

a cause as resulting from such cause. The wish is too often father to the thought. To nothing does this apply more fully than to the drug treatment of disease. The masses are still imbued to a great degree with the ancient belief in the existence of a mythical power in drugs; and, relatively, the profession often shows quite as blind a faith. That this is true is made quite evident by the contents of the multitude of one-dollar medical journals that flood this continent. Their pages are filled with innumerable specifics for all kinds of diseases, the only proof assigned for the supposed action of the drugs being the improvement which followed, and which is therefore regarded as due to their use. This kind of reasoning appeals strongly to all, and too often it is only after repeated disappointments that our superstitious faith is shaken, and the drugs discarded as useless. It is on this faith and half-knowledge that the vendors of the innumerable drugs, new and old, and preparations, misnamed prepared foods, have grown fat and prosperous. Their audacity has increased with their prosperity, so that now their agents take possession of our consulting rooms to announce to us discoveries which they think we should receive in blind faith.

We can recall many instances from our personal experiences in which illnesses have presented the greatest vagaries in their courses, uninfluenced by our most careful therapeutic measures. These vagaries are frequent in all diseases, from the mildest to the most severe. We too often forget what the term disease signifies—the condition resulting from the action of some morbid influence on the body and the reaction of the body against the injurious agent. Both the attacking agent and the body are unstable, and therefore the resulting phenomena vary, not only in different persons, but in the same person from day to day. The slight infection which causes a mild naso-pharyngeal catarrh in one child may excite high fever, delirium and convulsions in another; not only so, but a second attack in the second child may be as mild as that in the first.

No better illustration could be cited than pernicious anaemia to show how frequent are the variations in the ordinary course of disease, and how easily they can be attributed to the administration of drugs. Had Biermer been familiar with the usual course of the disease, he could scarcely have prefixed “progressive” to the name. When arsenious acid was introduced as a remedy for this disease, it was regarded as a specific that seldom failed, at least to mitigate, if it did not cure. We all know how greatly experience has blasted the sanguine hopes that were