

SPECIALTIES AND SPECIALISTS.

One science only will one genius fit,
So vast is Art, so narrow human wit;
Like kings, we *lose* the conquests gained before,
By vain ambition still to *make them more*.

The word Specialty and Specialist would seem to be of modern coinage. The latter term has come to be applied to those who devote themselves mostly to one particular department of scientific inquiry.

Some appear to regard the term Specialist, when applied to a medical man, as opprobrious; for what reason, it is not evident. The

necessity of Specialism in medicine is so obvious, that it would appear like arguing a truism to defend it. The experience of many who are included in this category proves that there is a disposition on the part of some of the profession to underrate their efforts and to undermine their reputations. This leads the public constantly to confound the educated specialist, who loves the science, and does all that he can do to promote it, with the uneducated mercenary, who keeps secret his experience and his remedies, and whose only love for medicine is in the gain which it procures. Every medical man of any considerable experience has learned to lightly esteem public favor. It is easy to make a popular reputation. The public smile as benignantly upon the ignorant adventurer or the successful empiric as upon him of scientific attainment. Every real physician greatly prefers the approval of his brethren, to popular favor, or even popular fees, if obtained with their disapproval. It is not strange, therefore, that some should hesitate to enter upon a course of specialty which seems to be so beset with difficulties, and especially with perils, among brethren. If special investigation leads to practice, which is of course generally the object of study, the successful physician hears himself spoken of as ambitious; as if ambition were in any wise illaudable, and were not necessary to success, unless it leads to a departure from the spirit of our ethical regulations, most of which are wise, and the observance of which is necessary. Having patiently investigated facts in a particular direction, and having, perhaps, developed new and important truths, the specialist looks to his brethren in the profession for their approval, and is obliged, it may be, to hear the intimation that his status is equivocal, notwithstanding that he has hitherto maintained a character for ability and *esprit du corps*. If *eminently* successful, he has been forced to learn that,

“With fame, in just proportion, envy grows;
The man that makes a character, makes foes.”

Thus, the timid are sometimes alarmed, the public misdirected, and the advance of science is retarded. There are men now before the public who, when dead, will be regarded as great discoverers—as having advanced the interest of science, of the profession, and of humanity, who, while living, are often spoken against. Other professions in this respect are regarded as more liberal than ours; still, human nature will crop out, in all the circumstances under which men meet each other.

The time was within our recollection when a young man could ride with the doctor for a few months, and learn about all that he knew. A few weeks with "Bell's Anatomy," a look into "Thomas's Practice," with some pestle-and-mortar experience, was about all the office preparation necessary. The rest was left to be learned at the bedside. In those days the public were easily satisfied. They expected little, and they got little. A man might then hope to live long enough to know about all that was generally known of medical science. We have fallen upon far different times. Our lot is cast in an age when diligent study and years of attention are necessary to learn what none should be satisfied without acquiring. A longer time still is necessary, if perfection is aimed at in any of the many departments of medicine. Dr. Bigelow says: "The constituent branches of medical science are so expanded that they are not acquired, by any physician, in a lifetime." The same is true even of many of the individual branches. The necessity of division in Medicine was apparent to the profession as early as the days of Herodotus; although this, the second King of Egypt, wrote the anatomical books. In the Hermaic books, a whole chapter is devoted to diseases of the eye. Clement says a class called *Pastochore* were obliged to know all things relating to the body, diseases, and remedies, contained in the second book of Hermes. Cyrus sent to Amasis, the King of Egypt, for an oculist. Many ophthalmic diseases to-day bear the names given them by Greek writers. If necessary in ancient days to divide up the branches of science, how much more in this our day of expansion and discovery! In Chemistry, no man is familiar with all the recorded facts, and all that is to be known or taught in that science. Organic Chemistry, though still in its infancy, is taught in many volumes. Still, every well-educated physician must of course understand the grand principles of Chemistry. *Materia Medica* tells of thousands of substances which have been, or may be, employed in practice. How little is known or remembered of that which is recorded in our plethoric dispensatory!

Pathology has grown into a science so large, that all the facts relating to it cannot be appreciated by those eminent men who devote themselves to this department of medical science.

Etiology, which is of superlative importance, presents a broad field for investigation and an endless source of inquiry.

To become a thorough anatomist is the work of a lifetime; of in-

dustry, genius, and abilities of the highest order. How few satisfy themselves in this department!

General Surgery presents a variety of experience, and requires a dexterity of manipulation to which some are not adapted, and in which not a large number excel.

Diseases of the Chest—Diseases of Females—Diseases of the Eye and Ear—Diseases of the Genito-urinary Organs—Insanity, and Diseases of the Brain—Diseases of the Skin, or even Pharmacy or Dentistry, formerly practiced by the physician, each furnish sufficient occasion for labor and thought to satisfy most minds, and few will regard themselves as fully understanding the subjects of their choice.

The necessity of familiarity with special branches is admitted in the appointment of professors to teach each in their special department; and if specially competent to teach, why not to practice? The one is as legitimate as the other.

No painter would expect to become eminent in his profession if he sought proficiency in every department of his art. Some artists paint only with water-colors, others in oil. Some devote their lives to landscapes, like Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa; others wholly to animals, as Herring, Rosa Bonheur, and Landseer. Some to domestic scenes, as Collins. Many give themselves wholly to historic painting, as Horace Vernet; others to fresco; and many to portraiture art. Each of these classes is subdivided into others; for example, portrait painters are divided into miniature painters, and those who paint the larger size. Each branch is regarded as in itself almost a separate art; still, precisely the same general principles must be fully learned and constantly applied. With each there must be the same familiarity with colors, and an acquaintance with the art of blending them. Success in the one department indicates almost certainly that success could have been attained in the others. This, however, is not so universally the case, perhaps, as in other professions, because painting, like poetry and ventriloquism, is a peculiar and special gift, which is bestowed upon comparatively few. Division of labor is far more necessary in order to secure the highest advancement of medical science than in any branch of science or art. Let us inquire into the habits of lawyers. Here we find the principle of division of labor fully established. They do not try to be great everywhere. Some devote themselves to criminal business; some to the Admiralty courts, which do business only with matters connected with shipping interests. It is said that some eminent lawyers never appear except

in these courts. Other lawyers are devoted to Chancery business; and another class are called Commercial lawyers. Patent business fully employs the time and services of another set of advocates; while others are devoted to Conveyancing; and others still, to Real Estate operations. In England, Scotland, and on the Continent of Europe, there are found further subdivisions. No man who knows anything of medical science will believe that there is less necessity for subdivision in Medicine than in Law. In Theology, there is observed to some extent the same diversity of gifts and the same division of labor. Some are made for logic, others for moral painting; some for writers, others for speakers. A good Divinity Professor might not be qualified to fill the pulpit of the Plymouth Church, or the man for that place, the Professor's chair. Division of labor lies at the foundation of the surpassing perfection of English manufactures. Most trades in this country are now subdivided into many branches.

A residence of nearly two years in Europe afforded us frequent opportunities to observe the difference between American and European physicians. In rudimentary and technical studies they perhaps exceed us; in practical inquiry, and particularly in actual practice, we, as a whole, greatly excel. Observers of larger experience have made the same remark. As general practitioners, we believe that we of this country are nowhere excelled. This is owing to the fact that we are educated to the practice of medicine and surgery in all their branches. There are reasons for this difference peculiar to this country. Ours is more thinly populated, and large towns are less frequent. The populated parts of Europe abound in cities. Many of our best physicians spend their lives in places so remote from cities, and so far from opportunities of consultation, that they are forced into habits of absolute self-reliance. In order to be successful, they must become familiar with the general principles of medicine, and to some extent with practice in all branches. To the full extent of their ability, they must be equal to all sorts of emergencies. When it is remembered how large a portion of the time of a country practitioner is spent on the road, how incessant his engagements, how almost impossible it is for him to pursue his studies topically—which, as most minds are constituted, is the most profitable—it will be perceived that, though his solitary life will induce thoughtfulness and self-reliance, he will fall very far short of satisfying himself in any single department. Moreover, his attention being mostly confined to diseases of his own locality, he may be little familiar with the origin, causes, and development

of disease, as it manifests itself in other sections of the country than that embraced within his own circle of practice. When emergencies arise, or an unusual case presents itself, and the country physician desires to obtain the counsel of one who has pursued special investigation with all the advantages of observation which a large city affords, it is a great relief to him to know where he may confidently direct his patient. If not advised, and often even when directed, his unfortunate patient falls into the hands of one of those mercenary quacks whose advertisements have made their names familiar to the residents of the country, and which abound in every large city throughout the world.* We doubt not the observation of most readers will sustain this view of the subject.

No man who has the *esprit du médicale*, which is necessary to success in this profession, and to the comfortable practice of it, will ever willingly relinquish general practice; nor can he, without becoming rusty, and losing confidence, and competency even, in this department, which principally occupies his attention. Circumstances—such as ill health, a very great pressure of engagements, in connection with his specialty, or the duties of teaching—may force him unwillingly to relinquish in a great degree, or wholly, in some few cases, his general practice. Still, he is not therefore to be regarded as any the less a legitimate and regular physician, entitled to all the confidence which he had earned while his engagements were of a less special character. Most physicians sooner or later find themselves attracted more especially to some department of their art; some from taste, some from accident, others from the consciousness that creeps over them insensibly that they cannot be everywhere as perfect as they desire. Their leisure thoughts are directed to this class of topics. We advise that this be done, not *accidentally*, but *deliberately* and *early*. Said an eminent physician to us while this paper was in the course of preparation, “I wish that I had earlier understood in what field of inquiry I could best excel; I would have concentrated my powers instead of wasting much of my life, and exhausting my energies in the vain endeavor to accomplish that which I could only do with difficulty.” It would be naturally absurd for a man constitutionally timid, and without me-

* For example, a case of elephantiasis might be directed to Carnochan, or calculus in the bladder to Parker; of vesico-vaginal fistula, to Sims. There are many excellent physicians who would not be willing to treat such cases, because they have had no experience.

chanical genius, to aim at great proficiency in general surgery. The same might be said of other branches.

Every material advance in medical science, during its most progressive period the last half century, has been by men who have enthusiastically devoted themselves to some particular department of science—who have deserved, if they have not received, the name of Specialists. It is hardly necessary to refer to Harvey, Jenner, Hunter, Bell, Cooper, Laennec, Corvisart, Hope, Dupuytren, Pitcher, Kramer, Zinn, Sæmmering, Richter, Bath, Beer, Haller, Tyrell, Middlemore, and others, who are the pillars of science.

In later days, we have many upon whom the mantle of these departed great men seems to have fallen. Among these we may mention Rokitsansky, in the department of Pathology, who, four or five years ago, had dissected thirty-two thousand bodies, and is still diligently dissecting more. In the same department others are immortalizing themselves. In diseases of the kidneys, Bright has made his name immortal; and Hibel, of Vienna, has scarcely earned less fame in diseases of the skin; Langenbeck, Gagen, Van Ammon, Himly, Saraden, Guthrie, Farre, Scarpa, Travers, Valote, Morgan. In diseases of the eye, we have Graepe, Lichel, Desmarres, McKenzie; and Lawrence, Toynbee, Wilde, and others, are devoted to diseases of the ear; while Louis, Skoda, Trousseau, and others, devote themselves to diseases of the lungs and air-passages. Among eminent European Specialists must not be omitted the names of J. Henry Bennett, Tilt, Tyler Smith, Simpson, Montgomery, Canzoni, as Gynecologists, to use a new phrase, meaning those treating diseases of females; nor must we omit the great names of Müller, Carpenter, Diefenbach, Ricord, Razier, Lisfranc, Civiale. There are other great men laboring in Specialties which relate to science collateral with our own. For example, in Chemistry we have Faraday, Berzelius, Dumas, Liebig, and many more. We have men at home who deserve equally honorable mention, but, alas! the prophet is not without honor save in his own country. Men are much like wine—they need to be put away in a vault; and after the mould of a generation has gathered upon them, they begin to be fairly appreciated. Among those who “live in fame, though not in life,” we have the names of Bushe, Rodgers, Swett, Wallace, Bethune, Reynolds, and others; and among the living we have laborious workers in every special department of Medical Science. We will name a few representative men in several departments. In Surgery, Mott and Stevens have

earned an enviable fame. Parker, Carnochan, Detmold, and Wood follow hard after them. In Etiology and Statistics, Griscom and others are constantly developing new truths; while, as Gynecologists, Sims, (whose reputation is enduring and world-wide,) Sabine, Gardner, and others are pursuing their investigations. Moses is devoted to diseases of the Rectum. In diseases of the Eye and Ear, the veteran Delafield heads the list, which Wilkes, Reynolds, Bethune, Dubois, Littell, Hays, and Clark, of Boston, help fill up. In diseases of the Chest, the world furnishes no more diligent investigators than Clark or Cammann; and as an original observer, the world recognizes the labors of Green. In diseases of the Skin, everybody has heard the name of Bulkley. In Chemistry, who is abler than Draper, Torrey, and Doremus? While in other special departments of science we have Agazzis and Henry, Shepherd, Hitchcock, and Maury. The list is long as it is honorable. It is hardly safe to particularize, for many equally worthy of mention will be omitted, whom, if we do not honor, posterity will. God speed them in their labors! may they long live to continue them! It is true that in Europe the great Velpeau, who is a miracle of mind—a Napoleon in his profession—distinguishes himself in many special branches. But his example is no guide to ordinary men. In the department of the diseases of the eye, Graepe, of Berlin, is accomplishing wonders. It is said of him, "All old theories are thrown to the wind." The facts which have been noted in more than a hundred thousand diseased eyes which have come under his observation—these are the basis of his practice. He is the great Oculist of Europe. Other Specialists seem to be approaching the limits of thought in these several departments.

There is a heaven-wide difference between the educated Specialist, who, after being thoroughly grounded in the first principles of his art, and having surveyed fully the whole ground, acquiring a fair knowledge of each branch; who, guided by taste or personal adaptedness, or other motives, determines to fully acquaint himself with all that is known, and to acquire all the new facts which by investigation he can obtain in one single important department, cheerfully imparting this knowledge; and he who, without competent education, enters practice in relation to a particular organ, and, with little experience, professes to be able to prescribe, boasting, perhaps, of some secret process or remedy. The public cannot understand the difference, but the profession can, and ought to distinguish between the two classes. The public do not know, as do the profession, that man is a net-work

of sympathies; that every organ is intimately connected with every other organ; that disease is not a unit; that there are but few specifics, and that, from the nature of the case, there never can be. The profession should help the public distinguish between Clark and Cammann, and Fitch and Hunter, or Wilkes and Wheeler, or Francis and Beach. There were just such quacks who dealt in specifics in the times of Herodotus, some of whom professed to cure diseases of the head, others of the bowels, others of the legs, &c. A gentleman remarked to us the other day, that he always called to his family one doctor for dysentery, (a Thomsonian;) another to his children, (a Homœopathist;) another to bone troubles and rheumatism, (a "bone-setter.") This sort of specialism he appreciated, but the kind defended in this paper he did not understand.

To this class of Specialists Lord Bacon alludes when he says, "In particular sciences, we see that, if men fail to subdivide their labors—as to be an oculist in physic, or to be perfect in some one tittle of the law—only on the like they may prove ready and subtile, but not deep or sufficient; no, not on this subject that they do particularly attend, because of that consent which it has with the rest." Two cases have recently fallen under my observation which illustrate the sympathetic relation which exists between the eyes and the rest of the human structure. We shall merely allude to them, leaving this subject, with the design of making it the theme of a future paper.

A lady applied to us for the treatment of conjunctival ophthalmia, for the cure of which she had been treated in various ways for several years, without success. On careful inquiry, it was found to date back to an exposure at night during the menstrual period. The restoration of this secretion resulted in entire recovery. Another case is that of a lady who had been treated for amaurosis for a full year, without success. She was cured by the dilatation of the neck of the womb. The affection of the eye was wholly one of sympathy.

No man can hope to obtain eminent success legitimately in any special branch of his profession without thorough education at the outset, and life-long diligence. There are many tempting fields of investigation yet to be entered upon. We are all wading in water a little too deep. Let us plant a stone somewhere, that we may stand securely, if elsewhere we are in danger of sinking. Let us send down a tap-root that shall hold us erect, if in danger of falling. If I had half a dozen sons to introduce into the profession, I would urge them

first to secure a complete and practical medical education. I would then impress upon their minds the truth of the old adage,

"Ars longa vita brevis."

I would counsel them to set up a high standard of attainments, but not to dissipate their powers, and waste their energies by a fruitless endeavor to accomplish a work that death would surely arrest. I would urge them to have a definite aim, and to undertake only that which they might hope to live to accomplish. It dispirits and debilitates the mind, and keeps it out of working condition, to be forced to find one's self outdone in every department of the science, that it is the business of life to acquire. We would desire one son, perhaps, to study most especially the principles of Surgery, to become familiar with the diagnosis of surgical diseases, and to familiarize himself with all sorts of surgical appliances. We would tell him to handle tumors, dissect surgical regions, and to study the mechanical forces concerned in fracture and dislocation. We would tell another to watch carefully at the bedside, to become a well-qualified nurse; to study the habits and wants of the sick; to learn to sit by the cradle of the invalid infant, and by his inarticulate gestures learn his little wants, and study his case. We would tell him to familiarize himself with fevers, their causes, origin, and treatment; in short, to make himself an accomplished general practitioner, having added to these accomplishments a perfect understanding of the obstetric art. We would advise the next to become competent to treat all diseases of females; another, diseases of the skin; another, diseases of the respiratory organs, or of the eye and ear. They would thus feel that if they failed in some departments of practice, in some others no man could teach them. Thus, a healthful self-respect would be preserved. In every branch of their choice they would find themselves daily acquiring some new experience in proportion to their diligence. They would thus be able to look back upon a life usefully spent;

"And, departing, leave behind
Footprints on the sands of time."

The war against Specialists has been fought out in Europe, and it may as well be abandoned here. The Specialist is obligated to be truthful to the public, and honorable in his relation to the profession. It ought not to be a subject of complaint that he sometimes obtains more publicity than he who gives himself wholly to general practice. This is fully counterbalanced by a loss of business in other

departments, in consequence of particular devotion to the one of his choice. The confidence of the *public* in the profession is much weakened, and quackery is strengthened, by the abuse often bestowed on those who gain reputation in some one department. Some of the smaller journals join the cry, and maliciously mingle together the educated Specialist and the ignorant pretender. Two columns of such abuse is copied into the *Medical Reporter*, of Philadelphia, for May, 1859, from the *Peninsular and Independent Medical Journal*, and commended as *well-timed*, and is fully endorsed. Here is a specimen:

"There is no man so dangerous to the integrity of the human wind-pipe and its appurtenances as the throat-man. There is no man so prolific in mischief to the fairer portion of the race as he who displays, as the peculiar badges of his ministry, the speculum, the *porte caustique*, the sound, and the multiform pessary." Diseases of the eye and ear, and other specialties, attract the attention of the journalist. He speaks of them all as "unmistakable quackery," "that has grown up insidiously within the very sheep-fold of the profession." Probably the writer is soured for the want of business, or is too lazy to keep posted even in a single branch; or may be he is a man of such distinguished ability as the one that he describes nearer the close of his article, thus: "*He only is a reliable practitioner who has drawn from every well at whose bottom truth is; who has thoroughly grounded himself in the love of experience, and the wisdom of research in ALL science.*"

It is feared that there are very few reliable practitioners of this pattern. Such ridicule only reacts, especially when so indiscriminately cast. As well might an architect confound, in his strictures, towers erected in the sand, which, by their showy appearance, challenged admiration, with heavy steeples, that are built upon massive stone edifices, having deep and solid foundation. The truth is, that there is no attempt at discrimination. Nothing would satisfy such writers, except that all others sink to their own level, and agree to advance no faster than they do. If he gets to the bottom of "every well," they are surely shallow ones. If really grounded in all science, he would have more sympathy for those minds who found "research in all science" more than they had time or talents to accomplish.

There are no truths more worthy of investigation, or more important to mankind, than those which engage our attention; nor is there any field of inquiry so fruitful in results. The Theologian deals with truths fully revealed; he has only to expound them. The man of

Law has to make himself acquainted with principles and precedents well established, and fully recorded. His efforts, properly directed, secure the peace of society, and operate to the pecuniary advantage of his clients. Our duties concern man's most valued, and most valuable, possessions—health and life. Our efforts are less public, and their results are less apparent, and therefore they are less appreciated. The lawyer is always paid more cheerfully than the doctor. Men expect their property to take wings and fly away, without all the vigilance which they can exercise, or pay for; but they expect to have preserved to them for an unlimited time about the same amount of health that they at present enjoy. If they are ill, and improve, it is due to a "good constitution;" if they become worse, it is a fault of the doctor. We must not rely upon or expect popular appreciation as the reward of our labor, but upon the conviction that we have lived to some purpose; that we have blessed mankind, and have performed our whole duty. With this spirit to guide us, in no profession may we be more useful, or better earn the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servants." But, to be satisfied that we deserve such commendation, requires incessant study. The student-life of the honest physician is never passed this side the grave, for retirement is seldom practicable. He must think on, and think ever. Unlike the lawyer, he must digest his own precedents. His must be an individual experience. His eye must be educated to see; his finger to touch; his reflective faculties to perceive; and his judgment to decide. Books teach only a small part of what he has to know. He must learn to rely upon them less than upon himself, and to become an independent thinker, if he would hope to acquire anything like eminence in his profession.

In the course of years, the Physician has seen so many theories exploded, has so often been obliged to return to first principles, that he is in some danger of becoming hyperskeptical. He may settle into a sort of conviction that the advancement of the science has ceased; that the medical world is learning no more. Some men, when tired of inquiry, reach a lazy age, or acquire indolent habits, and seem determined to believe that progress ceased when they relinquished their studies. Such men, when there is presented a wonderful discovery like that of Sims, which opens up unheard-of blessings to womankind, though modestly urged, and kindly presented, and fully demonstrated, still doubt, and skepticism takes the place of confidence and welcome.

It ought not to be necessary that men die first, as Jenner did, before their claims are admitted.

There is a strong tendency in the human mind to expect to find nothing true except in the direction in which it is accustomed to look. Thus, a class of theological inquirers fail to appreciate truths, which would be to them very apparent, if the names of things were changed, and certain prejudices could be overcome. As a profession, we do not rise wholly above these prejudices. We do not always welcome every new-comer, who desires honestly to present fresh facts, if they conflict with our previous opinions. While this is sometimes true, on the whole, we are eager to learn new facts, which shall assist us in combating disease, or fighting off the great enemy of mankind. Our hatred of quackery, which does us honour, and our chronic determination to resist all secret nostrums and secret mongers, may induce us to overlook, or fail to appreciate, some truths within our reach. We cannot entirely ignore all that is denominated quackery. We may not forget that many of the most valuable remedies in our Pharmacopœia were originally introduced as secret nostrums. Among these are Mercury, Peruvian Bark, Antimony, James's Powders, Colchicum, Purgative, Elixir, our Compound Cathartic Pill and Black-Drops, and many other useful remedies. Many of these have been rescued from the domain of quackery, in some cases, at least, by special investigators.

We may learn some practical facts from the pathies and pathists of the day, as well as from nurses, and other ignorant observers. Homœopathy has perhaps increased our respect for the *vis medicatrix naturæ*; also suggested a more careful adaptation of our remedies to each particular case; and further, that if the remedy is appropriate, a small dose will frequently answer the purpose. Hydropathy has revived the experience of Dr. Currie. This new Motorpathy, which appears to have originated in the North of Europe, teaches us the value of local as well as general exercise. Of all the novelties outside the profession, it seems to us this is the best. This hatred of Charlatanism, and our steadfast refusal to have nothing to do with its gains, is an evidence of our honesty and single-heartedness. That we reject with disdain the abortionist, the mercenary, the cheat, and to such an extent keep our eyes fixed upon the great central idea, of the diagnosis of diseases, and the curing of them if we can, ought to earn for us far more popular appreciation than it does.