

Mental Retardation Institute

The New York Medical College's Mental Retardation Institute recently dedicated a new facility which is the first unit of the Westchester Medical Center being built on the Grasslands Reservation in Valhalla, New York. The institute headed by Dr. Margaret J. Giannini and staffed

by multidisciplinary teams has helped more than 6000 retarded individuals since its inception in the college's pediatric clinic in 1950. The staff now expects to treat 500 new patients a year and to provide 25,000 visits annually for outpatients.

The new facility has 24 beds for

patients undergoing diagnoses, adjoining apartments for the use of parents if their presence is required, and special rooms for audiology, myelography and neuroradiology tests. There is a unit for visual training, a dental department, auditorium and a library of material on the management of retardates.

MD REMEMBERS: Sir Francis Galton

■ Francis Galton, born 150 years ago, is usually remembered as the father of eugenics and the author of *Hereditary Genius*, but his interests embraced many disciplines.

A onetime student of medicine, explorer, geographer, meteorologist, statistician and experimental psychologist, he founded an anthropometry laboratory and initiated the science of fingerprinting.

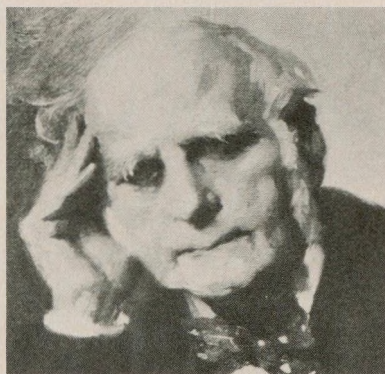
Galton was a grandson of Dr. Erasmus Darwin and a half cousin of Charles Darwin. He was born to a wealthy Quaker family near Sparbrook, Birmingham, on February 16, 1822. He was tutored at home by one of his sisters until he was eight when he was sent to school first in Boulogne, then at Kenilworth; at 14 he entered King Edward's School in Birmingham.

When he was 16 Francis was introduced to medicine by observing an autopsy from which he returned "chilled, awed, and sobered." His next introduction was pleasanter: a tour of medical institutions in Europe with his father's friend, the distinguished physician Sir William Bowman. After this trip he became a pupil at the Birmingham General Hospital, studied medicine and mathematics at Cambridge.

In 1844 Galton inherited a fortune from his father, abandoned all thought of becoming a physician and set out for Egypt. He traveled by camel caravan to Khartoum, cruised on the White Nile, sailed from Alexandria to Beirut, studied Hebrew in Damascus and visited Jordan and the Dead Sea. From 1850 to 1852 he undertook a 1700-mile journey through unexplored country in southwest Africa and returned through Spain to England to receive the Royal Geographical Society's gold medal. He described his expedition in *Tropical South Af-*

rica, offered some advice for future safaris in *The Art of Travel*; after the publication of these books he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society.

Galton next turned his attention



to meteorology and discovered the importance of anticyclones in weather systems. He published his *Meteorographica* in 1863 and played an important part in establishing the Meteorological Office and the National Physical Laboratory.

The cloud of controversy that swirled around Darwin's *Origin of Species* inspired Galton to study heredity, especially the inheritance of physical and mental characters. As the study of this subject was hampered by the lack of quantitative information Galton launched anthropometric researches.

At the International Health Exhibition in London in 1884 he measured people's height, weight, arm span, breathing power, sight and hearing with instruments he devised himself. In his laboratory in the South Kensington Museum he collected anthropometric data on 9000 individuals which resulted in setting up the Biometric Laboratory at University College in London. From this work he developed the

system of identification by fingerprints that is now in universal use.

On the basis of his statistical analysis of inherited characteristics Galton concluded in his book *Hereditary Genius* that special talents run in certain families. In *Natural Inheritance* he advocated the application of scientific breeding to human populations and strongly urged that seriously defective individuals be restrained from reproducing, principles that he named "eugenics." In his will he endowed the chair of eugenics at University College which was first held by his favorite pupil Karl Pearson, who later established the science of biometrics.

One of Galton's oddest studies purported to prove that prayer exerted no measurable effect on health because the average life span of 97 members of the royal family had been shorter than 513 less prayed-for commoners. Another bizarre calculation tabulated in *Natural Inheritance* indicated that of 46 percent of ill-tempered married men 24 percent had bad-tempered wives and 22 percent had mates with sunny dispositions.

A gentle, generous and modest man, Galton was given to eccentricities. To see over the heads of a crowd he carried a periscope-like device or a brick on which to stand. Some of his unpublished works contained a description of a Utopia, called "Kantsaywhere," governed by eugenic principles.

The recipient of the Copley, Huxley, Darwin-Wallace medals, Galton was awarded honorary degrees by Oxford and Cambridge and was knighted in his 87th year. On January 17, 1911 while visiting Haslemere for his health he died of heart failure.

* Greek *eugenes*, wellborn.