

through a lack of appreciation or through a lack of knowledge of the importance of the subject. Another reason is to be found in the exact character of ophthalmology. In no department of Medicine, we take it, is the necessity for a previous scientific training more apparent than in this. Some knowledge of optics is a *sine quâ non* to a comprehension of its facts; minute anatomy becomes a necessity. A cross-section of the retina may well be described as the *ne plus ultra* of organization. The very difficulties in the attainment of a preliminary knowledge make the information necessary to the practice of ophthalmology largely impossible. It may be true that the general practitioner may be able to treat with success, the ordinary conjunctival and corneal troubles; but even this he attempts with fear and trembling. Hypermetropia, myopia, and their allied conditions are commonly unnoticed or disregarded until they have become permanent. Optic neuritis, and retinitis are to him unknown quantities. That we have specialists devoting themselves to the subject can be no answer to our argument that extended instruction should be given and a positive knowledge required of those who are to receive the license to practice Medicine. The general practitioner may not have once in a year a capital surgical operation, but he certainly will have a dozen cases of congenital or induced eye troubles, which demand immediate and intelligent attention if permanent injury to those afflicted and their posterity are not to result. If there be any one thing which is most likely to give those, who now-a-days in so many departments are calling themselves specialists, prescriptive rights to the title and to arrogate to themselves a professional superiority owing to the fact that they may know one thing well, it is this general neglect of some of those at first sight minor departments, but which, in this case of eye diseases, at any rate, have an importance which has been too long either ignored or unvalued. Amongst the many advantages which may be expected to attach to a University Faculty of Medicine is the utilization of the department of Physics for giving medical students a course in optics; and we shall not have written in vain, if we have called the attention of those whose province it is to regulate the teaching of Medicine to a subject which has relations so wide-reaching and important. We trust that their myopia is not *progressive*, and that they are not of those "who, having eyes, see not."

PHYSICIAN, SCIENTIST AND LITTERATEUR.

"Two single gentlemen roll'd into one."

SEVERAL years ago appeared the work by W. Sloane Kennedy, of Old Cambridge, which, as he says in the preface, is not technically a biography, "but is designed to serve as a treasury of information concerning the ancestry, childhood, college life, professional and literary career, and social surroundings of him of whom it treats, as well as to furnish a careful critical study of his works." We need hardly say that the life treated of is that of Oliver Wendell Holmes. From time to time, indeed frequently, have his *vers d'occasion*, or poems of anniversaries, and memorial verses, appeared in our medical journals, but we take it that the profession at large are not in possession of a knowledge of Holmes *en pleine vie*, a personage so unusual and interesting that we may thank Mr. Kennedy for a work which gives us the facts of Holmes' many-sided character and life, even though it may possess defects necessarily incident to an *ante factum* obituary. The work is by no means as remarkable as the subject it treats of, and yet it has its materials arranged admirably for giving us a real insight into the life treated of. Much food for reflection is afforded us by its perusal, and perhaps the first and most striking point in the whole life is the evidence everywhere set forth, that Holmes, as might be expected, is a product of circumstances and conditions which were unique in their occurrence and possibility in America at that time. Holmes as a product, if unique because unusual and rare, is a further evidence of how barren are the possibilities of life in newly settled countries to produce a really cultivated class of men, either in science, literature or the arts. That the Boston School should so dominate American literary and scientific life is due to the fact that any other was in the real sense of the term non-existent. It does not detract in any way from the real status of Holmes, in any of the fields of work in which he has displayed his energies, to say that Holmes, as we know him, would have been an impossibility in England. It is Holmes as the *littérateur* and poet, rather than as the scientist, that we know, and we realize that "the Autocrat" of the *Atlantic Monthly* will always be our favorite rather than the writer of a treatise on "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever," or of "Currents