

Here eye-strain and imperfect nutrition were mistaken for cataract by a noted specialist. Still another medical man, run down by fever and other causes, suffered nervous troubles, for which he consulted a leading neuro-pathologist. The thermo-cautery was applied to his occiput for congestion of the brain; he was ordered mercury and iodide of potassium before meals, and ergot and bromide of sodium after meals. His condition did not improve, and, growing impatient, he quit medicine and took to the country where his troubles speedily vanished. The specialist mistook blood poverty for grave cerebral disease. The following case is more remarkable for its negative side, as regards the specialist consulted. A medical gentleman of our acquaintance, whose wife had suffered from uterine troubles for some months, decided to consult one of the most distinguished gynecologists on this continent. The lady had been troubled with irregular and excessive menstruation, unhealthy discharges, etc. The cervix was greatly enlarged and nodulated. The uterus also was firm and enlarged. Malignant disease was apprehended. The specialist made a careful examination. He was unable to make a definite diagnosis, but leaned to the belief that the disease was non-malignant. He could not say whether pregnancy existed or not. Four months after the lady was delivered of a healthy child, and the distortion of the cervix was afterwards ascertained to be due to laceration.

These instances of error are not referred to as a bill of indictment against specialism; on the contrary, they offer a strong plea in its favor. If the well trained and experienced specialist is beaten on his own chosen ground, what must be the diagnostic record of the man who strives to cover the whole ground? We also learn from the above cases that specialism has its own peculiar dangers. Moving within a given circle, or along a certain groove is not unattended with danger. In obedience to a well-known mental law, the tendency is to widen the circle and embrace within its circumference matter foreign to it. That the greatest amount of good may be done to the greatest number, it is manifestly in the interest of suffering humanity that specialism should have a leading place, and that specialists should rise to a higher plane in the profession than they have hitherto done.

THE USE OF ALCOHOL IN DIPHTHERIA.

The rule usually given by lecturers in medicine as to the use of alcohol in various diseases is, that its action should be watched, and that if the pulse is found to become slower and fuller, the temperature lower and the tongue more moist, continue to give it; but if on the contrary the pulse and temperature are not favorably affected, or the tongue shows no sign of an improvement in the condition of the mucous membrane of the alimentary tract, it should be discontinued. This is a good general rule, and one which most medical men follow. In one dread disease, however, namely, diphtheria, it is to be doubted whether it is ever contra-indicated. Here we have the system profoundly affected by a specific poison, and antiseptic treatment should be followed by the best results. As to any specific antiseptic for the germs of diphtheria, it yet remains to be discovered, as is witnessed by the countless methods of treatment we see vaunted by various writers in all countries. Since the introduction of the potash treatment some five and twenty years ago, nearly every important drug in the Pharmacopœia has been used, and with alleged success, for the amelioration of the symptoms and cure of the disease, and the results obtained, as shown by statistics, vary greatly, owing no doubt to the varying circumstances of environment, the virulence of the epidemic, the previous condition of the patient, etc. It is doubtful whether any drug, save tinct. fer. mur., receives the same recognition in the treatment of diphtheria that alcohol does. It is an antiseptic of high value, as well as a general stimulant, and is, therefore, indicated both on account of its specific action upon the germs of the disease, which have found their way into the blood, and for the purpose of tiding the patient over a very difficult place. Some of the oldest, most thoughtful and most successful of our practitioners believe, that the alcohol treatment alone would be perhaps the best and safest which can be undertaken. Under its influence the patient improves as to the worst symptoms, the membrane gradually disappears, the temperature is lowered, the pulse is slowed, and a sense of well-being is given to the patient, which places him in the best possible position for recovery.

But to get the full benefit of this drug, it must