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THE RELATION OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING TO OTHER PROFESSIONS¹

ON the wall of a great engineering library is the legend "Engineering is the art of organizing and directing men, and of controlling the forces and materials of nature for the benefit of the human race." This is broad and all-embracing, but other professions will find it hard successfully to quarrel with it. While the immediate object of engineering is a material one, engineers draw from many different channels of human energy, such as generalship, commerce, psychology, mechanics, economics, to say nothing of chemistry and physics and many others, all under an interpretation, insight and method that are best described by the term scientific.

It may be asked, Why could not a similar statement of embrasure or scope apply to medicine, the law, the army and other professions? In part it could, but it is to engineering that it applies preeminently. The subject-matter of the older professions, the things about which they busy themselves, and the objects they seek to accomplish have changed relatively little in many centuries. The means have altered but the ends persist. They are approximately the same to-day as they have been throughout history and tradition. With engineering it is different. There was no such profession a hundred and fifty years ago, and if I may a little anticipate my conclusion, there will be no such profession a hundred and fifty years hence in respect to a large part of what we now call engineering.

¹ President's address presented at the twenty-ninth annual convention of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, Boston, Mass., June 25, 1912.

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