

LESSONS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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Lessons in Psychology by E. Helen Hannahs

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E. HELEN HANNAHS

**LESSONS IN
PSYCHOLOGY**

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PREFACE

THE lessons are designed particularly for the use of teachers and those who are studying to be teachers. The principles of psychology, however, as here presented show the bearing of the subject in the affairs of daily life, and for this reason it is hoped that the book will be of interest as well to others.

Though it has not been customary to follow the plan of the Lesson-Unit in teaching above the grades, I have ventured to arrange my material according to it, since that material is for the most part elementary. And long experience has confirmed my opinion that it is helpful in all work in the classroom to follow in spirit, at least, each day the general plan of the three steps of preparation, presentation, and application.

In using the lessons in the classroom teachers will find many of them as given too long for one day's work. A week is not too much time to spend in reaching, for example, the law of associations here developed in the first lesson. For the formulation of this law pupils will be interested to trace in class and outside many trains of association and to talk about them familiarly as they do about the facts of nature or mathematics. And in most of the subjects, indeed, pupils may spend profitably a much longer time than one lesson in watching, giving, and discussing their experience before they are led to generalize.

A great amount of practice is necessary, moreover, to accustom one's self, say, to trace trains of association, to find first members, to realize when one has omitted members,—in short, to become really familiar with the process of watching the stream of thought from the standpoint of

associations and to establish the habit of observation. The lessons are quite without meaning unless this detailed observation is persistently continued.

Psychology to be of value to a teacher or to any one else must be a habit of mind. Such a knowledge as one gains in reading a technical book on the subject when one says of a fact, "Yes; that is true; I'll remember it," might be called an assenting knowledge. A few facts gained in this way no doubt become available in guiding daily life, but not a large enough number to pay for the time spent in this mode of study.

If, on the other hand, a person sets earnestly to work to master his own thought processes, the ways of his mind, he will soon accumulate a mass of observations, which indeed "are not in themselves science, but without which there is no science" for him. The kind of knowledge of psychology that he can make out of this material is the kind that is valuable, the kind that is available daily and hourly in the schoolroom and everywhere. It is not just formal, academic information about a text-book, it is rather knowledge of the subject in our hearts and lives—willed, professional wisdom.

The lessons are offered then, not with the aim to present theories of psychology, nor yet to record the progress that has been made in the science. There has been no attempt even to classify the material logically. The purpose of the book is rather to indicate one way in which by the study of his own experience a person may gain a working idea of some of the simple, general, and commonly accepted truths of mind.

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Lessons in Psychology

CHAPTER I

ASSOCIATIONS

LESSON I

THE LAW OF ASSOCIATIONS

PREPARATION STEP.—I. There is no better place to begin the study of psychology than your own mind, and no better method to follow than that of constant observation of what takes place there. Suppose then that you study your stream of thought, say, from the standpoint of the law of associations.

II. Surely you have noticed occasional trains of association. To gain a working idea, however, of the law, you must make a business of watching what passes through your mind. For convenience in analyzing it, regard your stream of consciousness as though it were all made up of successive trains of associations, each one interrupting the preceding one, and trace, trace, trace your fleeting thoughts morning, noon, and night!

III. After having observed these trains of associations for a time, begin to write out lists of them. Recall the ideas that have helped to make your stream of thought for the last half hour and write them out somewhat in this way: (I just looked to see what time it was.)

- (1.) A visual image of the clock-face;
- (2. Thought words) Eight o'clock; I must do my errands;