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PRIMER

OF

PSYCHOLOGY

BY

GEORGE TRUMBULL LADD

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN YALE UNIVERSITY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1895
THIS
BOOK
IS DEDICATED
TO THE YOUNG DAUGHTER
OF MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE
WHO HAS BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO READ
IT AND TO SAY THAT SHE HAS
UNDERSTOOD AND
ENJOYED
IT
PREFACE

The writing of this little book was undertaken in part as a recreation between two much more bulky and serious pieces of work. From the personal point of view it may be regarded as the result of a feeling of curiosity—of the author's desire to make the experiment of telling, in a manner to correspond fairly well with its chosen title, the story of the mental life. As the dedication shows, a young friend was kind enough to offer herself as both subject for the experiment and judge of its result. I have tried to make my confidence in the intelligence of my youthful critic the measure of my success.

But besides the more personal interest in such an endeavor, I have hoped in some degree to supply what I believe to be a real need. For it cannot be doubted that there are many adults, as well as youths, who would find some pleasure and perhaps more profit in reading a very brief and simple treatise on psychology.

While adopting the title of "Primer," it has been my aim to avoid both of two extremes. One of these is the extreme of "talking down" to the reader in such manner as to keep unpleasantly before him his own lack of familiarity with the subject
—not to say lack of intelligence and of willingness to think for himself while acquiring the information and thoughts furnished by others. It is my experience that intelligent and self-respecting youth resent this; and, certainly, it is offensive to almost all of that maturer audience which any genuine scholar would care to reach. The other extreme is that of dryness and of difficulty due to excessive condensation without dropping the use of technical language and of strictly scientific modes in presenting the results of previous researches.

In a word, this book simply aims to narrate some of the more obvious facts and principles known to modern scientific psychology in plain and familiar English, and in an orderly but wholly untechnical way. Anything like completeness, whether as respects the topics touched upon or the treatment given to any one of these topics, must not be expected.

I hope and expect that this book will be useful for the instruction of the young in the important subject with which it deals. It would seem not unreasonable also to think that it will be welcome to many adults who are willing to spend a few (but only a few) hours on easy lessons in psychology. It is likely, too, that it may prepare the way, with both classes of readers, for the study of larger and more serious works on the same subject.

It is worth while only to add that the considerable number of experiments constantly used to illustrate each topic can, with few exceptions, be performed
by any reader. Most of them require little or no apparatus; and, of course, by following them out for one's self the interest and value of so elementary a study will be greatly increased. Finally: this book is not to be regarded as an abridgment of any other existing work, whether by its author or by other writers on psychology. It is what its name best indicates—a "Primer."