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Original Articles

DRUGS AND MEDICAL AGENTS CONSIDERED FROM THE PROFESSIONAL, ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL STANDPOINTS*

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To talk on drugs and remedial agents is an old theme carrying us back in the vistas of our imagination to the days of Dioscorides and Galen, and very justly awakening the query, what are the special conditions in the practice of our profession to-day which have induced your esteemed President to consider a paper with the title which has just been announced as opportune, and perhaps interesting, at the present moment?

After some consideration I have deemed that the first and perhaps most outstanding fact in regard to drugs as a whole is the position which they at present hold in modern therapeutics. Years ago they were deemed to be of the first importance; without them there was no therapy. To-day, with the exception of the few which have a definite specific action on some of the discovered causes of disease, drugs in general have been relegated to a distinctly secondary place. For the cure of disease the physician to-day places more confidence in fresh air; on rest, either systemic or local; on a carefully arranged dietary which will afford a sufficient number of calories with the proper proportion of proteids, carbohydrates and fats to supply most perfectly the wants of the organism without unduly taxing any weakened or suffering organ, and on a rational application of the principles of hydrotherapy.

Certainly with the exception of the few diseases for which we have specific treatment, I know of none in which, if I had to make a choice between the use of these remedial measures and the use of drugs, I would not invariably choose the use of the former.

This pre-eminence of these remedial agents in our modern ideas of therapy, the profession owes in great measure to the almost

*Address delivered before the Ontario Medical Association.

