

SCIENCE

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

THE TREND AND INFLUENCE OF CERTAIN PHASES OF TAXONOMY¹

"ENOUGH is sometimes too much," says the newspaper philosopher. I suspect some of you are thinking right now that we have already had enough systematic botany, but as briefly as I can I wish to try to show you that while it is true that we have already had too much, it is equally true that we have had too little.

Do not feel alarmed because of the magnitude of my subject. I shall not deal with it as a whole—only certain phases of it and their influence. Before attempting my main message may I voice a plea for the old-time systematic botany? It is of course primarily the handmaid to all of the other subdivisions of the science, but apart from that is it not in itself a desideratum of no small moment?

It trains the perceptive faculties, teaches orderliness, develops judgment and strengthens reason. It is therefore a cultural course of no small significance to all who take it and, as some of us know, the source of much pleasure to many. There is a saving grace in botany not found in most of the other sciences and this is exercised through taxonomy more fully than through all its other divisions combined. Systematic work for its own sake is distinctly worth while. It develops in the student or the amateur, who achieves a fair measure of success, a feeling of confidence in himself and gives that stimulus for further mental effort that only the conquering of a definite problem affords. In this respect it may be compared to mathe-

¹ Read before the Botanical Society of America at Atlanta, December 30, 1913.

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