

sec. The exact point at which the reversing action begins can be easily determined by the revolving disc, and will be investigated shortly by one of our students.

R. W. WOOD.

#### SCIENCE IN THE DAILY PRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In view of the appearance of several articles in the daily press relating to the case of the rapid calculator, Arthur Griffith, and purporting to be written by us, we beg to say that we have written no such article and have seen neither copy nor proof of any such article. We have given to reporters, when asked to do so, the principal facts reported before the Psychological Association. The published accounts have varying degrees of accuracy, a few of them being substantially correct. We are impelled to make this disavowal, for the reason that in some instances we are represented as making claims in regard to the case which we have never made. Persons interested are referred to the Proceedings of the Psychological Association and to the fuller statement of results presently to appear.

E. H. LINDLEY,  
WM. L. BRYAN.

UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA, Jan. 4, 1900.

#### 'NEWSPAPER SCIENCE.'

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Some weeks ago in SCIENCE, and more recently in *The Psychological Review*, Professor J. H. Hyslop condemned in rather sweeping terms what he called 'newspaper science.' He was incited to do so by the publication of an erroneous and annoying report about himself. But while his irritation was certainly justified, his utterances were a trifle indiscriminate. And it is due both to the daily press, which he thus censures, and to the readers of your pages that attention be called to this fact.

It is true that certain papers indulge in untruthful and sensational stories about scientific men and scientific discoveries. But there are others that do not. To classify these two kinds of newspapers together betrays a lack of careful observation, or a wrong use of the logical faculty; perhaps both. Such a proceeding is

hardly worthy of a man who pretends to a strictly scientific method in his ordinary work.

The fact is that, though they are only too scarce, one can easily find both newspapers and newspaper men who possess as keen a perception of the eternal beauty of truth, and are animated by as lively a sense of responsibility to the public, as the average professional scientist. A wider recognition of this fact is needed, not merely in the interests of justice, but in those of science also.

Now the number of persons who read technical reports and periodicals—astronomical, electrical, engineering, medical, psychological, and so on—is only about one-hundredth, or only a thousandth, as great as those who see only the daily papers. The vast majority of people could not understand this literature, anyhow. It needs interpretation and adaptation to popular comprehension. The daily paper, therefore, forms a highly important medium of communication between the original investigator and the general public; and, for better or for worse, it will always perform that function. If, then, men who are themselves engaged in scientific researches of value to mankind, or are identified with institutions devoted to the deposit of scientific collections, would abstain from aiding papers that are notoriously reckless, and encourage by word and definite favors those which treat scientific matters intelligently, conscientiously and accurately, they would promote the diffusion of knowledge to a far greater degree than is now possible, and check the very abuses of which Professor Hyslop complains. Not merely in their comments, but also in their active policy, professional scientists can do much to reform 'newspaper science' if they will.

AMATEUR.

NEW YORK, January 5, 1900.

#### BOTANICAL NOTES.

##### A NEW SOUTHERN FLORA.

PROFESSOR TRACY has prepared a little book under the title of 'Flora of the Southern United States' for use with Bergen's 'Elements of Botany' (Ginn & Company), which is intended to be used as an elementary manual for field work in systematic botany in the public schools.

The author recognizes the fact that "the ability to identify and name plants is not the object of botanical study, but it is a great assistance in attaining the knowledge which the true student of botany is seeking—an understanding of the laws of life in the vegetable kingdom." He has made it possible by means of keys and easy descriptions for the beginner to obtain some ideas as to how plants are classified, what botanists think as to the relationship of plant groups, and how to proceed in identifying an unknown plant. As far as it goes the book is a modern presentation of taxonomic botany. It deals with seed-plants only. Even the ferns so commonly included in manuals of this kind are not included, while the pupil gets no hint whatever of anything lower in the scale of plant life. This is a mistake, but a very common one, in botanical manuals, and we must perhaps overlook it for the present. It is pleasant to find a modern sequence of families (Engler and Prantl's) and a strictly modern nomenclature.

#### A NEW BOTANICAL JOURNAL.

WITH the December number the first volume of *Rhodora*, the new journal devoted to the botany of New England, was completed. The idea of a local botanical journal of high grade was a novelty, and its progress during the year was watched with much interest. Now at the end of its first volume we may look over what it has accomplished and judge as to whether a geographical limit is a wise one to be placed upon the field of a scientific journal. By far the greater number of articles deal with flowering plants, and are systematic rather than morphological, although the latter are by no means wanting. The ferns and mosses receive scanty notice, while the algæ and fungi are the subject of frequent papers and notes. Many of these papers have much more than local interest, and might with propriety have appeared in any botanical journal. Of course, there are some 'local notes,' some papers on 'noteworthy plants,' some on 'rare plants,' and some 'additions' to local floras. There is little if any of that species splitting which is too often the bane of local botany. The editorial announcement of a year ago stated that special attention

would be given "to such plants as are newly recognized or imperfectly known within our limits, to the more precise determination of plant ranges, to brief revisions of groups in which specific and varietal limits require further definition, to corrections upon current manuals and local floras, to altitudinal distribution, plant associations and ecological problems." 'Ferns, mosses and thallophytes' were promised a share of attention. It is to the credit of the management that the program outlined at the outset has been so well carried out. *Rhodora* has shown that a geographically limited scientific journal may be successful and useful.

CHARLES E. BESSEY.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.

#### THE CONFERRING OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

THE Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Mr. McMillan, introduced, on January 2d, a bill entitled "An act to authorize the regents of the Smithsonian Institution to confer certain degrees and for other purposes." It provides:

"That the regents of the Smithsonian be, and they are hereby, authorized to appoint a board of five examiners, who shall, with the approval of the said regents, prepare and publish a schedule of courses of studies preparatory to the degrees of master of arts, master of science, doctor of philosophy and doctor of science. The said examiners shall from time to time hold examinations in the City of Washington for the said degrees; and, on the satisfactory completion by any candidate of the prescribed course of studies for either of the above mentioned degrees, shall recommend such a candidate to the regents of the Smithsonian Institution for such degrees. The said regents are hereby authorized to confer, under suitable regulations, the degrees above mentioned and also the honorary degree of doctor of laws. Provided, That no person shall be accepted as a candidate for the degree of master of arts or of doctor of philosophy who has not completed a course of study at least equivalent to the course of study required of candidates for corresponding degrees in the most advanced universities in the United States; and provided further, That the