

SCIENCE

VOL. 83

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 1936

No. 2140

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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.

SCIENCE AND VALUES¹

By Professor EDWARD L. THORNDIKE

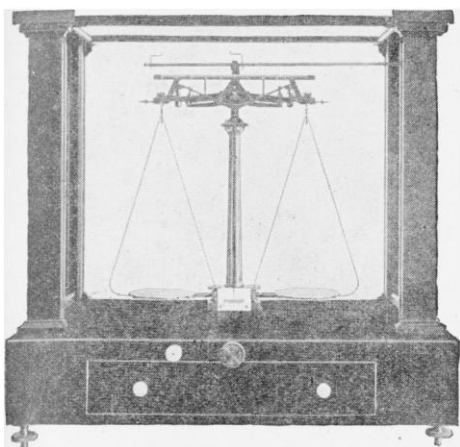
DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF PSYCHOLOGY, INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

A WISE custom recommends that this address be upon some topic in which substantial recent advances have been made and about which your retiring president is especially competent to speak. I have, nevertheless, chosen a topic about which very little has been learned in the past decade and in which I am not expert. The reason is that the topic is important for workers in all sciences, and is especially important now. You will all agree that wisdom in the wants and valuations which are the prime movers in human affairs has not kept up with knowledge of the brute facts of human nature, much less with knowledge of the lower animals, plants and inanimate nature. Foes of science are asserting, and some of its friends are admitting, that science is incompetent to improve the

judgments of value and esteem which rule men. On the other hand, certain alert students of government, law and morals are suggesting that what is needed in the treatment of questions about good and bad, right and wrong, useful and harmful, is the matter-of-fact curiosity of science. So I invite your attention to some facts of the psychology of values, as I see them.

The facts about valuation have been much discussed under the title of "Ethics" and "Esthetics" by thinkers of philosophic temper. In spite of the great acuity and scope of their intellects, their efforts to devise general theories of the good or of the beautiful or of what men ought, and what they ought not, to enjoy have been unsatisfactory to philosophers as a whole, and rather mystifying or empty to men of science. Nor do they seem to profit by the general advancement of knowledge. Aristotle's solutions seem as good as

¹ Address of the retiring president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, St. Louis, December 30, 1935.



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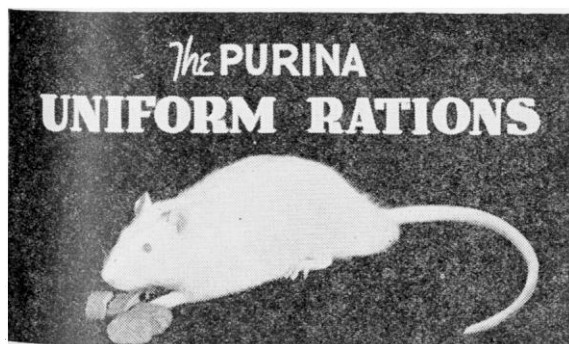
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