

SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1898.

THE VITAL EQUILIBRIUM AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

CONTENTS:

<i>The Vital Equilibrium and the Nervous System:</i>	
PRESIDENT C. L. HERRICK.....	813
<i>Some Experiments on Animal Intelligence:</i> EDWARD THORNDIKE.....	818
<i>The American Society of Mechanical Engineers:</i>	
PROFESSOR R. H. THURSTON.....	824
<i>Botanical Notes:—</i>	
<i>Botany and Agriculture; Papers on the Diseases of Plants:</i> PROFESSOR CHARLES E. BESSEY...824	
<i>Current Notes on Anthropology:—</i>	
<i>The Aryan Question; Polyandry among the Semites; The 'Folk-mind':</i> PROFESSOR D. G. BRINTON.....	826
<i>Notes on Inorganic Chemistry:</i> J. L. H.....	827
<i>Scientific Notes and News:—</i>	
<i>Vasco da Gama Celebration; General.....</i>	827
<i>University and Educational News.....</i>	831
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>Color Vision:</i> PROFESSOR E. B. TITCHENER.	
<i>A Precise Criterion of Species:</i> DR. GERRIT S. MILLER, JR.....	832
<i>Scientific Literature:—</i>	
<i>Packard's Text-book of Entomology:</i> PROFESSOR WILLIAM MORTON WHEELER. <i>Pasteur:</i> PROFESSOR EDWIN O. JORDAN. <i>Stratton and Millikan's Course of Laboratory Experiments in General Physics:</i> PROFESSOR W. LE CONTE STEVENS...834	
<i>Scientific Journals.....</i>	839
<i>Societies and Academies:—</i>	
<i>Philosophical Society of Washington:</i> E. D. PRESTON. <i>Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia:</i> EDW. J. NOLAN.....	839
<i>New Books.....</i>	840

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It is noticeable that there has been a tendency on the part of our most thoughtful working biologists, especially such as are equally equipped for the philosophical and biological aspects of cellular biology, to seek some avenue of return to the vitalistic point of view. It has become sufficiently plain that the most conspicuous triumphs of histology, even in the domain of cytology, have rather reduced than increased the probability of securing an explanation of vital phenomena and specific heredity and integrity from the study of structure alone. A strong tendency is visible toward a dynamic point of view. We believe that a consistent application of a dynamic hypothesis is destined to prepare the way for greater advances, not only in interpretation, but also in practical applications of biological principles. When we come to regard the visible structural data of histology as expressions of dynamic processes rather than the causes of these processes, and when we have agreed to apply other criteria than that offered by materialism to the phenomena of heredity, we may be able to shake ourselves free of preconceptions that have done much to retard the normal development of both biology and psychology. It is true that a strong prejudice exists against the dynamic method because of the belief that it tends to limit research and