

THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER.*

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It is not my intention to give a dissertation on the general practitioner of ancient, mediæval, and modern times, but rather to confine myself to a few salient points which have presented themselves to me, illustrating our present condition.

Like the Gaelic "meenister," who, when he took as his text the words, "The devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," divided it into three parts as follows: (1) Who the devil *he* was; (2) What the devil *he* was doing; (3) What the devil *he* was roaring about. I shall treat my subject under three heads, namely: (1) What he (the general practitioner) was; (2) What he is; (3) What he might be; in other words the *fuere*, the *esse* and the *posse*. I have neither the time nor ability to sketch the fathers of medicine, mythical and real, but will merely name Æsculapius, the pupil of Chiron, and his sons Machaon and Podalirius, of whom Homer wrote in song:

"Of two great surgeons, Podalirius stands
This hour surrounded by the Trojan bands,
And great Machaon, wounded in his tent,
Now wants the succour which so oft he lent."

—thus showing that in those days as in our times the "non-combatants," as our supercilious British officers call the medical staff, did not flinch from their duty in the midst of danger. Neither shall I regale you with the histories of Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna and Celsus, but will refer you to character sketches of the more modern physician to Shakespeare and Dickens, whose brilliant pens have immortalized the family doctor.

The great dramatist tells us in "King Lear" how disease was sold dearer than physic, as it is also in our day; for is there one here who does not know that the scoundrel who has given his last five-dollar bill to get a malady will spend \$30 in trying to evade payment of \$20? While the novelist caricatures certain types of Drs. Suneby, Jeddian, Blanik, Kurtancunagen, Prof. Muff and the Charlatan Marigold, the reader will observe that due honor was paid to the studious, hard-working, faithful family physician, the friend and confidant of the household, whose words of hope and cheer were ever ready, as, guided by his skill and devotion, the children were led from infancy to childhood, from youth to man's estate and womanhood.

In comparatively recent times there stand out in noon-day brightness the names of Sydenham, Simpson, Hunter, Jenner,

* Read before the Dufferin Union Medical Society at Shelburne, December 30th, 1893.