

# SCIENCE

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## THE INTER-RELATION OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES<sup>1</sup>

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SECTION N of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has for its field the medical sciences. I do not know that in this organization the question what are the medical sciences has ever been raised or discussed. I take it, however, that it is generally assumed that the medical sciences include at least human anatomy and human physiology. At any rate, the workers in these fields find no home in this association except in this section. It is also taken for granted that among the medical sciences are included all the myriad branches of medicine, many of which have sprung into being during recent decades. Recently it has almost seemed that whenever two or three have gathered together to deal with a special medical problem, the suffix o-l-o-g-y has been added to the name of the subject treated, and a new science has been born.

To the practical American there seems to be little value in attempting a rigid classification of the sciences, such as has been attempted by Bacon, Spencer, Karl Pearson and others. Yet any serious consideration of the various sciences and of their interrelations may make us realize how much we take for granted and how illogical in many respects is the present situation.

From its derivation, the term medicine has to do strictly with healing, and the term designates either the agent employed in healing or the branch of knowledge which has to do with the prevention, cure or alleviation of human disease. It is obvious, however, that in spite of this definition medicine has come to mean something much more inclusive than therapeutics. If it does not this section is dealing with the application of science, not science itself, even though various sciences are contributing to it. It is true that the application of knowledge to practical ends neither lessens the importance of that knowledge nor lowers the dignity of him who so uses it. This association, however, is chiefly interested in the pursuit of knowledge, not its application. And in the striving after knowledge, experience has shown that any limitations, such as usefulness, placed upon the results of the searcher seriously handicap him in his

<sup>1</sup> Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section N—Medical Sciences, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Nashville, December, 1927.

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