

*When I arrived at 291 the Spirit of 291 was manifesting itself at its best; 291 himself was at the height of an animated discussion with the Professor.*

*291 is a trinity; a place, a person and a symbol, so be not surprised if I refer without transition to its separate entities.*

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Professor What I wonder at, is why *you* did not tell the world what 291 is.

291 I wanted the other people to tell me.

Prof. Have they done so?

291 Each one of the sixty odd contributors has said what 291 was to him; the sum total of what it is to each individual makes up the spirit of 291.

Prof. Very well, they have given you the spirit of 291 but they have not told you what definite thing 291 represents.

291 It represents nothing definite; it is ever growing, constantly changing and developing.

Prof. And how is it going to develop?

291 That, I do not know; nobody knows.

Prof. But somebody should know; somebody should at least know what it should accomplish. If 291 is nothing definite but only a spirit, how can it do its work? We know now, what the spirit of 291 is, as nearly as a spirit can be known. What we should know for the future is 291 the machine which will provide the channels through which this wonderful spirit can accomplish useful work.

291 That will come of itself, in the course of events.

Prof. Precisely; but there is a logical sequence in the course of events. The past history of 291 shows it. . . You started with a fight for photography; you wanted your problem answered: "What is photography?"; you got the photographers together, you held exhibitions, you published reproductions of meritorious work; writers came who wrote about photography and out of all these efforts came an answer. We all know now what photography is, what it can accomplish; we have standards by which we can judge new work. What was 291 while all this was going on?

291 Nothing but a laboratory, a place for experiments.

Prof. And is it not still a laboratory, only with new problems to solve?

291 That is what it is.

Prof. And what is the object of a laboratory?

291 To experiment.

Prof. And what do experiments lead to?

291 To finding out.

Prof. Now, at last, we have a definition of what 291 is; a laboratory where experiments are conducted in order to find out something. Now, the inevitable sequence which man follows in experimental science is:

1st. *To establish facts or phenomena by observation and experimentation.*

2d. *To arrive through induction from these facts or phenomena to their general relationship or laws.*

3d. *To start from these laws to arrive by logical deductive reasoning to the discovery of other facts which may in turn be included in the general law.*

Now, I have noticed of late that you, 291, have been, so to speak, marking time. You are waiting for the "*WHAT NEXT?*" For me, who have been watching you closely for many years the "*WHAT NEXT?*" is clear. You are at the end of your first period; you have gathered your data, you have made your observations. You are about to enter your second period in which you will arrive at the laws which govern the phenomena you have observed. This may be a long period, for new data will constantly be coming up which may cause you to modify or abandon the theories you will evolve before you strike the answer that will satisfy you. That must be your next step if all your experimenting is not to remain sterile, and when that is done, then we will talk about the last period.

291 But laws are the very things I have been fighting against all my life.

Prof. Let us not quarrel about words. You have been fighting against *FIXED* laws which impede progress and development. The laws I mean are but our conception of the relationship of phenomena which we use as guides in making new discoveries. That, I believe is what you have always sought to discover. If 291 sees clearly the path which is traced for it, great things may be expected from it for its preliminary work has been well done.

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