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## Title Page

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# SCIENCE BULLETIN

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## PERMANENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF SCIENCE

A very delightful man whom I once knew often said that he was deeply grateful to science for all its invaluable gifts to humanity, but that he would have more confidence in scientists if only they would change their minds less frequently. His indictment of science for its instability was a long one, and took a wide range. A favorite count was on the treatment of disease. Time was, he said, when practice was simple. Whether the ailment was fits or fever, sunstroke or apoplexy, raving madness or gentle decline, bleeding by knife or leech was the prompt and universal remedy. Then came pills and herb tea—white pills, pink pills, big pills and little pills, plain pills and sugar coated, ginseng and camomile, swamp root and sassafras. Nowadays we do not try to cure by bleeding, and do not turn so universally to pills or tea. But we are constantly shifting from one alleged cure to another, and with what reason, my friend wishes to know.

In the matter of diet, prescriptions have been less venerable but not less variable. Our frontier ancestors were brought up on food—when it was to be had—no questions raised and no theories advanced. Our parents thrived on pork and potatoes, corn bread and garden sass. In our own generation we have been more exacting, especially in choosing a diet for the young. Time was when Willie's older brother waged a futile fight against the spinach. Now Willie may have lettuce and cabbage instead. Baby's older sister took milk at one time and orange juice at another. Baby may have them together. She also seems to thrive on bacon and potatoes—a diet once thought fit only for adults and hardy school boys.

"Science is fickle," my friend has said. "There is no knowing how soon the most cherished beliefs of today may be abandoned for some new fangled idea, hardly conceivable and not yet conceived."

In answer to all these charges science submits a disclaimer to most of the specific details, but a proud admission to the general indictment of variability. Science at some time has doubtless suggested that green vegetables are a wholesome ingredient in the diet of both young and old. It has never stipulated spinach as a daily dish for either. It has often specified certain drugs for certain specific ailments. It has never at any time offered a cure-all. The fads that come and reign and disappear are not the contribution of science, but of unfettered hope and imagination, to which science is diametrically opposed.

But variable science surely is. Science is a dual combination—an unceasing search for still undiscovered secrets of nature, and a continual effort to fit all available knowledge, both new and old, into the simplest and most plausible rational systems. Science accepts nothing on authority, but only on evidence. At every stage it formulates its beliefs on the basis of the best evidence then at hand. Meanwhile, in every field, the search for more new knowledge goes diligently on. It is therefore inevitable that the new will frequently be at variance with our conceptions formulated on the basis of the old. When this occurs our ideas have to be modified to harmonize with new as well as old. Science is proud to admit this kind of variability. It never closes its eyes to new evidence, but always and everywhere carries on an earnest search for it, no matter how revolutionary it may seem to be.

It is easily understandable why