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Criticism and News.

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet," Toronto.

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THE PHYSICIANS OF THE FUTURE.

Physicians and Surgeons in the British Isles, we are aware, are averse to specialism. Even those who pre-eminently excel in the treatment of particular classes of diseases, strive, by avoiding the habit of devoting themselves to these single classes, to set an example of a general rather than a limited practice. Despite this tendency, however, we cannot but think that specialism is the feature of the age. As the population increases, the amount of labour and competition proportionately increases. The result is that the law of the division of labour is now carried to its extreme limits. Nor is this law confined by any means to manual labour; intellectual labour comes equally under its operation. In short, specialism in every form is the salient characteristic of the nineteenth century. Grant Allen, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century* some months ago, very wittily pointed this out in an imaginary dialogue in which an Oxford graduate, despairing of fame in a life devoted to Greek, or Latin, or even Hebrew, Chaldee, or Syriac, vowed that he was "going in for the Ostiak dialect of Tungusian." The richness of the joke is only apparent when it is known that the Tungusks are an obscure little tribe of fishermen living on the almost unknown banks of the Yenisei, and that the Ostiak dialect is a corruption of their language by a yet more obscure neighbouring tribe.

In the science and practice of medicine and surgery specialism certainly is a most marked fea-

ture. Should it continue to increase at the same pace as it has done for some years past, it is no uninteresting and certainly no unimportant task to see where it will eventually land the profession. And indeed, the consideration of this subject is almost a duty. The young practitioner, and especially the student, must look ahead and endeavour to foretell, and to adjust his methods to the profession as it will be, when he hopes to be in its front ranks.

What, in broad outline, has been the history of specialism during the lifetime of the medical man who was "capped," say fifty years ago? The first step in this direction was, probably, the separation of wards in a hospital for distinct diseases. Then followed entire hospitals devoted to a single class of diseases. These gave opportunities for special study, and from these arose the famed specialists of to-day. The effect of this upon the profession at large is, that the class of cases treated by the general practitioner—and by general practitioner we do not refer to those who, as Bacon says, "take all knowledge to be their province," the "physician, surgeon and accoucheur"—will gradually become more and more limited. A patient has ear-ache; he calls in a general practitioner, who prescribes morphine. The effects of the morphine wear off, the ear-ache returns. He then goes to an aurist. The aurist diagnoses catarrh of the middle ear, punctures the membrana tympani, and cures the ear-ache. Any medical man could multiply such instances a hundred fold. And it is instances like this, daily occurring, that will soon teach the public to forsake the "family doctor" and resort to the "eye, ear, throat, lung, and nose doctor." The family doctor will soon be an institution of the past, and his place will be taken by a circle of doctors. Materfamilias will go to her gynecologist; paterfamilias probably to the whole round, according as he imagines it is his liver, or his heart, or his lungs, or his spleen that is affected.

We are by no means treating the subject lightly. But to come to a sober view of the case, and seriously to conjecture, on scientific principles, what will be the character of the physicians of the future. We think we shall express the opinion of the majority of the faculty in the following prophecy:—First, there undoubtedly will be men who by their fame as diagnosticians will be resorted to on the first appearance of any malady. Finding his forte