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THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

ONE of the most significant meetings that occurred during the Christmas holidays was that of the American Psychological Association in Philadelphia on Dec. 27 and 28. This was the first regular meeting of this body, a temporary organization having been effected in June last. The coming together of psychologists is significant not alone of the rapid strides which this science has recently been making, but particularly of the unity of method and subject matter which the introduction of scientific modes of observation into this controverted field has made possible. This association of psychologists is composed almost exclusively of specialists who are studying the nature of mental processes by the help of ingeniously devised apparatus, are propounding new problems and adopting new methods to their solution, and, in brief, are proceeding with that painstaking vigor and caution characteristic of all phases of modern science. For these reasons an account of their proceedings necessarily becomes somewhat technical; but this moderate element of technicality is itself a welcome relief from that over-popularization and almost sensational publicity in which a line of activity too often confused with psychology has indulged.

The meeting was called to order by the president of the association, President G. Stanley Hall, of Clark University, and the reading of papers began with a paper by Professor Catell, of Columbia College, on "Errors of Observation in Physics and in Psychology." Professor Catell criticised that line of psychophysical observation in which the liability to degree of error was taken as a standard of the sensibility for differences. He considered that the entire subject needed re-investigation, with a complete separation of these two points. He also regarded that recent experiments of his own and Professor Fullerton tended to show that the errors of observation do not fall under the law as usually stated (Weber's law) but approximate the law which the distribution of errors demanded.

A very interesting problem was presented by Dr. Witmer, of the University of Pennsylvania, in an account of a research upon the aesthetics of visual form. Dr. Witmer attempted to determine, by a large number of experiments, such questions as, What are the most pleasing forms? What proportions of the division of a line, and what proportions of the relations of the height to the breadth of a rectangle are the most pleasing? and the like. The results of these preferences were interpreted by reference to the general outline of the field of vision, of which the figures form a part. He showed conclusively that the former views of the conditions of such aesthetic judgments were inadequate, and that this neglected factor of the position of the figure with reference to the edges of the field of vision was a most important one. The experiments will be continued and give promise of contributing some measure of system and order to a field usually regarded as determined by caprice.

President Hall presented a brief outline of the history and pros-

pects of experimental psychology in America, tracing the beginnings of this study from the first laboratory founded at Johns Hopkins University some eight years ago, up to the present time, when there are as many or more psychological laboratories established in this country than in all Europe. The rapid dissemination of interest in psychological studies and the material provisions for its future development were ably presented, and various measures of credit judiciously assigned. The publication of such a review of the purposes, methods and results of the new psychology, as President Hall outlined, should certainly contribute much towards a more general understanding of what psychology and psychologists are doing and—equally important—not doing.

Professor Jastrow, of the University of Wisconsin, gave an account of the exhibit of experimental psychology, which is to be made at the World's Fair. Here, for the first time, the attempt will be made to gather together various types of apparatus which are used in psychological research, to maintain in running order a working laboratory, in which simple tests of the senses, powers of judgment, the times of mental processes, the peculiarities of association, the limits of memory, of fatigue, and the like, may be made and recorded; and to exhibit in some measure the results of statistical and other forms of research. Considerable expenditure, the co-operation of colleges, of individual psychologists and of makers of apparatus have been secured for the successful completion of this large task. It is hoped that this somewhat comprehensive exhibit of the method and aims of this new science may aid in disseminating a truer and more appreciative view of the theoretical and practical value of this line of research than has yet been accomplished.

Professor Münsterberg, of Harvard University, upon the request of the president, addressed the association, speaking of the problems that were engaging his attention at his laboratory at Cambridge. No less than fifteen subjects of investigation are here in progress, and the nature of some of these Professor Münsterberg described in a very interesting manner. The impetus to work in this direction, which his acceptance of the chair at Harvard has given, has already made itself evident, and, before the year is over, many important results will undoubtedly be issued from his laboratory. The subjects under investigation covered a wide range, from the determination of the methods of localizing sounds in space, and a new method of determining when differences of sensation may be regarded as equal, to complicated experiments upon the nature of association, of changes in mental condition, of complex forms of reaction, and the like.

Dr. Sanford reported some of the minor studies which are in part completed and in part in progress at the laboratory of Clark University. One of these studies gave an account of the fluctuations in mental power at different portions of the day, as determined by the capacity to remember a series of arbitrary impressions. Another dealt with the frequency and character of dreams of subjects who every night at once recorded their dreams upon awakening from them. The great frequency of dreams, the fact that they are concentrated in the early hours of the morning, that they are so largely based upon actual experiences, and that recent events contribute much to their content,—these and other points clearly appeared in the analysis which this material furnished.

Professor Bryan, of the University of Indiana, presented two papers, in one of which he gave an account of experiments establishing the effect of the intensity of the stimulus upon the reaction time; and, in the other, described some tests which had been made in schools of Springfield, Mass. These tests show the development of motor power in children at different ages, and brought out many unexpected and significant relations.

Papers were also read by Dr. Nichols, of Harvard College, presenting some novel experiments upon illusions of rotation and upon the sense of pain; by Professor Pace of the Catholic University of Washington, describing some observations upon the power of judging the thickness of surfaces held between the thumb and forefinger; by Dr. Witmer, describing the results of a few simple reaction times, taken upon a great variety of unpractised subjects; other papers of a somewhat philosophical nature were presented by Dr. Chamberlain, on the "Relation of Psy-