

pily. For us, however, it must never be the blind unquestioning trust of the devotee, but the confidence of the inquiring spirit that would prove all things. But it is so much easier to believe than to doubt, for doubt connotes thinking, and the expenditure of energy, and often the disruption of the *status quo*. And then we doctors have always been a simple, trusting folk! Did we not believe Galen implicitly for 1,500 years and Hippocrates for more than 2,000? Now, my first contention is, that we are still too apt to have the placid faith of the simple believer instead of the fighting faith of the aggressive doubter, and this has ever been our besetting sin in the matter of treatment.

In the progress of knowledge each generation has a double labour—to escape from the intellectual thralls of the one from which it has emerged and to forge anew its own fetters. Upon us whose work lay in the last quarter of the 19th century fell the great struggle with that many-headed monster Polypharmacy—not the true polypharmacy which is the skilful combination of remedies, but the giving of many—the practice of at once discharging a heavily loaded prescription at every malady, or at every symptom of it. Much has been done and an extraordinary change has come over the profession, but it has not been a fight to the finish. Many were lukewarm; others found it difficult to speak without giving offence in quarters where on other grounds respect and esteem were due. As an enemy to indiscriminate drugging I have often been branded as a therapeutic nihilist. That I should even venture to speak on the subject calls to mind what Professor Peabody of Harvard remarked about Jacob Bibelow, that “for his professorship of materia medica he had very much the same qualifications that a learned unbeliever might have for a professorship of Christian theology. No other man of his time had so little faith in drugs.” I bore this reproach cheerfully, coming, as I knew it did, from men who did not appreciate the difference between the giving of medicines and the treatment of disease, moreover, it was for the galled jade to wince, ‘my withers were unwrung.’ The heavy hands of the great Arabians grow lighter in each generation. Though dead, Avicenna and Mesue still speak, not only in the Arabic signs which we use, but in the combinations and multiplicity of the constituents of too many of our prescriptions. We are fortunately getting rid of routine practice in the use of drugs. How many of us now prescribe an emetic? And yet that shrewd old man, Nathaniel Chapman, who graced the profession of Philadelphia for so long, used to say “everything else I have written may disappear, but my chapter on emetics will last!” How much less now does habit control our practice in the use of expectorants? The blind faith which some men have in medicines illustrates too often the greatest of all human capacities—the capacity for self-deception. One special advantage of the skeptical attitude of mind is that a