

## **THE VALUE OF USELESS STUDIES**

### **CECIL POWELL MEMORIAL LECTURE**

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In the late nineteenth century Lord Kelvin and George Francis Fitzgerald, professors of natural philosophy in Glasgow and Dublin, played leading international roles in physics. They had much in common: an Irish background, a passionate lifelong devotion to their subject, high principles, eclectic interests and a strong belief in the power of applied physics to change the world. Kelvin put this into practice in an astonishing series of practical innovations. Fitzgerald's contribution was less direct but he was the principal herald of the age of wireless communication. He defended "the value of useless studies", which we still need to do today.

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