

**WHAT IS
PRAGMATISM?**

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What is pragmatism? by James Bissett Pratt

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JAMES BISSETT PRATT

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF "

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WHAT IS PRAGMATISM?

BY

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IN WILLIAMS COLLEGE

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1909

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To

JOHN EDWARD RUSSELL

THE KEENEST AND KINDLIEST CRITIC OF PRAGMATISM

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

IN GRATEFUL AND SINCERE AFFECTION

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PREFACE

DURING the spring of 1908 I received an invitation from Mr. Stephen F. Weston to give a course of six lectures the following summer at the Glenmore Summer School, and to choose my own subject. Unfortunately for the school, as it turned out, I decided to make use of the opportunity to say certain things about pragmatism that had long been stirring in my soul; and "Pragmatism, A Critique," was, accordingly, advertised in the circular of the school as the subject of my lectures. I say my choice was unfortunate for the school, for when, after a twenty-mile drive into the heart of the Adirondacks, I reached Glenmore, I found that the patrons of the school had to a man (and almost to a woman) postponed their arrival to the following week, and it looked as if Mr. Weston and myself would

constitute the bulk of the audience. By the help of the neighbors, however, we managed to corral several philosophers who were known to be at large in the mountains, and several lovers of philosophy, who by their kindly interest and helpful suggestions more than made up for the paucity of their numbers. The purpose of the publication of this book is, therefore, to show those who did *not* go to Glenmore last summer (and this includes a fairly large portion of the human race) how much they missed.

The criticisms of my friends at Glenmore proved decidedly valuable, and the following pages have, therefore, been somewhat recast since I gave the lectures; yet it has seemed advisable to retain the lecture form as best adapted to somewhat popular and informal exposition. For though I have nowhere allowed the desire for simplicity and popularity to interfere with thoroughness of treatment, and though I have used technical language where exactness demanded it, my aim has been throughout to give an exposi-