As the meetings of the New York Neurological Society were held in the building of the New York Academy of Medicine, and as the regular November meeting was held on the second Tuesday of the month instead of the first Tuesday, on the same evening that the meeting of the Academy Section on Neurology and Psychiatry was held, it had been deemed suitable to hold a joint meeting annually on that evening. This has been done during the past two years.

It was to be hoped that the abundance of clinical material controlled by the members of this society would be sufficient incentive for the cultivation of a persistent initiative in offering cases for demonstration. Essays and other scientific material should also in a large measure be volunteered.

Before relinquishing the chair, the speaker took pleasure in expressing his grateful appreciation of the privilege and honor of having served as president of this society for the last two years. In thanking the members for their support and coöperation during that time, he wished to bespeak their continued enthusiasm and activity in behalf of his successor.

ADDRESS OF THE INCOMING PRESIDENT

By Frederick Tilney, M.D.

Dr. Frederick Tilney said that in taking the chair of this distinguished society, he wished to express his appreciation of the honor bestowed upon him; this office was a privilege, but it was also a responsibility. It was customary for a newly elected presiding officer of a scientific society to forecast the general trend of the proceedings for the ensuing year; in doing so, the speaker wished also to call attention to various opportunities in the neurological field.

The indispensable task of classifying, recording and cataloguing the diseases of the human nervous system was now nearly completed, due to the genius and industry of the past century. Attention could now, therefore, be devoted to the underlying causes and more thought could be given to the mechanism rather than to the syndrome. The nervous system had come to be recognized not only as a reflector of the many currents of life, but as a regulator of these currents. Called into being by the need of coördination, the nervous system held an intimate relation to the processes of metabolism. The necessity of understanding the mechanism of this relation was now becoming clearer and its problems more well defined. These were the problems of organic differentiation and the maintenance of such differentiation, of growth and the maintenance of limitations of growth, of the management of the chemical sources of energy—in a word, the regulation of metabolism; all of which problems lay within the province of neurology.

The underlying mechanism was in part mechanical, but more certainly chemical. There was a rich field for investigation for neurologists in the important bearing of the discrete endocrinous organs on the control of differentiation and growth. Present day interest in internal secretion demanded that every possible source of such secretory activity be explored and its mode of action investigated.

It was known that the thyroid was capable of accelerating somatic differentiation but had no power to stimulate growth. On the other hand, there was no evidence that the thyroid possessed the power to inhibit growth; when such suppression did occur, due to disturbance in this organ, it was incident to such rapid differentiation that proper growth was prevented. Experimental evidence also showed that the thymus had the power to stimulate somatic growth, but lacked the power of producing differentiation.

That the gonads, especially in the male, had much influence upon somatic growth and sex-differentiation, had long been recognized. A number of other structures must now be added to this class, chief among them being the cortex of the adrenal. This organ was genetically related to the gonad and, in the lower forms, remained distinct from that portion described as the medulla of the mammalian adrenal. During the breeding season, in pregnancy and after castration the cortex of the adrenal body enlarged. Disease of it in females led to the diminution of certain female sex characteristics and the development of male characteristics.

The relation of the pituitary gland to somatic growth and sex differentiation had, perhaps, received more extensive attention than any other endocrine organ. But even here there was room for further investigation, particularly in the relation of this gland to the epiphysis cerebri.

Differences of opinion still existed concerning the essential nature of the pineal body. It was regarded by some as an active gland, by others as a vestigium. The question was raised as to whether the nervous system was capable of giving rise to glandular tissue and this at first glance seemed like a serious obstacle. Certainly the nervous system was the most highly differentiated of tissues and the least likely to be pluripotent in its derivatives. Notwithstanding this, however, it might be demonstrated that it was quite possible for glandular structures to develop from the encephalic roof plate. There was evidence also that the epiphysis was primarily concerned in glandular development, but this required further investigation. Upon a decision in this matter would depend the acceptance of the pineal relation to growth and sex differentiation as well as its reciprocal relations with the pituitary gland.

There was an opportunity for the study of mechanisms in the fact that while the sympathetic nervous system in one capacity held sway autonomically over the biochemical and physical aspects of the vegetative life, in its equally important phase it served as the intermediary between this life and the psychic activities. In these respects there was indeed an opportunity for the study of mechanisms. There could be little doubt but that in the light of this study manifold complexes—sexual, gastro-enteric, cardio-vascular and respiratory—would disclose the secret of their difficulties and much less frequent use would be made of the convenient carry-all diagnosis, neurasthenia.

The striatum was a part of the nervous system which was a particularly promising subject for subsequent consideration. In addition, recent advances in knowledge of the cerebellar mechanism required attention, particularly in the matter of cerebellar localization. The newer work on muscle tonus, especially in its relation to the sympathetic system, introduced another point of view which should be investigated. In a word, there was no more fascinating or ultimately profitable field of investigation in neurology to-day than the study of those mechanisms which contributed to the organization of somatic motion.

No prospectus of neurological thought or endeavor was complete without a word concerning psychoanalysis. The psychoanalysts had developed a valuable method with which to search out and release the hidden difficulties of many who otherwise would not have received relief. But there was danger in the indiscriminate application of this method. Many believed that other parts of the body preëmpted cerebral activity while the gonad was yet little more than a struggling anlage, and that desires and repressions arose from impulses other than those directly or indirectly connected with sexual life. The restriction of psychoanalysis to the sexual sphere would seem to deprive a good method of its fullest application. It might be that there were opportunities for the psychoanalysts in the study of the phylogeny of behavior. In any event, the researches of the animal behaviorists could not fail to be constructive in the conception of psychic activity.

While intent upon the investigation of the mechanisms of the nervous system, clinical obligations should not be overlooked. Something of practical value should be demonstrated. The most promising opportunities along this line seemed to be in the relation of neurology to social problems which included those pertaining to mental hygiene, mental defectiveness and delinquency, prison reform, industrial regulation guarding against the development of occupation neuroses, the epidemiology of acute infectious diseases involving the nervous system and other allied subjects having sociological aspects.

Many of the topics here referred to as offering opportunities in neurology were at the present time engaging the interest and efforts of members of this society. It would seem advantageous, therefore, in order to encourage and develop the original work already in the process of preparation, to conduct the meetings as symposia upon assigned subjects and by thus concentrating deliberations, render them most valuable. In accordance with this idea the director of the Psychiatric Clinic, recently established at Sing Sing, at the March meeting would deliver an address on prison reform, and the succeeding programs would be planned so that the end of the year would see the neurological field widely represented in the annals of this society.