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☞ *Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Address,* DR. J. L. DAVISON, 12 Charles St., Toronto.

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MEDICAL SPECIALISTS.

The question of medical specialism is one of increasing interest. The range of medical knowledge and practice has now become so wide as to have outgrown individual mental capacity, however generously endowed by nature, or cultivated by education and experience. No man can be, at the same time, the foremost physician and foremost surgeon of the day. No one can be the first oculist of his time, and also the first gynecologist. The fact that the field is too extensive for individual careful cultivation is patent to all. The admission of this opens the door to specialists, and the question resolves itself into the possibility of a man's ability to do a special work more successfully than can one who attempts to be more or less perfect in all. The day for sneering at the specialist is gone by; his advent is past, and his stay is assured, therefore, the most rational course to adopt is to define his qualifications and sphere of action, and allot him his true status as a necessary member of the profession.

The practice of specialties has been brought into much disrepute by quacks and humbugs. Recognizing the reasonableness of specialism, and the readiness of the public to attribute extraordinary powers to the specialist, many persons have not been slow to plume themselves in the garb of the specialist without possessing the first qualification for the work. The true specialist is no embryonic product, but a full-grown man, a giant in fact; for unless he be far in advance of his fellows in his chosen field, he is no specialist. Medical specialism is unique, and differs widely from specialism in other professions and callings. The medical specialist must needs qualify himself by a careful study of the whole range of medical science. The human mechanism is not made up of detached pieces fitted together like the wheels of a clock, but is rather an inseparable mysterious whole, each part in direct relation, communication and sympathy with all the other parts. It naturally follows, therefore, that the specialist must be acquainted, not with a part merely, but with the whole organization. Not only so, but he must also be acquainted with the pathological conditions liable to affect the various parts, and the symptoms, local and general, to which they give rise. This involves a vast amount of preparatory labor. The competent specialist, however, is not yet equipped for his work. Specialism can never have a spontaneous evolution. It can never properly exist, except as the outcome of general experience in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. When a general practitioner finds that he has special tastes and adaptations, let him cultivate these, and if successful beyond his neighbors, his right to be regarded as a specialist will be recognized and undisputed.

The following cases illustrate how important it is to the specialist to be well grounded in general practice. A leading physician went to New York to obtain relief from misty and cloudy vision—"the atmosphere appearing as though a smouldering fire were near." The gentleman first consulted was not a specialist, and apparently, without inquiring into the case, took him to a distinguished oculist. The patient was advised to go home and confine himself in a darkened room, take mercury and live on low diet. He gradually grew worse. His urine was at last examined and revealed albumen and tube casts. He died in less than two months. Nephritic amaurosis was mistaken by the specialist for acute retinal congestion. Another medical man suffered similarly. A noted oculist assured him that he had post-polar cataract. He was advised to postpone operation until vision had become much more imperfect, as it most certainly would. This gentleman gave his eyes needed rest, lived more generously, and exercised in the open air. A few months of this treatment removed his cataract, and completely restored his sight.