EMBRYOLOGY AND ITS RELATIONS

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It is my impression that what is expected of a retiring chairman is that he inform the section upon the “state of the nation” in his branch of science. Were I to attempt this in a phrase I should say that it was that of the Tower of Babel. On our program papers are listed by the hundred and are presented in various scientific languages, only one or two of which I can speak, and many speakers are talking at once, to the bewilderment of would-be listeners.

In contrast let us go back to the corresponding meeting forty years ago, when the American Society of Zoologists was called the American Morphological Society. Thirty-five papers were presented, four of them by title. A number of them dealt with the centrosome. There were several on biometry, but only one experimental study—that by Davenport on “The Role of Water in Growth.” Dr. Minot described his newly invented rotary microtome. It is safe to say that had a Rip Van Winkle gone to sleep after that meeting and not awakened until now, he would have scarcely understood any of the papers on this year’s program.

One wonders about the origin of all this present commotion, whether it does not go back to the instincts of primitive man—the nomadic hunter and the unskilled tiller of the soil. In his contact with nature he must have been impressed by the great diversity of living creatures as compared with the inorganic, and by their mysterious coming and going. Naturally he was most interested in those animals and plants that afforded food or were otherwise of practical im-