

Miscellaneous.

THE PRACTICAL PHYSICIAN.

"The vast increase of our knowledge in both medicine and surgery during the past quarter century is so bewildering that I do not wonder that the student of to-day, even after a four years' course, feels himself quite at sea when he starts out into actual practice. He has been trained to examine the blood in order to make a diagnosis of malaria or anemia, he will not say whether a patient has typhoid or not until he has found the Widal reaction, and although he may find dulness in the chest and high temperature, crepitant râles and bronchial breathing, he is not willing to risk a diagnosis of pneumonia until a specimen has been sent to the laboratory and the pneumococcus has been discovered. Of course, he thinks it a waste of time to study the clinical appearances and symptoms of diphtheria when he can send a culture to the Board of Health and have the diagnosis made for him.

"Far be it from me to underestimate these valuable aids to diagnosis, but I merely wish to emphasize the importance of the clinical side of medicine and surgery, and to impress upon your minds the value of the older methods of determining the nature of disease. You will not all practice in large cities; many of you will be called to treat patients far from the laboratory and even from your own microscope, and you will have to make a diagnosis without their help, and you should, in most cases, be able to do so."

The above quotation is taken from an address of Dr. William B. Coley, which was delivered before the Jefferson Medical College Society of Philadelphia. It embraces a suggestive truth, which is applicable to the present age of medical practice, and it furnishes us a text for thoughtful reflection. We see and hear so much which pertains to the accurate and scientific consideration of pathology nowadays that it is quite natural for us to exist in a professional atmosphere, which occludes the practical experience of the physician who has never had many advantages. We are bound at all times to look into the achievements of the past and admit that there is some virtue in the practice which existed before we knew so much about science.

The treatment of disease is, in a sense, an art, and it may be entirely independent of the extreme scientific knowledge which now prevails. To be sure scientific advancement is a necessary accomplishment, and it should be cultivated and sought