

acknowledge that, under the most favorable circumstances and most skilled treatment, many persons die overpowered by the virulence of a malady. The daily record of vital statistics would seem to prove as much. And the pathologists will bear testimony to the fact that where disease, either acute or chronic, has invaded a vital organ, just so much of the tissue as is destroyed remains destroyed and is never reproduced. Have we a broken-down lung? The best that can happen is that the process shall be stopped. Are portions of the kidneys degenerated? We can but save the remainder. Has the liver begun to retrograde in fibrous tissue? We can at best but check the retrogression.

The probable reason that treatment does keep pace with the rapid advance of pathology is that therapeutics has gone astray, since the only possible solution for some of these difficulties is to seek out the cause and obviate it. A great deal of time and talent have been wasted in a fruitless search for specific remedies for diseases, like unto the metaphysicians who have been asking unanswerable questions for hundreds of years about the unknowable.

While it is possible to imagine a community so intelligent as to exist free from the ravages of disease, it is too much for the most sanguine to hope for in the near future. But, notwithstanding this, the history of the recent past assures us that already great strides are being made in the proper direction. Devastating epidemics are less common, because stupidity and superstition are being overcome by intelligence and a more general recognition of the sequence of cause and effect.

We have many useful drugs, some that are indispensable, but they are mostly double-edged tools to be handled only by trained hands. The man unfamiliar with disease who ventures to administer these drugs because he happens to be acquainted with their names, is very much like the literary aspirant who resorted to opium in the vain hope of becoming a De Quincey.

Whenever the germs of disease gain admission to the body, nature makes strenu-

ous efforts to throw them off, and, although it takes its own time, it is often successful. For example, fever, by destroying the morbid products that produce it, serve a most useful *role* in the restoration of the patient to health. And, as part of nature, the skilful physician stands by in readiness to do his share in furthering the process already initiated. By an intimate acquaintance with the phenomena of disease and the means by which they are manifested, he is enabled to do the right thing at the proper moment, and thus frequently turn the scale toward recovery, when without his intelligent interference the balance might fall in the wrong direction. But the meddlesome interposition of the ill-informed is often productive of great harm. A burning desire to do some impossible thing leads the unwary practitioner into many fatal extravagances. To have the knowledge when not to act, and the moral courage to forbear and give Nature a reasonable chance, are indeed combinations of gifts as desirable as they are rare. From this it follows that the man who recognizes the limitations of medicine is by far the safest adviser.

There are no real specifics for disease: and to believe that somewhere in the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdoms, hidden from the eye of man, there are to be found by diligent search a cure, at least, for each of the many ills that flesh brings upon itself, seems much less rational than to consider all these troubles as induced by violations of laws, known or discoverable, which must be obeyed and cannot be evaded.

In the scheme of Nature it would have been much simpler to eliminate all pain and disease than to provide occult remedial agents for each, were either alternative within the scope of creation. . . .

What can we do? Let us now glance at what we can do. To begin with, we are able to give much instruction regarding the avoidance of disease. We can relieve functional troubles first by the simpler means of rest, food, or exercise, as the conditions demand. We can quell undue pain. But we cannot continue to supply