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PERCEPTIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL
STUDY OF OBSERVATION AND
REPORT IN SCHOOL CHILDREN**

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No. 12

CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS

An Experimental Study of Observation and Report in
School Children

By

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Since the year 1900, when Binet published his well-known volume upon suggestibility, and more especially since the labors of Professor Stern, of Breslau, during the next few years, there has arisen among psychologists a very keen interest in the psychology of testimony, or psychology of report, to use a more general term. The report, or *Aussage*, as the Germans term it, is an account, either oral or written, and either spontaneous or in response to questions, in which a person seeks to describe a scene or narrate an event that he has witnessed. The report, therefore, clearly implies and hinges upon a previous observation. Experiments with reporting are one way of testing the capacity of school children to observe, and previous experiments with school children by these methods have invariably elicited results and conclusions of pedagogical, as well as psychological value.

In the present monograph Mr. Winch has, happily, used not only the general methods of Professor Stern, but also the identical picture which figured so prominently in the original work of Stern and other German investigators. Moreover, the picture has been reproduced and inserted in the volume, so that all readers may compare the work of the English children with the actual test-object, and may use the

picture and the method for repeating this very interesting and profitable experiment upon themselves, their pupils, and others. In the text of the book will be found not only the statistical tables necessary for this comparison, but also actual reports of children of both sexes and of different ages and school grades. In short, the work is designed to encourage and facilitate the actual trial of the experiment by the reader, and should on this account be especially welcomed by teachers and others interested in experimental pedagogy.

Finally, Mr. Winch's results have an immediate bearing upon the vexed problem of the training of observation in children. They serve particularly to clear the ground for the consideration of this problem by showing what children do, and what they do not observe at different stages of their mental development. It is evident enough that we need to know these facts before we can proceed intelligently to formulate a system of exercises for training observation.

G. M. W.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

This volume is a research in experimental pedagogy.

In England and in other countries, those whose efforts are creating the new science of experimental pedagogy are inspired by a profound belief. They preach a revolution in education. But what kind of revolution, for we have had many before? Most thoughtful teachers indeed, and not a few educationists, have become a little tired of the fashion-like changes which, from time to time, sweep across the educational field; and, after much dislocation and annoyance, vanish within the limbo of the discredited and the forgotten. The believer in experimental pedagogy preaches another kind of revolution—a revolution in the method of determining educational needs and practices. He holds that, until an educational proposal has been submitted to definite tests under rigorously scientific conditions in the schools themselves, there can be no adequate ground for recommending it for general adoption. He holds also that the teachers should have a share in this work of experimental verification.

There is an increasing number of teachers who are willing—nay, anxious—to carry out scientific psychological and pedagogical experiments in schools,

if proper guidance be given them. But they desire to see how this experimental work bears on *their* work; they want it to be practical; and surely these requests are not unreasonable.

One hopes that, in education as in other arts, there will never be a lack of persons to come forward with new ideas. The believer in experimental pedagogy will accord, both to them and to their ideas, a most hearty welcome. "*But,*" he will say, "let us see how your proposals work *through* the teachers *in* the schools before we accept them." Science must become the handmaid of art in education as in other professions. To talk of a science of education before this experimental verification has been done is to use inflated language which has little reference to reality. But for educational ideas securely based on actual knowledge, gathered under school conditions with the help of teachers, there has never been, I believe, throughout the whole history of education, so favorable an opportunity of realization as at present.

W. H. WINCH.

London, February, 1913.