PATHWAYS OF MEDICAL PROGRESS¹

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On occasions such as this we gather together from laboratories and hospitals as disciples of scientific medicine. We assemble, primarily, for the purpose of exchanging views on problems which seem to have crystallized for each of us individually. Current reviews thus prepared by thoughtful minds and representing diverse perspectives afford those engaged in other fields an opportunity to keep in touch with the trends of contemporaneous research in specialized fields.

But these occasions have other functions, too. The frank exchange of opinions and the exposition of facts upon which they are founded serve to re-energize us, even if like opposite charges they outwardly seem to repel. As no effective electrical forces can exist without positive and negative charges, so no dynamic forces can be induced in research without a polarity of opinion. Furthermore, we who, despite earnest efforts, frequently become dissatisfied with our own contributions need to revitalize our faith occasionally by noting that the summation of modest efforts has contributed quite as much to medical progress as the occasional big discoveries.

However, impressive as the advance has been during the past quarter century, occasions such as this are opportune for reexamining our current methods and procedures with a view to planning still more efficient and economical means for accelerating it. I shall attempt to review the major pathways over which we have reached our present stage of progress in medicine, and, as we proceed, shall stop occasionally to note the ruts in the road and obvious suggestions for their repair. Since this assembly is dominantly interested

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of the Section on Medical Sciences, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Columbus, December 28, 1939.
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