

is surrounded on all sides by malign influences, which, by the induction of different diseases, tend to bring about his dissolution. Indeed, Bichat defines life itself to be "an assemblage of the functions which resist death." The Creator of man, however, has not exposed him helplessly to the operation of these influences and their effects. By the gift of reason and the capacity for prosecuting and acquiring knowledge, he is fully furnished with the power necessary to guide him unscathed through this world, until he arrives at the period, appointed from the beginning, when a "sickness unto death," removes him from his probationary state. For that there is a period fixed for the death of every mortal, we freely admit; but while doing so, we would strenuously assert that it is quite possible for a man to die before his time. That is, he may so violate the laws of his nature by a reckless course of conduct, or carelessly expose his body to the influence of well known deleterious influences, that a mortal disease may strike him down ere half his days are numbered. It being, then, uncertain, whenever a person is indisposed, whether that indisposition will or will not terminate in death, the result in many instances depending materially on the careful and correct application of the means whereby a bountiful nature has provided for the restoration of the aberrant functions to their natural and healthful action, how important that there should be a class of men to devote their time and talents to the elucidation of disease and the proper methods of obviating its effects on the body. In truth there is an absolute necessity for medical knowledge and medical practitioners. Society cannot and will not do without them.

This want of faith in the efficacy of medicine is not, I am sorry to say, entirely confined to the unprofessional. We find a class of physicians who profess to depise therapeutics and trust entirely to the "*vis medicatrix naturee*." On the continent of Europe they are known as those who practice according to what is termed "the expectant treatment." Doubtless this scepticism on the part of numerous talented and celebrated men in the ranks of the profession, has done much to extend among the people that kind of fatalism of which I have just spoken. The greatest scepticism is exhibited by the Vienna School. The following interesting pen and ink portrait by Dr. Gallavardin, of the celebrated Skoda, the very type of the spirit and tendencies of that school, will serve to show the extent to which disbelief in practical medicine exists in high quarters: "That which constitutes the originality of Skoda among all the teachers of Germany, and which has made for him so universal a reputation, is his scepticism. In medicine there has been rarely seen, if ever, a *doubter* so absolute, so fervent; for his is no *theoretical* scepticism (which is a very common thing) but a *practical* scepticism, which he actively propagates both by his teaching and through the writings of his pupils, and by its application at the bedsides of the sick. Thus from his name any physician who neither believes in nor practices any forms of therapeutics, is termed a Scodist. Scodism among the Germans is Pyrrhonism in medicine. We would lay long odds that our reader could never divine the remedy which Skoda applies at the bed-side. Every year, during nine or ten months of clinical lessons, he employs on his twenty-eight sick—patients they may indeed be called—in *succession* all the most classical, most celebrated means of cure, and do you know with what intention? Simply to convince his pupils that all these medications are always and completely *inefficient*.