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ment of sight and hearing. Here is an opportunity for the youngest member of the medical staff to distinguish himself by post-graduating long enough to become reasonably familiar with this work and taking it up in a systematic manner. He would find a rich field for study and practice and would confer great benefit on those in need of such assistance beside preparing himself in a congenial line of work in which he might some time later wish to specialize. He could examine the eyes and ears of all present inmates, as well as those of new arrivals, and by properly tabulating his results could make them a valuable addition to the history of each child. There are at present no data concerning the visual and aural conditions of inmates of American institutions. If some young man with a literary turn of mind will accumulate and publish such data in the form of a monograph he will have done a work of considerable scientific value and interest and one which would be greatly appreciated by students and writers.

With modern medicine pushing into every possible field of research and leaving no stone unturned to discover causes and effects, we should not neglect the plain and simple problems. The tendency of the day is, I believe, for us to allow our minds to become too firmly fixed on the minute and abstruse to the neglect of some things which are more easily seen and which would yield more practical results with less work.

I hope none of my remarks will be in any way construed as a criticism on the noble work being done by the gentlemen of the association. I simply offer them as suggestions of what may be done in the future.



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## EDITORIAL.

### THE VALUE OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION.

No feature of training children and youth is more to be emphasized than the habit of observation. The corollary of this is the habit of noting and comparing associated facts; of learning to read the lessons that nature is constantly presenting in graphic and tangible form.

It is a long way from the old, conventional custom of reading into the pupil the lessons of the school and the modern plan of requiring the pupil to read his own lessons out of the things he sees, touches and hears. Fortunately, minds are not all made alike. Their interpretations of similar things are not the same. As some one has aptly said, "Millions of people had watched an apple fall to the earth, but only Sir Issac Newton saw the earth

fall to the apple." So, when human minds are taught to observe carefully the things of nature about them, she speaks to each in a language which he, perhaps, better than any one else, can interpret. It is thus that we have new discoveries that give us definite laws, and he who persistently follows a line of systematic observation, comparison and deduction, is sure, in the end, to find something which has passed unnoticed by others.

We are, to-day, in the midst of a wide-spread and intense interest in the study of heredity, and we have every reason to believe that the next few years will be fruitful of many practical and definite laws pertaining to the improvement of plants, animals and, let us hope, mankind by careful breeding. But all this wonderful interest has arisen from the published results of experiments by the Austrian monk, Mendel, who patiently planted and grew and compelled to be fertilized as he desired, a few, simple, garden flowers. He worked, of course, with a definite aim and fertilized for a definite purpose. But the secret of his success lay in the fact that he observed his plants carefully, made careful records of his results and kept up the experimentation until he had sufficient data from which to draw definite conclusions.

The laws of Mendel are already recognized as authoritative in plant breeding and have even been successfully demonstrated to be true in animal breeding, and we shall expect large results in the future. Mendel's flowers were no different from those of the same species during the whole history of the world. They grew, blossomed, faded—grew, blossomed and faded, century after century. Thousands and thousands of people watched the processes, but yet it remained for this simple monk to study and compare colors, form of leaf, length of stem, and find the genetic relation that given characteristics of progeny bear to their progenitors and thus deduce definite laws.

Thus nature is always ready to disclose her secrets to the thoughtful student, and Mendel, the Austrian monk, will be known in history when the multimillionaires of to-day are long forgotten.



## PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL ADDRESS\*

GEORGE MOGRIDGE, M. D., GLENWOOD, IOWA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION: For the second time in the history of the association we are in annual session at the Iowa institution and I assure you that your visit is a pleasure which has been looked forward to, not only from the associations we have anticipated but from the influence and uplift that such a gathering confers.

Twenty-two years ago was the occasion of your first visit and I am satisfied that the impressions for good resulting from it have not yet faded from our institution traditions and if from the present meeting shall radiate similar lasting results, the effects of it will be for the next quarter of a century.

There has, in recent times, been some question as to the advisability of continuing to hold the annual meeting at one or other of the institutions; it has been suggested that they might be better attended if held in some central city. For my part I look upon the association as having been abundantly successful under the present arrangement and this fact leads me to conclude that a change is not at this time imperative. This matter I trust will be fully discussed and doubtless a wise conclusion will be reached. Another matter in this connection is the time of meeting. June is a busy month with institution people; probably our members are less free in this month than in any other. Some have annual meetings and all that they entail, on their hands; with others it is the close of the fiscal year and with all it finds the added work entailed by the close of the school year. This matter I trust will also receive your consideration. Realizing the importance of a liberal attendance at our meetings and somewhat of the difficulties as to the present custom as to time and place, the officers have made special effort this year to obtain a full representation in order that the foregoing matters might be fully considered. The object of our association is, "The discussion of all questions relating to the causes, conditions and statistics of idiocy and to the management, training and education of idiots and feeble-minded persons; it will also lend its influence to the establishment and fostering of institutions for this purpose."

How well the objects promulgated by the fathers of our work have been lived up to is demonstrated in the number of states that have made special provision for this class in the past thirty years. In 1876 there were six institutions devoted to the care of these children—at present there are twenty-eight such. The most recently established is in the state of Montana. In 1895 a building was completed for the care and training of feeble-minded children in connection with the state school for the deaf and blind at Boulder, and doubtless this is the nucleus of what will in time be a separate

\*Delivered at the meeting of the American Association for the Study of the Feeble-Minded, Glenwood, Iowa, June 13, 1906.