

SCIENCE

VOL. 94

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 1941

No. 2431

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THE METAMORPHOSIS OF DRUG RESEARCH¹

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THE topic which has been assigned to me for discussion is a broad one, and I am going to consider it from its broadest aspects. It is only a small exaggeration to say that any one who takes as much as an aspirin tablet for himself engages in drug research. I can speak then as one of 130,000,000 drug researchers in this country, but even at that I can only speak with the deepest humility. A short time ago our colored maid developed a cold and with it a cough. I was called upon to do something about it, and I gave her what I considered to be the best medicines available for a cough due to a cold. But the maid had more faith in a medicine of her own selection which I noticed she took to the exclusion of mine. Her faith in her medicine was its own reward and in due course of time her

cough fortunately disappeared. I would have exposed myself to polite but silent scorn if I had tried to tell her that neither my prescription nor hers cured the cough—that it would have disappeared anyway, or, as some one put it, "Nature cures the disease while the remedy amuses the patient." I might have tried to show her that man has been subject to colds and coughs since the dawn of civilization and that they have come and disappeared for countless generations before her medicine or mine had been discovered. But it would have been useless. If colds and their coughs hadn't made a habit of coming and going in precisely the same way regardless of what we did for them, man would long since have coughed himself off the face of the earth.

The element of faith has for centuries been one of the most important active ingredients in every medi-

¹ An address delivered before the American Drug Manufacturers Association, May 7, 1941.