

SCIENCE

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PRACTICAL SCIENCE¹

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MEN who spend their lives in universities are apt to develop certain unfortunate peculiarities. These peculiarities may not make them less happy, or less useful to their professional students, but they diminish the appreciation of the community at large. In the life of an instructor or investigator of university rank there is a peculiar kind of isolation that is bound to react.

It is partly the isolation of a subject, which is more or less segregated from general human interests, at least in the aspects of it the university man is cultivating. As a consequence, he feels that his world is quite apart from that one in which the majority of men are living. He is conscious of an interest distinct from their interests, which seem therefore relatively trivial. This sense of intellectual aloofness does not result in a feeling of loneliness, but rather in a feeling of superiority, unconscious in many cases, but often naïvely expressed.

It is also the isolation of authority, which comes from mastery of a subject and from association with students who recognize this mastery. To speak with authority in intellectual matters, to give the deciding word, to meet a constant succession of inferiors, is apt to affect any man's brain. Either he becomes dogmatic in expression, or he must hold himself in check with an effort. It is the same reaction that was observed in the case of the clergy, when acknowledged authority in position

¹Address at the winter convocation, 1910, of the University of Chicago.