

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 1913

GALILEO, THE PHYSICIST¹

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THE mission of an academy of science is a function of the age in which it flourishes. The ancient academies accomplished a work now performed by the universities. The Italian academies of the Renaissance, variously estimated at from 500 to 700 in number, represent different purposes almost as numerous as the institutions themselves. But in general they were literary and scientific clans; they belonged to a period when learning was the possession of the few, to a period when one might still take all science for his domain.

The modern academy is, as a rule, closely allied with the sovereign power of some state, whose interests are promoted by it, consciously and unconsciously, in a variety of ways. The service which it renders is sometimes political, sometimes literary, sometimes scientific, sometimes social. But, so far as I can see, they all have, in common, these two ends, namely, the encouragement of the individual and service to the community.

The triple purpose of the Illinois State Academy of Science is clearly stated in the second article of its constitution as being "the promotion of scientific research, the diffusion of scientific knowledge and of the scientific spirit, and the unification of the scientific interests of the state"; just how this object can best be secured is the interesting subject of an after-dinner discussion this evening.

I leave this problem, therefore, with the

¹ Presidential address, delivered before the Illinois Academy of Science, at Peoria, February 21, 1913.

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

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