

What is the moral of all this? The human body is the same century after century, and disease is the same. The one varying factor consists in the fluctuating theories of the different ages.

Theories are necessary, but they are tricky things and

"Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy."

Now-a-days with improved laboratory facilities facts can more often be obtained about diseased processes, and surely we must arrive at some conclusions which are true and therefore will stand the searching criticisms of centuries to come, so that if on some theoretical globe a practitioner of to-day meet one of a future century in consultation they will agree upon the diagnosis and treatment of their case,—their theory and practice will be founded upon things that are and not on things as they are imagined to be.

It behoves us, seeing how the ship has been tossed and even wrecked by the winds of theory, to be slow in yielding to every change of doctrine, in changing our course to fit every new theory in physiology and pharmacology, many of which will die a natural death ere the practice founded upon such slight foundation be well established. P. M. Latham, in one of his magnificent lectures delivered some seventy years ago, put the matter thus: "It is not *all* physiology which can be made useful towards the knowledge and treatment of diseases, but only those parts of physiology which are undeniably true. . . . A great deal of what is termed physiology has turned out to be a mistake, and so far as it has got mixed up with our notions of disease (and this has happened to a deplorable extent), it has hindered the progress of practical medicine."

Far be it from me to dare, much less desire to advocate any opposition to physiology and the other sciences bearing upon medicine. They are indeed the very foundations of our work. But let us be cautious in taking as facts what are yet in the experimental stage.

'On every side the importance of a certain conservatism in our beliefs is evident. We need indeed strong anchors and secure moorings to stand firm amidst the various gales of theory that would drive us on the reefs of insufficient diet here, or of over-operation or under-dosing there. The winds are most changing and uncertain, but let us steer by the compass of *common sense*, and perchance we may in time reach the port where all that it is possible for man to do for suffering man is done, and people will all reach old age and die of that alone.