

THE CANADA MEDICAL RECORD.

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MONTREAL, APRIL, 1893.**THE ORIGIN OF AND NECESSITY
FOR PRIVATE HOSPITALS.**

As our knowledge of diseases has increased, the whole field of medical knowledge has been found to be too large for one human mind to cover; for although one doctor might be a good, all-round man, he could not become especially versed in every department of our art. In fact, medical literature has become much too abundant for anyone to keep himself informed on all that is written, so that certain members of the profession have given up the attempt to do so, and, by limiting their reading and practice to one particular subject, have become experts or specialists in that particular branch. With the advent of the specialist and the division of labor, an immense advance has taken place in every department of medicine and surgery, and diseases which before were abandoned as hopeless because not understood have become easily curable. The specialist began to commit to writing what he had discovered, and in the hour of doubt and difficulty his book was consulted by the general practitioner. The latter was sometimes able to carry out the treatment, and cure his patient, but in other cases this could not be done with the instruments in his possession; and as the case might be one which would never occur in his practice again, he could not afford to purchase them for a single operation. Moreover, the operation might be one which can only

be performed fairly well after considerable practice, which the specialist soon obtains, while the general practitioner may never have a second case of the same kind. For his own sake, therefore, as well as the patient's, he sends her to town to be treated by someone who has already had many similar cases under his care. At first the patient went to one of the hotels in the city, where the specialist examined her, confirmed the general practitioner's diagnosis, and forthwith prepared to operate. Though apparently clean, the room was, surgically speaking, filthy; this could not be helped, however; a day nurse and a night nurse were engaged and brought to the hotel to live for a month or more. The administration of ether in a hotel and the moans of the patient gave rise to the just complaints of those who were healthy and came there for pleasure, while the demands of the nurses for sick diet for their patient caused great annoyance to the cooks, so that any hotelkeeper who had once had such a visitor would never knowingly take another. Then, as to the expense: we have known a hotel to charge five dollars a day for the patient and the same for each of the nurses; so that with five hundred and fifty dollars a month in addition to the drug bill and the doctor's bill, the expenses were simply ruinous. Then the specialist, in order to save his patient so much extravagance, tried to take her to a private room in the General Hospital, only to find that that institution was controlled by a staff, who, unlike the members of a liberal profession, have excluded all patients except their own from the benefits of an institution provided by the public at large, and which would rather see the rooms empty than have them occupied by the patients of a confrere not on the staff. With the private wards of the public hospitals closed against him, he was compelled at considerable inconvenience to clear out and render aseptic a room in his own house for their reception, charging them nothing for board but merely what he paid out for nurses. This was all very well when he had only one case, but when half a dozen patients were sent to him at once, the accommodation was insufficient for patients and nurses, and he was compelled to take the house next door to his own or some other house, and fit it up as a private hospital, the patients and