

actual demonstrable cases that the profession as a whole was aroused out of its pessimistic attitude. It is not to our credit that the public had so much to do with the change of opinion in the profession. We followed rather than led in this reformation of opinion. When the masses get a new idea they are hampered by no preconceived notions, so that they adopt new doctrines precipitately, while we, who know somewhat of the lions, real and imaginary, in the path, hesitate.

It is often said that medicine is not an exact science, and that we cannot hope to make it such. I am inclined to demur to that statement, although, of course, much will depend on the meaning we attach to the term "exact science." If the interpretation is strict, what science is entitled to the designation? They are all liable to err, and all depend to some extent on other sciences for their foundation. Much in medicine is quite as exact as any of the sciences. We have an accurate knowledge of the cause and process in many diseases, as, for example, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria, dysentery, and many other infections, while of many others our knowledge is about complete. In some the exact infecting organism which causes the disease is not yet discovered, or, knowing the organism, the missing link in our knowledge is in the exact means by which it gains access to the infected part. Measles, scarlet fever, variola and syphilis belong to the first class, and pneumonia, tuberculosis, pleurisy and cerebro-spinal meningitis to the second. We have good ground for confidence that our knowledge of these and many others will soon be complete.

Of the practice of medicine, however, exception cannot be taken to the charge that it is not exact; the human organism is too unstable to justify us to hope for more than approximate results. This necessitates the bringing of empirical knowledge to the aid of rational therapeutics, and our empirical knowledge depends very largely on an accurate knowledge of the natural or uninfluenced course of disease. It is therefore as essential now as in the days of our forefathers, before the introduction of laboratory methods, that a careful record of the patient's condition be made, noting the variations in the course of the illness, to enable us to intelligently direct the treatment and accurately estimate its effect. With the advent of the laboratory, the tendency has been to rely on it to the neglect of the proper study of the patient, too often forgetting that it is the patient, not his disease, that is to be cared for. What a rich fund of information would be at our disposal if careful records were made of all patients who are under sufficiently close observation to per-