

SCIENCE

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CONTENTS

<i>Contemporary Deterrents to the Process of Clinical Medicine:</i> DR. SYDNEY R. MILLER....	577
<i>Photoperiodism, the Response of the Plant to Relative Length of Day and Night:</i> DR. W. W. GARNER, DR. H. A. ALLARD.....	582
<i>Fish Parasitism in its relation to the Biological Problems of the Northwest:</i> DR. NATHAN FASTEN.....	583
<i>The Third Asiatic Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History:</i> DR. ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS.....	584
<i>Scientific Events:</i>	
<i>The University of Halifax; Activities of the Rockefeller Foundation; The Annual Meeting of the American Ceramic Society; The Illinois State Academy of Science; The Third International Congress of the History of Medicine.....</i>	587
<i>Scientific Notes and News.....</i>	590
<i>University and Educational Notes.....</i>	593
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:</i>	
<i>The Writing of Popular Science:</i> DR. N. ERNEST DORSEY, J. O'H. COSGRAVE. <i>The University of Graz:</i> DR. L. B. BECKING. <i>Request for Papers on Geological Diffusion:</i> DR. GEORGE OTIS SMITH.....	593
<i>Atmospheric Pollution:</i> DR. ALEXANDER McADIE.....	596
<i>Special Articles:</i>	
<i>The Pollen Tubes and Abortive Ovules of the Globe Mutant of Datura:</i> DR. JOHN T. BUCHHOLZ and DR. ALBERT F. BLAKESLEE....	597
<i>The Mathematical Association of America:</i> PROFESSOR W. D. CAIRNS.....	599
<i>The Mathematical Society of America:</i> PROFESSOR R. G. D. RICHARDSON.....	600

CONTEMPORARY DETERRENTS TO THE PROCESS OF CLINICAL MEDICINE¹

INTRODUCTION.—It has been said that “Methods and view points rather than men determine periods in the history of medicine.” Following an era dominated by the study of structural pathology and of those physical signs expressive of structural change, there occurred a rather abrupt transition to a period characterized by investigation of the *function* of the various organs of the body in health and disease. Within the past fifty years there has been an increasing utilization of the sciences of chemistry, physics, biology, and mathematics, employed by investigators in their endeavor to measure function in exact ways, to estimate the degree of functional impairment in an organ diseased, to establish diagnosis upon a functional basis, and to institute therapy along lines calculated to prevent *functional* deterioration. By some, the contemporary period is termed “the golden age in medicine.” That period will have come more truly when there is a more appropriate correlation between functional impairment and structural change. Contemporary medicine has lost somewhat by its neglect of pathological anatomy.

This “functional” period in medicine has been marked by numerous well recognized trends. It has witnessed the development of an enormous number of laboratory tests and procedures. Many mechanical devices and instruments of precision have been introduced, designed to detect the slightest deviation from the so-called normal. The period has been associated with the sub-division of medicine into a great number of specialties, and a marked re-

¹ Presidential address read before the American Congress on Internal Medicine, at Rochester, Minnesota, April 7, 1922.

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