

COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

ERNST MEUMANN. AN APPRECIATION

Of late the mortality among psychologists of leading rank has been very high. In the last few years we have lost Ebbinghaus, James, Binet, and now Meumann. And the loss is all the greater in that these men were for the most part in their prime. Thus both Binet and Meumann were just a little over fifty, and Meumann was at the



stage where he was just beginning to avail himself of his extraordinarily wide knowledge of the literature of educational psychology and several more or less remotely allied subjects, such as pure psychology and aesthetics.

In such an article as this I only need to mention his various articles on learning, memory, aesthetics, etc., and his monumental work on experimental pedagogy, the second revised and much enlarged edition of which he had just completed under somewhat hurried and adverse conditions due to the beginning of the war.

His method of writing this second edition was characteristic. As a result of his desire to include everything that had appeared up to the date of publication, he had to do most of his work under hurried conditions, and thus he dictated almost all his material. This accounts for a certain diffuseness of his style. He himself was only

too well aware of this, as was shown by a remark that he once made in rather a hopeless tone of voice, that he would be satisfied if only he could sit down and completely rewrite the second edition without the necessity of including any new material. As another example of his desire for completeness, his review in the *Archiv* of articles on the Binet tests may be mentioned. He actually attempted to read all the articles at first hand in four or five different languages, and he used to shake his head and sigh whenever one of the American periodicals came in with a fresh batch of Binet articles; he had a whole bookcase full of such articles. Of course this desire to include everything carried with it a failure to exercise critical selection in some cases.

Meumann was not only theoretically a pioneer in the new science of experimental pedagogy in Germany, but by his very varied academic career he served to break the ice for the actual practical establishment of experimental pedagogical seminars. Thus in his comparatively brief career he made the following changes, from Leipzig to Zurich, to Königsberg, to Münster, to Halle (as Ebbinghaus's successor), to Leipzig, and finally to Hamburg. In addition to this he gave to numerous teachers' associations throughout Germany series of lectures which formed the basis of his largest work.

As an investigator and student he was an absolutely indefatigable worker, and his early death was in a large measure due to the fact that he did not know how to rest. He was always planning to take vacations, but when the time came round he usually had so many irons in the fire in connection with his many interests that instead of resting he worked all the harder because of the lack of interruption by lectures and class work. Even his one hobby of collecting Oriental carpets was pursued with the same untiring energy. Any one who visited him in his later days will always remember him as working hard to explain the points of difference in the various kinds of carpets, and showing the course of their development with regard to pattern and workmanship.

As a teacher he was unusually stimulating. As one of his students once said, "Meumann could in five minutes propose enough material for two or three doctor's theses on almost any topic in his field." The greatest difficulty that most of his students had was in picking out a sufficiently restricted problem from the wide-reaching suggestions that were made, in order to have even a remote chance of completing the work in the time allowed. This enormous breadth of

view is shown all through Meumann's own work. From his own doctor's thesis on he was always outlining and intending to carry out a far more inclusive investigation than he or any other man could hope to accomplish in a lifetime. But even though he did not himself carry out these proposed lines of research, the outlines for future work constitute his chief contribution to the progress of the new science of pedagogy. He has been accused of scattering his energy over too many and too diverse fields, but in this very scattering lay his chief opportunity for far-reaching influence. His task was to break new ground; it is for those who follow to see that this pioneer work is properly carried out to its logical conclusion.

As a man Meumann was the very essence of courtesy. It was next to impossible to get the better of him in a bout of compliments. When all other resources failed he would come out victorious with the remark "*Ganz auf meiner Seite.*" In spite of the great respect that was paid to him wherever he went he was always modest and unassuming and even tried to place the credit for any work which he himself had done on some one else who had merely taken a collaborator's part. It may be said without any reserve that personally he was a perfect gentleman.

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A TACHISTOSCOPE FOR CLASS EXPERIMENT AND DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES.

The need for and value of class experiments in the teaching of educational psychology have frequently been expressed in the pages of this JOURNAL and indications have from time to time been given as to how they may be employed in various spheres. If, however, the range of applicability of class experiments is to be extended, the instruments generally employed in experimental psychology will have to be modified, or new instruments devised.

The value of the tachistoscope in experimental psychology is known to all teachers and students of the subject; but, as the ordinary type can be used only for individual work and the cost of the instrument prevents it from being reduplicated for large classes, the writer has been led to consider whether a new and cheap form, suitable for class purposes, could not be devised.