

PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION. ix

is thereby advanced. And it is, as a rule, precisely those who are most eager to follow new fashions who are most impervious to fresh ideas. It is an easy thing to prescribe a drug, but it is not an easy thing to readjust your outlook. The man who discovers a new drug—like MacLagan and his salicylates—is acclaimed as a deliverer; the man who preaches a new gospel, as Lister, Arbuthnot Lane, or George Gould, is despised by his contemporaries and stoned by his elders.

In so far as this book can pretend to be anything higher than an ephemeral practical aid to everyday practice, the larger claim would rest on the fact that in successive editions it has endeavoured to reflect the current of thought which is moving opinion among those who are really progressive. The ultimate object of medical science is prevention, not cure. The ultimate aim of any curative system is to influence a morbid process while it is still in a stage where skilful interference will do permanent good. Sir James Mackenzie is fond of insisting that our present methods of investigation are not sufficiently directed towards the discovery of disease in its earlier stages, that we are content impotently to contemplate the full-blown, whereas we ought to search for buds and tendencies. In this criticism I see much justice, and I believe that the serious study of what are called minor maladies will in this way lead to the prevention or forestalling of many serious diseases. Still more earnestly do I believe