

they cannot get well without the use of drugs. Over and above our good advice we prescribe some simple drug which in itself can do neither good nor harm. The patient takes the drug and follows the advice and gets well and gives the credit to the drug. Thus is the belief in the efficacy of drugs fostered and increased in the minds of the laity. Such a patient would not have done so well without the drug. He would not have followed our advice. He would in all probability have gone to some other physician who giving him the placebo would have added to his reputation at the expense of ours. Such a use of a drug is in my opinion not only not harmful, but actually beneficial.

In the selection of a drug for administration in any particular disease, we should endeavour to select one which experience has demonstrated has a curative influence upon the disease to be treated. Sometimes it is true this selection must be made empirically. More frequently today than ever before the selection is based upon our knowledge of the nature of the disease, and of the physiological action of the drug. Let me illustrate. A case of syphilis comes to us. We prescribe Iodide of Potassium. We do not know how it acts in this disease, but by experience we have repeatedly demonstrated that it has a beneficial effect in this affection. This is an empirical use of the drug. Again we are called upon to treat a case of malaria. We administer Quinine. Here we know that the disease is caused by the presence of protozoa in the blood. Quinine has been shown to have the power of destroying these protozoa. The use of Quinine therefore in malaria is a rational mode of treatment. As our knowledge of the causation of disease and the physiological action of drugs increases the number of drugs used empirically will decrease, and the number rationally employed will increase. Drugs used today empirically will later on be used rationally. Quinine is a good example of this. Long before the cause and nature of malaria were known, Quinine was used empirically in its treatment. Now that the nature of the disease is thoroughly understood and the destroying influence of Quinine upon its causative germ has been