

# 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.

## SCIENCE AND LIBERAL EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

SEVERAL years ago a discussion was carried on in one of the London newspapers on that interminable but always interesting question as to what is the best definition of a gentleman. Various answers were suggested by different contributors. Some were in the form of citations from our noblest literature—one, as I recall, was given in the words of St. Paul, another was taken from Shakespeare, a third from Emerson. The one generally acknowledged to be the most effective was, however, phrased in the picturesque vernacular of modern sport. A gentleman, so this answer ran, *is a man who plays the game*.

As this lingers in the memory it brings a growing sense of broader implications. The definition, evidently, only gives a new turn to the old thought that human life is like a great game that man plays with the world. We recall the striking words in which an illustrious master of modern science once brought this thought to bear upon the problem of education:

The life, the fortune and the happiness of every one of us depend on our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more complicated and difficult than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, each man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays

<sup>1</sup> An academic address given at the opening of Columbia University, September 29, 1915.