

SCIENCE

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MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

HENRI POINCARÉ AS A MATHEMATICAL PHYSICIST¹

WHEN I was asked by the secretary to contribute a paper of general interest before this section I was overwhelmed with the sense of my inability to do so, but when he suggested that I should take as a subject the work of Henri Poincaré as a mathematical physicist, I consented, because, however slight might be my capability, the subject was a most congenial one. The great Frenchman whose untimely death at the age of 58 the whole scientific world deplores was a man of extraordinary versatility, while his productiveness is measured by the fact that the total number of separate contributions from his pen reaches nearly the sum of a thousand. France has always known how to honor her great men, even if she does not understand them, and the impression produced by the death of Poincaré on the whole country was profound. The news was communicated to me in London at the celebration of the Royal Society by his friend and distinguished colleague, Émile Picard, who in a voice choked with emotion pronounced the words, "Poincaré est mort!"

While there can be no doubt that the greatest work of Poincaré consisted in his work in pure analysis, we must not forget that for ten years he filled the chair of mathematical physics of the Faculté des Sciences. During this time he touched every conceivable part of the subject and it may be truly said that he touched nothing that he did not adorn. Fourteen volumes

¹ Read before Section A of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 31, 1912.