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A PLEA FOR RATIONAL THERAPEUTICS.*

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A more suitable title for this paper, perhaps, would be "The Rational Use of Drugs for the Cure of Disease," as it is only with drug therapy that I propose to deal. And my remarks will be more suggestive than exhaustive, for I have no intention of presenting to you a treatise on materia medica and therapeutics.

At the outset I would make the statement that there is reason, and good reason, for the use of drugs in the treatment of disease; but they must be used in a rational way, and not in a haphazard, hit-or-miss fashion. I have no sympathy with the therapeutic nihilism that has become so fashionable in some quarters, and which is openly avowed by many "eminent authorities."

Medicine, especially in its practical aspect, is not yet an exact science, and indeed never will be, because all the factors in the solution of every problem can never be known; there will always be an X quantity, which will vary in each case. These problems, however, are being constantly reduced to simpler factors, the values of which are becoming definitely known, and, while there will always be an X, we are gradually arriving at greater exactness in the solution of the many-sided problems of disease.

For proof of the statement that there is good reason for the use of drugs in the treatment of disease I would point to such facts as the following: the value of quinine in malaria, mercury and iodine in syphilis, antitoxin in diphtheria, morphine as an

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