

of the greatest intellects of the race have exerted their utmost powers. One of the many notable testimonials to his rare eminence was the publication, several years ago, by the Carnegie Institution, of his "Collected Mathematical Works," with an introduction by Henri Poincaré, the most illustrious French mathematician of the last two generations. In this introduction, Poincaré gives an outline of Hill's researches, and discusses their relation to what had been done by his predecessors, and their bearing on the future development of celestial mechanics.

So remote are labors like these, not only from the ordinary interests of mankind, but from the possibility of even a dim apprehension of their nature on the part of any but mathematicians, that it is not surprising that the man whose life is given over to their pursuit gains none of the glittering rewards, such as they are, of popular notice. And in the particular case of George W. Hill, it would be peculiarly inept to treat the absence of such notice of him, alive or dead, as a personal grievance. For Hill was, by deliberate choice, a recluse, a solitary, even in relation to the small circle of the elect who were capable of fellowship with him in the special intellectual field to which he was so exclusively devoted. And yet one can but feel that, in one way or another, the consciousness of this kind of high endeavor and achievement might well be more widespread than it is; and that if it were, the result would be a reciprocal benefit—a benefit to the man of science and a benefit to society at large—of no small value. In the case of an almost freakish simplicity and self-withdrawal like that of Hill, it may be that nothing of the kind would be possible; but his case is highly exceptional. It is not many years since there died an American mathematical physicist of similar scientific eminence, a man whose work is acknowledged to be in the first rank, and who was during his entire career professor in one of our leading universities; but how many Americans knew the name of Willard Gibbs? How many persons in New Haven—how many Yale students even—were aware that this modest scholar was one of the world's leaders in a great field of scientific thought?

It is something of a coincidence that within the few days since the death of Dr. Hill, another American man of genius has been taken away who, different in almost every possible way from Hill, was like him in that his life had for many years been passed in extreme seclusion. A man at once of extraordinary acumen and originality, and of a phenomenal range of intellectual interests, there was in Charles S. Peirce a vein of the erratic, perhaps one may say the unstable, which seems to account for his achievements having fallen far short of what might have been expected of his unquestionably splendid powers. Even as it is, however, he left his mark on at least two branches of the intellectual activity of the age. In that modern development of the science of reasoning which is usually designated by the name of Symbolic Logic, his work well deserves to be called *bahnbrechend*; the leading German writer on the subject, Ernst Schroeder, makes it the foundation of his extensive treatise. And it is from Peirce that William James derived the name "Pragmatism," and the doctrine for which that name stands in James's work; though, in the interest of accuracy, it is necessary to add that Peirce repudiated James's development of his seminal idea. But the concrete fruits of Peirce's labors, many as are the fields in which he worked, are small in comparison with what those who came into contact with him could not but feel would have fallen into his hands if he had but possessed that something—constancy, balance, or whatever it may be—which nature seems to have denied him.

That there might be—that there has been in other times and other countries—an atmosphere more genial and friendly even for those whose labors carry them to those strange and lofty heights in which dwells the mathematician or the abstract philosopher, we have already intimated. But these almost self-condemned exiles from "the kindly race of men" are not the only scholars who suffer from an intellectual isolation that is deplorable, and to the nature and consequences of which we seldom or never give attention. That free-masonry of the intellect which has played an inestimable part in the higher culture of Europe is almost wholly absent, as yet, in our university circles.

## Foreign Correspondence

### THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE—RECOMMENDATIONS OF A ROYAL COMMISSION.

LONDON, April 11.

The British Civil Service has had a hard task to live down the reputation given it by Charles Lamb. His charming account of the problems that vexed him daily from ten to four, and his practice of making up for late arrival by going away early, have left a widespread impression that Whitehall is almost a synonym for Lotus Island. But Lamb retired from the East India Office in 1825, and nowadays the interiors of the large buildings that stretch from Trafalgar Square to the Houses of Parliament show little resemblance to a land where it is always afternoon. Indeed, the pressure upon the more responsible Civil Servants when bills relating to their departments are passing through the House might be compared to that upon the station masters of the big railway terminals during the excursion season.

Not only is the daily round of the Government clerk far more strenuous than a hundred, or even fifty, years ago, but, at the same time, the gate into the service has been narrowed by the modern custom of filling so many of the appointments by open competition. In 1854 it was declared by the Commissioners chosen to report on the existing system of appointment by nomination that "admission into the Civil Service was greatly sought after, but it was for the incompetent and the indolent and incapable that it was chiefly desired." The Government departments then were regarded "as a means of securing a maintenance for young men who have no chance of success in the open competition of the legal, medical, and mercantile professions."

That scandal, at any rate, has been brought to an end. A Royal Commission on the Civil Service that has been sitting for more than two years has recently published its recommendations based on four considerable volumes of evidence. It finds that the fundamental principles on which the Service is based are sound, and that its organization is, in the main, efficient. There are some defects of considerable importance, for which remedies are suggested, but the Commissioners recommend that the principle of open competition should be adhered to, and, whenever it is applicable, extended.

One of the reforms now proposed is due to the recent agitation against "blind alley" employments. At present, there are about 2,600 "boy clerks" who are recruited between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. Some of these have a chance of getting a permanent clerkship, but most of them are dismissed at eighteen. It is recommended that this class be entirely abolished, and that, in future, the lowest class in the official hierarchy shall be a "junior clerical class," recruited at sixteen, from boys who have completed the intermediate stage in secondary schools. Appointments to this class will be permanent.

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Thirdly, had our Government taken stern measures to protect the lives and property of Americans and Europeans in Mexico, however desirable that protection might be, the result would surely have been a real war with Mexico. Fortunately, the situation was saved by Huerta's tactlessness. Mr. Wilson was careful to state, in his address to Congress, that an official dispatch of the United States Government had been held up, and that the flag incident at Tampico was merely the culmination of a series of insults to our Government. At no time in the last year has the wisdom of our policy been so clearly demonstrated, for the fact that we were dealing with an irregular government enabled us to base our demands, not on international law, but on expediency.

What has been the result? The seizure of Vera Cruz has had a profound effect, as Mr. Wilson intended, upon Mexican opinion of all classes and factions. The truth seems to have dawned upon our unfortunate neighbors that further trifling with the United States could have but one result, the occupation of Mexico by our troops, and, if our history is any guide to the future, the end of Mexican independence. Two weeks ago Mexico seemed on the eve of a complete collapse. To-day, so far as one can judge from the daily press, a permanent settlement is more likely than in many, many months. It is to this end that the South American mediators appear to be devoting their energies rather than to an adjustment of the American quarrel with Huerta, for we still insist that he must retire. For the great improvement in the general situation, Mr. Wilson's diplomacy is entirely responsible.

BERNADOTTE E. SCHMITT.

Western Reserve University, Cleveland, May 2.

[The Nation's criticism of the recent acts of the Administration in Mexico is precisely on the grounds that, as our correspondent suggests, they might lead to "the occupation of Mexico by our troops" and ultimately to "the end of Mexican independence."—ED. THE NATION.]

#### THE PASSING OF A MASTER MIND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I desire to record a word of tribute to one of the master minds of America. The recent death of Charles S. Peirce removes an heroic figure from the field of American learning. Living for the most part in retirement, he was known to a relatively small circle. Yet where known, his name was spoken with exalted respect; and his fame, critically appraised, placed him with the chosen few of any generation. How far he sought and failed to find the wider recognition that falls to those whose labors are in fields open to public approbation, how far he did not care to pursue the accredited steps to preferment and recognition, I cannot say. Yet this aspect of his career is significant.

My acquaintance with Mr. Peirce began in 1882 when I came as a graduate student to Johns Hopkins University. He

was there lecturing on "The Algebra of Logic"—a subject which he in large measure established in this country. He had interested certain able students—all of them since distinguished in various fields—in his explorations into a broad domain of thought; and of this enterprise a volume of studies by himself and his pupils bears record. In those days there was gathered in Baltimore a group of scholars and productive intellectual workers that would have been exceptional in any scholarly community. Their names would suggest the notable contributions of American scholarship in their generation. Yet among them the impression of Mr. Peirce stands forth most prominently *primus inter pares*. The impression that I retain of his analyses of logical and philosophical problems is that of observing a plummet line descending through troubled waters foot by foot, sounding the depths, avoiding the weeds and the shoals, and reaching an undiscovered bottom; for to the student many of the problems in a controversial sea seemed bottomless. It was not argument, but discovery.

It was Mr. Peirce who introduced me to the possibility of an experimental study of a psychological problem. He provided the problem, the instruments which I set up in my room, the method, and the mode of reaching the results; these were printed over our joint names. He also introduced me to the mode of attack upon larger psychological problems by methods of statistical inquiry. He gathered about him a group of five or six students and proposed a study of "great men." He drew up the questionnaire; we gathered and collated the results. The work was not finished; though I was permitted to publish one or two aspects of the material in brief papers. My personal indebtedness gave me the opportunity to gauge the measure of the man. Only one other produced upon me an equal impression of original greatness. I refer to William James. The two men may well be associated, for each held the other in high regard. Professor James recognized in Charles Peirce the true founder of Pragmatism, a way of thinking which James made popular, the significance of which he expounded. If, in addition, it be remembered that these logical, psychological, and philosophical pursuits were in a sense avocational, and that Mr. Peirce was for a long time actively connected with the Geodetic Survey, was a physicist and mathematician by profession, the scope of his attainments will be more truly perceived. In a sense he represents the American Helmholtz.

I do not know that Mr. Peirce ever held any academic position other than the lectureship for a few years at Johns Hopkins University. That his was the personal temperament that may well be called difficult may be admitted; such is the disposition of genius. It cannot but remain a sad reflection upon the organization of our academic interest that we find it difficult, or make it so, to provide places for exceptional men within the academic fold. Politically as educationally, we prefer the safe men to the brilliant men, and exact a versatile mediocrity of qualities that makes the individual organ-

izable. All this has its proper place and is doubtless more or less inevitable, even sound; but the penalty paid for safety is too heavy, when it excludes the use of rarer gifts, the choice product of exceptional power of sustained thought. Of this lamentable lack of efficiency—to turn the sting of an abused word against itself—Mr. Peirce is not the only example. Other master minds knocked in vain at academic portals, and were refused as too blunt. Or, more truly stated, the small group of their liberal-minded friends within the hallowed precincts failed to persuade the authorities to adjust methods to men. Certainly it remains true for all time that no more effective stimulus to promising young minds can be found than to give them the opportunity of contact with master minds in action. The service that a small group of such men can perform is too fine, too imponderable, to be measured; and likewise too intangible to impress its value upon the judgment of those with whom these issues commonly lie. Yet nothing would have shown better the greatness of a great University than to find a place in it for rare men like Charles S. Peirce. His memory invites not only the personal tribute, but is a reminder of our neglect of the true worth of genius.

JOSEPH JASTROW.

The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., May 6.

#### THE LATE EDUARD SUESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: On the 26th of April there died at Vienna, in his eighty-third year, one of the greatest of European scientists, the distinguished geologist, Eduard Suess. Strange to say, his death has passed unnoticed in the American press, although few scholars have ever lived who deserved better of their fellow-men. I must leave it to competent hands to point out in the Nation Professor Suess's service to science. Suffice it to say, in this place, that his principal work, the monumental "Das Antlitz der Erde," is regarded as the most authoritative exposition of the principal features of the earth's surface and their correlation, and that it has been translated into four languages. In the preface to the French edition Marcel Bertrand likened the appearance of the work to the action of a sudden ray of light in penetrating chaos, and the London Geological Society, which conferred on him the Wollaston medal, congratulated him on his seventieth birthday as the greatest living geologist.

From 1857 to 1901 Suess was professor of geology in the University of Vienna, and from 1899 to 1911 he was president of the Vienna Academy of Sciences.

But over and above his scientific work, Professor Suess achieved renown as one of the most indefatigable and most unselfish workers in Austrian public life. As a member of the Municipal Council of the city of Vienna, of the Diet of Lower Austria, and of the Reichsrath, he was a champion of liberal measures and a parliamentarian of remarkable power. The city of Vienna is indebted to him for its present water supply, the plans for which he drew, and which

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