CANCER RESEARCH AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

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Cancer is the most important problem of our time, for two reasons: first, because it kills people more than any other single disease (heart disease, which is higher in the mortality records, is a combination of heart and kidney and other diseases); second, because it has increased so greatly in incidence in recent times — 62 per cent. more deaths in Pennsylvania in twenty-five years, 40.5 per cent. in Australia in ten years, 58.2 per cent. increase in 50 American cities with more than thirty million population in twenty-five years, and in somewhat lesser degree in all civilized communities. In Great Britain in 1928, more than 12 per cent. of all deaths were from cancer, and a great insurance company has estimated the yearly loss from cancer in the United States to be about eight hundred million dollars.

Obviously the disease is a subject to warrant careful consideration and organized effort, for it touches the life of a great number of people. What has been done about it? A devoted group of medical men in a number of countries have studied the disease in man and in animals for many years, with the result that the treatment of cancer has improved in two directions — improved surgical treatment and treatment by radiation, x-rays and radium.

In medicine, as in all other forms of human endeavor, real ideas are rare; methodical development of ideas, after these are suggested or discovered, is common. The development of the automobile, for example, was only an elaboration of detail after the