), with its small resident staff, which is not composed of supermen, and its limited income, which falls considerably below a million dollars a year.

It is of this last Institution — what you will perhaps call the real Institution — that I doubt not you want to hear me speak. But, before proceeding, I wish to insist that the other two Institutions are likewise very real, and that the three have interacted on one another throughout most of our development. On the one hand, the ideals of our first director have surely influenced us for the good, however far they may ever be from full realization. On the other hand, the misconceptions of the press and of the public at large have doubtless worked us considerable injury.

Of the history of the Scripps Institution, up to the time of its occupying its permanent home, Dr. Ritter has published a very readable account. The salient features of this history may be stated very briefly. About the year 1892, it would seem, the zoology department of the University of California began to look around for an "outlet to the sea". Thereafter, during several successive summers, various points along the California coast were chosen as the sites for temporary marine laboratories. This nomadic existence seemed to pall on the scientists concerned,

and in 1901, it was decided to establish more permanent headquarters at San Pedro. After two years, however, another move was made, this time to Coronado. Later a site was occupied in La Jolla village, and finally the present tract of land was purchased at a nominal price from the city of San Diego in 1907.

Some time prior to this date, the active support of Miss Ellen B. Scripps and Mr. E. W. Scripps had been enlisted, and the laboratory for several years was maintained exclusively through their generosity. In 1912, however, the Marine Biological Station of San Diego became a department of the University of California, under the name of the Scripps Institution for Biological Research. The purpose of the University as officially stated by the Regents, was to make of the Institution "an instrument for the most liberal biological research and the free expression and publication of the results of such research, as intended by the founders". From that time on, an increasing proportion of the regular annual income was derived from the state.

The first permanent building, the present laboratory, was erected in 1909-1910, while the larger library and museum building, together with the pier, were completed in 1916, the cost of all these structures being defrayed by Miss Scripps. Further historical details are not possible in the space at my disposal.

It has always been the prevailing belief that the Scripps Institution concerned itself mainly if not wholly with the sea.

Some of my colleagues have complained, indeed, at the difficulty which they have experienced in justifying to visitors the existence of an experimental mouse-farm as part of a marine biological station. Such a situation would doubtless be rather hard to explain -- granting its reality. But the perplexity of our marine biologists is not a circumstance to what I have had to endure in trying to tell visiting mammalogists just why a thousand-foot pier is essential to the breeding of mice!

Whatever its historical origin, and whatever may be in store for it in the future, the Scripps Institution has not, during the past ten years, concerned itself exclusively or even primarily with marine biology. Thus, Dr. Ritter's series of published volumes, "War, Science and Civilization", "The Unity of the Organism" and the rest do not smack of salt water. Nor does the California woodpecker belong to the category of marine organisms, even though the director of the Scripps Institution has contributed largely to our knowledge of this interesting bird.

Indeed, we may make all possible combinations and permutations of the two words "marine" and "biological", in their application to the work of the Scripps Institution. Much of it, to be sure, is both marine and biological. But some of it is marine without being biological, and some of it is biological without being marine, while latterly considerable time has been devoted to one piece of work which is neither marine nor biological.