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### Dissertation on specialities in medicine

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## Specialities in Medicine.

Division of labor in scientific enquiries, enriches science by large discoveries of facts, and consequently is by no means to be disregarded or condemned. Particularly have the series of sciences collateral to medicine been profited by this mechanical system. This acknowledged truth, and its analogous illustrations in the varied departments of art and production, have of later years exceedingly influenced the domain of practical medicine. In the cycle of ages the medical world has

resolved to a condition of affairs precisely similar to that of remote antiquity.

Time was when each organ of the human body was placed in the care of a distinct medical custodian, and not infrequently when the unhappy patient died, the doctor still triumphed; "Still proved his reasoning best, and his belief, Though propp'd on fancies wild as madmen's dreams, Most rational,"

because, sooth to say, the organ over which he was the presiding genius, had escaped destruction before death.

En passant, this reminds of a recent case where a modern specialist glorifies and is glorified, because his probang did not transfix the tracheal friarities as was sagely believed by the patient (who died however), and two sarans, of the medical sort, who attended him in extremis. On the contrary, to the utter discomfiture of anti-probangdom,

not only did the triumphant probing  
not cause death, but the larynx and  
trachea were wholly free from disease!  
Truly, this modern Cerberus who came so  
near being sacrificed to Aesculapius by the  
Mentor of American Surgery and his  
colleague, may vigorously crow over the  
post-mortem developments. Human larynxes  
and tracheas will bear a deal of swabbing  
when wholly healthy, and why not  
allow anxious patients the luxury,  
if they can afford it?

The post-pharyngeal abscess with a post-  
mortem hole in it, the emphysema, et  
alii, are not within the tracheal swabbing  
domain—why call upon the king  
of medical specialists to invade  
the territory of his neighbors?

Medicine is spotted and covered,  
dwarfed and pauperised, by specialisms.  
Comprehensive, profound, exact, enlarged  
and true views of general practice



are too much lost sight of in the petty technicalities, the mountebank manipulations, the legerdemain tactics, the microscopic littlenesses of throat men, skin men, womb men, eye and ear men, and so forth. Every square inch of the human body, from head to heels, is dotted over with medical homuleuli, wedded in heart and soul to their particular square inch, and knowing nothing, caring nothing for the man as a whole.

And this is but the direct result of pandering to a gross popular error, which judges of practical medicine as it does of practical pie-making - much to be facilitated by division of the processess. And yet, if there is any one truth established by all medical experience and all medical philosophy, these truths are established beyond reasonable cavil.

There is no man who knows so little of the correct treatment of the human eye as the professed oculist. There is, in like manner, no man so deplorably ignorant of the human ear, as the "aurist". There is no man so dangerous to the integrity of the human windpipe and its appurtenances as the "throat man". There is no man so prolific in mischief to the fairer portions of the race as he who displays, as the peculiar badges of his ministry, the speculum, the porte-cau-tique, the sound, and the multifiform pessary.

And the catalogue might be extended indefinitely. A large proportion of this unmistakable quackery has grown up insidiously within the sheepfold of the profession. The magnates have eaten of it to their own rejoicing of pocket, and the tender lambs of

the flock nibble assiduously at the promising grain, being fully persuaded that they shall thereby be enabled to wax fat and, in their turn, kick lustily at all "irregulars"—outside the pale *delicium vitianum*.

Whatever excuse might have formerly been afforded for an attempt at division of labor in the practice of medicine, however attractive seems the opportunity, the great light, which has of late years been thrown upon the intimate relation existing between the most remote parts of the human body, now utterly dispels the illusion. No man who understands the full import of comparatively recent discoveries can now fail to see that an attempt ~~to~~ separate treatment of any single part of the body from a complete knowledge of the method of treating the whole, however diseased,



is like a man's attempting to light a single burner, when the whole supply pipe is shut off at the meter. It may burn a little, a timid flickering ray or two, enough to show how dark the surroundings are, but speedily it is gone—precisely as the traveling specialists do, burning out the supply in their little pipes, and then places which have known them know them no more forever.

It is to be feared that much of this specialism has grown out of sheer indolence. Acquaintance with what inquiries in special departments of medical science have brought to light is imperatively necessary to the conscientious medical practitioner, and it is quite a relief to have some prophets of smooth things say that it is better to devote attention to what observers in one department only bring forward. But

he only is a reliable practitioner who has drawn from every well at whose bottom Truth is - who has thoroughly grounded himself in the lore of experience, and the wisdom of research in all science.

This idea is not novel - it is as old as Bacon. "In particular sciences we see, that if men fall to subdivide their labors, as to be an oculist in physic, or to be perfect in some one title of the law or the literature, they may prove ready and subtle, but not deep or sufficient, no, not in that subject which they do particularly attend, because of that consent which it hath with the rest." ----- "I mean not that use which one science hath of another for ornament or help in practice, but, I mean it directly of that use by way of supply of light and information, which the particulars and instances

of one science do yield and present for the framing or correcting of the axioms of another science in their very truth and notion”.

Refer now to the flood of light which is being thrown upon the connection of remote parts of the human body, by the ingenious application of the newly-discovered laws of nervous action, to the elucidation of previously occult phenomena. The physiology of metastasis, now as clearly discoverable as the physiology of digestion. The epilepsy supplanting the disease which long baffled the “*Evil man*”. The phthisis, which rewarded the efforts of the “*Osuteri man*”, and so forth, and so on, to the end of the categories.

One blood percolates all capillaries— one nervous system is webbed in and over every organ, every tissue. Take away every thing else, and the nervous



fibers and vesicles wrap out the entire man. And yet, with these all-pervading elements, comes the specialist, and rejoices, like Marius at Carthage "alone amid ruins" that he can yet play manifold tunes upon his keyless, valveless trumpet.





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