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ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES[1]

By Dr. W. R. WHITNEY

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

THE promising study of mankind is man. I want to direct your thoughts with that in mind, under the title, "Accomplishments and Future of Physical Science."

This means a hurried view of a lot of territory with an eastern horizon at sunrise. Any single picture would be inadequate. If I could make a "movie" of many frames taken through an open mind, you would still not distinguish science, but only a moving blur. Really to see things, we need about a twenty-fifth of a second per frame. Science moves much faster than that. So any picture of accomplishments is neutral gray, much as newspapers appear feeding rapidly from a printing-press.

I shall select unrelated and peculiar pictures which do not seem to blend. By my poor lighting I lose detail, and by speed I spoil clearness. Perhaps also most important things are left out—spiritual things—but science is still a little confused there.

See first the animal itself, forced to experiment in order to keep alive. He tries, tests and names everything, but apparently creates nothing at all. He may *never* create, but he may continually put discoveries together in new ways. The log which saved him from drowning has become the steamship of to-day. His magic for keeping the wolf from the door—those pic-

[1] Address given on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Sigma Xi, Cornell University, June 20, 1936.