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ON THE URGENCY OF RESEARCH ON THE GREAT PORTAL TO DISEASE IN THE BODY¹

IN selecting as the subject of my address on this occasion the urgency of research in a line along which little progress has been made, I am led to do so by considerations which I think will appeal to many of my hearers. It is, first of all, one which is of transcendent importance as an antecedent to any great advance in scientific medicine in the near future. On looking over the road on which so much progress has been made in the last forty years, one cannot but be impressed with the idea that all the old lines of research have been developed as far as they are capable of yielding results commensurate with the expenditure of time and energy given to them and that we are now in the stage of diminishing returns. The record since 1880 is crowded with discoveries in scientific medicine which will preserve from oblivion those who have made them, but unless some new lines of attack on great problems are to be thrown open the record for the next thirty or forty years will not have to its credit similar achievements. A recognition that our present methods of research in scientific medicine are not to give solutions of some of the great problems in disease which still confront us is already beginning to prevail. The distinguished clinician, Sir James MacKenzie, who has been during the last thirty years one of the keenest students, on the scientific side, of clinical medicine, is so convinced that scientific medicine as now developed is not going to yield any further conquests of importance that he has been compelled to seek a new line of research which may give results which will initiate a new and great advance in medical science. The new line which he has taken is the study of the beginnings of disease in the individual, that is, a close and very careful observation of

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section K—Physiology and Experimental Medicine, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Boston, December, 1922.

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