

If by *chance*—*chance* is indeed the term to use here—if on any treatment there supervenes a very prompt and marked amelioration he attributes all the honour to the natural course of the disease. Example:—A young man of nineteen, very robust, comes into the hospital on the 11th May, on account of a pneumonia of the right lung, of a highly inflammatory and severe form. On the 13th and 14th Skoda causes him to take infusion of Foxglove, which induces six stools a day. On the 15th a pound of blood is drawn from his arm by his orders. Next day, the 16th, the pulse, which on the preceding evening, was at 100, falls to 66. To explain so notable and prompt a modification of the pulse, Skoda expresses himself in these terms: ‘Perhaps it is the effect of the bleeding, such things have been seen; perhaps, too, it may have been the effect of the foxglove, such things have been seen too.’ Skoda reasons habitually after this fashion, never denying in a very decided manner. In this way, little by little, he *insinuates* doubt into the minds of his disciples, all the more surely that he does not insist on its reception; so that finally these come insensibly to lose all practical faith, to raze from their medical vocabulary the word *causality* just as their master does.”

Formerly the system of drugging was carried to a fearful extent, and occasional injury to the constitutions of those subjected to the repeated doses of pills, boluses, powders, draughts and mixtures of the physicians of those days, probably resulted. A reaction has now taken place, and the other extreme has been, in the case of the Vienna School, fairly reached. It does not follow, however, that because *too much* medication is injurious, *all* medication must necessarily be hurtful. The active treatment, moreover, adopted by our predecessors, may have been demanded by the type of the diseases prevailing at the time; for, I believe, there are causes in operation which subject the same disease to undergo such changes, as, after the lapse of a number of years, to imperatively demand a modified or even contrary treatment at the hands of the medical profession. While it behoves every one, therefore, practising the healing art, to observe attentively those changes that take place in the constitution or general character of diseases, it is exceedingly puerile on his part to lose faith in medicine, because after the lapse of a certain number of years he finds he has to adopt other, and even contradictory plans of treatment in disease, to those he found beneficial when he first entered on the active duties of his profession. Diseases, likewise are so modified in many of their essential characteristics by the constitution of the patient, the presence of any particular diathesis, and so forth, that it is impossible to lay down absolute rules for treatment that will apply in all cases. Should a physician adopt the plan of Skoda and employ a therapeutic remedy merely to suit a name, which cannot be other than arbitrary—should he treat pneumonia, without first carefully ascertaining whether or not there exist circumstances that will in a great measure determine his treatment, he cannot be considered other than a routinist. He may possibly cure, or patients may get well in many instances; but it is quite undoubted that many others will suffer at his hands. When you come to practice medicine, gentlemen, above all things avoid becoming the slaves of mere routine. It paralyzes all effort, hanging like a dead weight to the neck of good resolutions of improvement, and is certain to prove a serious stumbling-block to all progress.