

SCIENCE

VOL. LXIX

FEBRUARY 22, 1929

No. 1782

THE OUTLOOK FOR PSYCHOLOGY¹

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Lancaster, Pa.

Garrison, N. Y.

Annual Subscription, \$6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

I WISH to call your attention to certain features of the situation in psychology at present, pointing up, so far as I can, the indications for the future. My summary and my prediction can not be 100 per cent. accurate—perhaps not 75 per cent. accurate. I believe, however, that it is useful to pause in our laboratory work occasionally, and, seated in our arm-chairs if you please, review the results of our endeavor. I shall emphasize the laboratory, its methods, training and products, because the laboratory is the center of true psychological activities, and nothing which is not founded on the laboratory in the fullest degree possible is worthy of scientific consideration in our field.

I must emphasize the fact that the laboratory method has justified itself under difficulties during the last twenty years. There is always dissatisfaction with the laboratory method. In the first place, it is "academic." But partly through the results of psychologists, and partly through the achievement of other "academic" men, this term has ceased to be an insult, and is a badge of merit and accomplishment. Let us call the laboratory method "academic"; one of the most striking features of the last two decades is the ephemeral life of movements claiming to be scientific but attempting to get away from a sound academic foundation.

In the second place, the laboratory method is slow. Men outside are impatient, and want quick results. They can not wait for the results of the tedious scientist, pottering in his laboratory. We must be *practical*.

Well, I could point out the fates of some of these practical movements. They are gorgeous while they last, but not beautiful when they burst. They are great opportunities for the charlatan and the sciolist, but unfortunately they have diverted the energies of many really able men.

The laboratory method receives its justification when these "practical" booms burst, having hastened to application when there was nothing to apply, and the shattered legions come limping back to inquire

¹ Address of the retiring vice-chairman before Section I, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the New York meeting, December 29, 1928.

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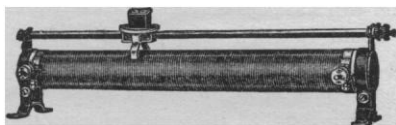
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