

*Henry (M.H.)* *with the Concepts*  
*of the author*

SPECIALISTS AND SPECIALTIES

IN

MEDICINE.

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF  
THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
VERMONT, BURLINGTON, JUNE 27, 1876.

By M. H. HENRY, M.A., M.D.,

SURGEON-IN-CHIEF TO THE STATE EMIGRANT HOSPITALS, WARD'S ISLAND, NEW  
YORK; PRESIDENT OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE MEDICAL  
DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT; FELLOW OF THE  
NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE; MEMBER OF THE  
MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE COUNTY  
OF NEW YORK, ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK:

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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The American Journal of Syphilography and Dermatology. Devoted to the consideration and treatment of all Venereal and Skin Diseases, including their lesions. 5 volumes. From January, 1870, to January, 1875.

The Treatment of Venereal Diseases: A Monograph on the method pursued in the Vienna Hospital. 1 vol. 1872.

On the Indications for Operative Interference in Cases of Phimosis. Pamphlet. 1870.

On Amputation of Redundant Scrotum in the treatment of Varicocele. Illustrated with a new instrument. Pamphlet. 1871.

Clinical Observations on the Dementia and the Hemiplegia of Syphilis. Pamphlet. 1872.

Clinical Contributions: Three cases of Induration of the Os and Cervix Uteri, the result of Syphilis. Two cases of Syphilitic Insanity. Four cases of Anomalous Localities of Chancres—extra genital—with remarks. Pamphlet. 1874.

Account of a New Instrument to facilitate the removal of the Prepuce in cases of Phimosis. Pamphlet. 1874.

Etc.,            Etc.,            Etc.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THIS address is published in its present form at the request of the Alumni Association, before whom it was delivered, as well as other members of the profession who coincide with me in the views I have expressed on the nature and treatment of Specialists and Specialties in Medicine.

I have only to add that if the plea I have made in the cause of a higher standard of education and culture in medicine is maintained in the smallest degree, I shall be perfectly satisfied.

157 WEST THIRTY-FOURTH STREET,  
NEW YORK, *July*, 1876.




# SPECIALISTS AND SPECIALTIES

IN

## MEDICINE.

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O one in this audience could, I think, appreciate the honor which I feel has been conferred, in selecting me to deliver the address before the Alumni of this Association, more than I do ; nor could any one feel more sensitively the difficulties surrounding and associated with the task. The more I have thought of it, the more I have realized the exactions demanded of those who deliver addresses on these occasions.

It is exceedingly difficult to select a subject that will be of equal interest to the professional and non-professional friends of the favored Alumni who gather around, and lend interest, by their presence, to these annual festivals.

I purpose calling your attention, to-day, to a subject that is of vast importance to the physician, and of no less interest to the public. I allude to specialists and specialties in medicine. Many of you will doubtless think that I am treading on very delicate ground in discussing the medical

fashions of the day. I can only say that I conscientiously believe that the present fashions in medicine are working harm, and are subversive of true scientific progress. Need I offer any better reason for devoting the little time at our disposal to the consideration of so important a subject. I purpose directing your attention to specialties in medicine, and their relation to science and the public good. I may as well state here that I believe in specialists and specialties, under certain conditions. I BELIEVE IN THE SPECIALIST WHO HAS WON DISTINCTION BY RIPE CLINICAL OBSERVATION, A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF PATHOLOGY, HISTOLOGY, MICROSCOPY, AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE; AND WHO, AFTER A GOOD CAREER IN THE GENERAL PRACTICE OF HIS ART, FINALLY DECIDES TO TREAT ONLY A CERTAIN CLASS OF DISEASES. The practice of any specialty, followed without good natural qualifications, without previous and constant study, special observation and thought, and a thorough groundwork in pathology and general medicine, is, in my judgment, undeserving the confidence of the profession or the patronage of the public.

I have no inclination—even if time permitted—to dwell on the wrongs to the public, and the injuries to the profession, committed by ill-cultured and irresponsible specialists within our own ranks. I think that I may fairly claim that the wane of public confidence in the regular practitioner—a fact beyond doubt or dispute—may justly be attributed to the subdivision of labor, and the want of unity and harmony in practice. Experience has forced me to believe that the evils of this subdivision are individually nursed and fostered through lack of proper general qualifications, indolence, and the greater prospect of large fees. Diseases that were skill-



fully and successfully treated, in the early part of this century, by the general practitioner, are now sent from one "ologist" to another, until the sufferer, exhausted of patience and means, seeks, in utter despair, the assistance of the nearest quack. It is useless to deny the success attending, at times, the efforts of these impostors. Many of them are wise in the ways and *personnel* of the world. They listen attentively to the course of treatment that has been pursued, and they discover previous excessive and meddlesome interference as the cause of the failures. May not some of the successes claimed by the followers of the mock science of homœopathy (in cases that have previously been under the care of so-called better educated practitioners) be attributed to this cause, and a nice appreciation of what *not* to do under certain circumstances? I speak of homœopathy as a mock science—for "homœopathy, mesmerism, and phrenology have now been before the world a sufficient time to be fairly and fully examined by competent judges; and as they have not stood the test of impartial scientific investigation, and therefore have not established themselves in professional opinion, they may be safely, on this ground alone, set down under the head of mock sciences; though, as in the case of alchemy, the researches to which they give rise, and the new hypotheses which they promulgate, may assist in promoting genuine science."\* In illustration of this last proposition, let me remind you of the fable which Lord Bacon applies to the alchemists: An old man told his sons, on dying, that a treasure was concealed in his vineyard, but he

\* An Essay on the influence of authority in matters of opinion. By George Cornwall Lewis, Esq. Second Edition, 1875.

had forgotten the place ; whereupon they fell to digging the ground in all directions and found no gold, but improved the cultivation of the vines.

The evils of this unscientific and unnatural division of labor may, in my judgment, be accounted for in the following manner :—

*Firstly.* Admitting uneducated and improper persons to the study of medicine.

*Secondly.* The absence of any preliminary test of qualification or fitness to pursue the study.

*Thirdly.* The recognition of all sorts of specialties in the medical schools.

*Fourthly.* The patent of fitness conferred by the colleges on illy qualified specialists.

*Fifthly.* The establishment and support of special rings and cliques for the purpose of worldly gain, to the utter and entire exclusion of all measures of a scientific or progressive character.

*Sixthly.* The excess of Medical Journals ; and the wretched character of, at least, two-thirds of the contributions that monopolize the pages of too many of them.

There are, of course, many other minor causes that assist in sustaining and supporting the evils of which I complain. Remove the greater, and the lesser will follow as a natural sequence. The question is now—how shall they be removed ?

*Firstly.* No one, in my judgment, should be permitted to matriculate in any medical college who has not shown by academic diploma, or certificate, or by special examination that he is sufficiently educated and prepared to understand and appreciate the highest order of medical teachers.

*Secondly.* Maintain and insist on proper qualification before matriculation. I firmly believe that the only way in which quackery and imposition, in the practice of medicine, can be fairly crushed out of the stronghold which it has established amongst persons of average intelligence—is by educating the alumni of our own schools so thoroughly, that when they enter the world for the purpose of practising their profession, the public will have no difficulty in discovering the well-qualified and intelligent practitioner from the ignorant and suave pretender. Until this is accomplished, the public will follow their false prophets to the exclusion and disgust of your own alumni.

*Thirdly.* For the purpose of leading the mass of the profession and the public into the belief that the schools are progressive, too many of the “faculties” have yielded to the fashionable spasm of the day, and appointed persons to deliver special courses of lectures. With some few exceptions, these special lecturers are scarcely up to the standard which might fairly be asked in so-called specialists. The fact is, the appointments are too frequently bestowed in reward for services of a private nature ; or for considerations which, perhaps, it would not be well to indicate at this time, or on such an occasion. I can assure you I speak with a full knowledge of the subject, and I challenge contradiction.

*Fourthly.* The title of Professor does, doubtless, carry with it a certain prestige of skill, or respectability, or both, when associated with a chair in a medical college of good repute. The public is led to believe that “the Professor” is better qualified to treat disease than his neighbor “the Doctor.” The falsity of this assumption is illustrated every hour of the day at the cost of the public, and to the discredit of the



colleges whose chairs are filled by second-rate or incompetent teachers.

*Fifthly*, The struggle for professional preferment—owing to the large numbers who are annually graduated from our schools—has led to the formation of special rings and cliques, that have done infinite and irretrievable harm to the status of the profession. Self-gain and aggrandizement have been the sole watchwords of these bunches of little men. From their narrow and morbid conceptions have been born only their own dishonor and a wide-spread lack of faith in the unsullied masses of the profession.

*Sixthly*, I sincerely believe—from a somewhat large experience in Journalism—that if four-fifths of the Medical Journals of the day could be “in the deep bosom of the ocean buried,” it would prove a source of new and better life in medicine. It would be the means of affording a healthful support to the really good Journals and well-qualified Journalists, and a corresponding boon to the students of current medical literature. The standard text-books of authors whose veracity and capacity are beyond dispute might then find more readers;—can any one question the good effects that would result from such a course?

I have sketched, thus far, the existence of and the remedy for the evils which have resulted from the tolerance of specialties pursued by incompetent persons. I shall now endeavor to show that scientific success in the practice of general medicine or a specialty, depends on natural qualifications and fitness, and ripe clinical observation and experience. By experience, I mean general familiarity with and knowledge of disease—not the mere act of visiting a large number of patients and affixing a signature to a large



number of formulæ. I have known not a few gentlemen of large practice and handsome income, who were literally ignorant of the first as well as all other elements of medicine,—but the world regarded them as men of large experience.

The world is too apt to regard quantity rather than quality in most affairs of life. In medicine, success is too often measured by the numbers seen in the ante-room, rather than the results that take place at the bedside. Nine-tenths of all special practice is congregated in the ante-room. The public mainly takes cognizance of the numbers. The infection is soon spread, and each and every one who has waited for one or more hours for his favorite “ologist” infects his whole circle of friends with his disease. It would be useless to talk of the unity of medicine to this class of persons. Their conception of the scientific or intellectual attainments of their favorite special advisers is about as feeble as their notions of pre-historic ages, or the spiritual conditions of a future existence. But the censure should not be attached to the public on this account. It belongs to what are termed the “Faculties,”—they who nurse and accept the “royalties” and moneyed rewards of this patent practice. The unity of medicine depends on harmony; the want of this unity—the violation of this unity is the great obstruction to progress, both in the science and the art which we practise. Deprive medicine of the science, and nothing more is produced; deprive it of the art, and there is no further development.

The same principles apply in music, painting, sculpture, architecture; and, in fact, in all branches of æsthetics, industry, and intellectual development, which mark the periods of the highest civilization. The great masters in music display in their compositions profound knowledge in all that pertains

to a great musician—poetry, melody, composition, harmony, thorough bass, and power and capacity of instrumentation. Those who have excelled in painting display their intimate knowledge of nature in all its forms, with the keenest sense and appreciation of all changes and mutations of organic and inorganic life. The same principles apply to sculpture. No one ever excelled as a sculptor, who did not combine a good knowledge of mathematics, anatomy, physiology, and psychology, with a finely cultivated imagination, and appreciation of all that was grand and ennobling in nature. Those only who have been fortunate enough to view the grand structures of the older European capitals, can form an estimate of the capacity and attainments of the architects who have added such lustre to the ages in which they lived. The success of, and interest manifested in the three great novelists of the day—THACKERAY, BALZAC, and DICKENS—is due to their extraordinary knowledge of human nature, and their wonderful word-pictures of all phases of human character. I might dwell more on this, perhaps, digression, in illustration of the necessity of more perfect culture and experience than is now regarded as essential in the practice of specialties. But time will not permit.

The necessity of a full and good knowledge of all branches of general practice in the successful pursuit of a specialty, is well illustrated in the account of the following failures :

Only recently, in the New York Pathological Society, a teacher of the practice of medicine mentioned some cases of aneurism of the aorta that had been for some months under the care of some "throat doctors," who were making almost daily topical applications to the larynx and vocal cords, for the cure of the aphonia incidental to aneurism in this locality. A

few years' practice, and a fair average knowledge of general disease on the part of the laryngologists, would have prevented the possibility of such unpardonable errors. The laryngologists have not, as far as I am aware, mentioned these cases in the transactions of their special society.

Again, a gentleman who had been for a long time under the care of a great experimental physiologist (who devoted himself to nervous diseases), asked me to give him a letter of introduction to an oculist. He mentioned that his physician was treating him for softening of the brain—he was then absent from the city—and, as his vision was becoming impaired, he desired to consult an oculist. I gave him a letter of introduction to an ophthalmologist of deservedly great repute—one who is highly cultivated in the general science and art of medicine, and its literature. An examination with the ophthalmoscope displayed beyond any doubt that the so-called softening of the brain was—Bright's disease in an advanced stage. The attention of the pure "nerve doctor" was subsequently called to the case, and he gracefully admitted his error. Now, was such an error of diagnosis pardonable in one who claims a very exalted position, and who charges correspondingly large fees for his valuable services! A few years judiciously spent in the practice of general medicine would enable any one of average intelligence to differentiate between a case of softening of the brain and Bright's disease.

*Thirdly.* A well-known New York gynæcologist a few years ago, relying too unwittingly on the statements of his patient, performed the preliminary steps of an ovariectomy, which was subsequently terminated in what is known as Cæsarian section. I am inclined to think that a really



good obstetrician would scarcely have been led into such a serious blunder.

*Fourthly.* An account was published in the *Medical Record*, a few months ago, of a poor gentleman, who, having suffered for a long time in the hands of a specialist, was subsequently, by his advice, and with the assistance of three friends, subjected to the operation of lithotomy. There was no calculus found. The specialist then decided that the sufferer was the victim of reflex spinal irritation, and it was thought that would account for all the symptoms of disease under which he suffered. It is possible that reflex spinal irritation may simulate somewhat the symptoms of vesical calculus; but the performance of a capital operation, without having first ascertained beyond question the presence of the stone, is, to my way of thinking, a most unpardonable piece of malpractice. I am inclined to think that such a mistake could never have occurred to such men as CIVIALE, SIR HENRY THOMPSON, or to any of our own surgeons of large culture and experience.

The advantages of dividing the practice of medicine from that of surgery is now generally conceded in all countries, and in all localities where the demand for professional services is sufficient to admit of the distinction. There are many obvious advantages in this separation. It tends to develop the special acquirements of each practitioner in the line in which he is best fitted to excel. It must not be forgotten, however, that success in surgery frequently depends on acquirements in medicine, and success in the practice of medicine is only obtained by a thorough knowledge of the same branches that secures success in surgery. In his essay on BARÈRE, MACAULAY aptly says:—"Practice contributes



more than books. Books are indeed useful to the politician, as they are useful to the navigator and to the surgeon. But the real navigator is formed on the waves; the real surgeon is formed at the bedsides."

There is no branch of medicine that requires more exact knowledge than that of ophthalmology. It deals with the most important and delicate structures. On the skill of the oculist thousands daily place their faith, and his judgment and skill determine whether those who submit themselves to his care shall enjoy God's greatest gift—sight; or whether they shall suffer the doom of darkness in all their future days on earth. I would ask you to pronounce the judgment deserved by those who venture to practice ophthalmology without thorough and complete preparation. I can assure you, from a survey of the literature of this subject, no one has ever attained real distinction in this department of surgery who was not a proficient in general medicine and in all the exact branches that bear on the treatment of eye-diseases.

VON GRAEFE, of Berlin, displayed beyond any doubt the greatest talent as a clinical observer. No one excelled him in his profound knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, optics, and mathematics. VON ARLT, of Vienna, was the author of one of the first and best text-books based on a thorough knowledge of pathological anatomy. HORNER, of Zurich, was a great anatomist and clinical teacher. In London, there is BOWMAN, the eminent anatomist and physiologist, and author of the *Encyclopædia* bearing his name. CRITCHETT, the general surgeon of wide local reputation, and author of many valuable treatises on the Eye and its diseases, including many anatomical and pathological essays. There is also HULKE and BADER, both excellent pathological ana-

tomists. In France the late Dr. SICHEL won great repute. He was a brilliant anatomist. Holland is justly proud of DONDERS, a distinguished anatomist and physiologist, and one of the first authorities of the Century on optics. WARLOMONT, of Belgium, is also distinguished as an anatomist. In this country we have KNAPP, LORING, ALTHOF, NOYES, NORRIS, JOY JEFFRIES, WILLIAMS, and many others who have fairly won distinction in the profession, and the esteem of the public. Among the aurists of deserved repute, VON TROELTSCH, SCHALBE, POLITZER, TOYNBEE, and ROOSA stand in the first rank. As anatomists and clinical observers they have no superiors. There are many others working their way to distinction, through a course of studious observation of diseases of the ear.

Diseases of the mind have for some years been under the special care and protection of what are termed alienists. The disparity in that which has been accomplished and what is now claimed by this class of practitioners, in this country, is daily manifested in our courts of law, to the discredit of our profession. In the words of the immortal bard:

“What done—brief told.

What not done—Volumes.”

BLANDFORD, one of the best English authors of the day, says:—“If there be one branch of the great study of medicine which more than another deserves to be called an art and a mystery, it is the treatment and investigation of insanity.” MAUDSLEY, another English authority, whose works are familiar to you, aims, in his *Treatise on the Mind*, “to deal with mental phenomena from a physiological rather than

a metaphysical point of view ; and secondly, to bring the manifold instructive instances presented by the unsound mind to bear upon the interpretation of the obscure problems of mental science."

You can doubtless picture to yourselves the amount of study, observation, practical experience, and power of generalization involved in the accomplishment of a work of this character. Many, endowed with the peculiar temperament for the study and observation of disease, and fitted by culture and experience, have failed to accomplish much in this department of medicine in this country. If we except the writings of RAY, GRAY, ORDRONAU, WEIR MITCHELL, and a few others, but little advancement has been made in the literature or jurisprudence of brain diseases since the days of BECK. He was undoubtedly a master of his art. He was not a specialist, nor did he claim to be an alienist ; but he excelled all others in this country in his contributions. It is now more than fifty years since he published his *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*. On looking over some early numbers of the *Lancet*, I find a review that must certainly have been gratifying to the distinguished author. The reviewer concludes by saying : "By no analysis that we can give of Dr. BECK's performance, can our readers appreciate its proper merit and value. The present work is remarkable for the extent of research it displays, the minuteness of detail, and the luminous arrangement of facts and observations which are to be found on every page. It reflects the highest honor on its author. . . . The work before us possesses decidedly sterling merit, and ought to find its way into the library of every medical practitioner in the kingdom. The notes of the editor are frequently curious and valuable, and the whole production is,



in our opinion, decidedly superior to any other that has yet appeared on the subject of medical jurisprudence." At the time this review appeared, the *Lancet* was regarded as the most critical and severe on all questions submitted for its judgment. I will now ask you to devote, at some future time, a little leisure to the works of the so-called alienists of our own day, and satisfy yourselves whether there is any one among us that possesses the ability, or frame of mind, capable of producing a work comparable to that of DR. BECK. Large octavos, said to contain wonderful discoveries on all sorts of brain and nervous diseases, including hydrophobia, are constantly advertised. The value of the claims of many of these authors will depend on the experience of other observers. "If you regard not the opinion of PERICLES, yet wait at least for the advice of time, which is the best of all counsellors."

Another favorite specialty of the day is devotion to the peculiar ailments of the gentler sex. With all deference to their judgment and good taste, I am led to think that, in a large proportion of cases, the special medication to which they are subjected has been productive of more harm than good. No less an authority than DR. GRAILY HEWITT, ridicules the idea of the subdivision of organs into specialties. He certainly is privileged to speak authoritatively on this subject. DR. FORDYCE BARKER, the distinguished gynecologist, could not possibly have expressed more clearly his dissent from attempts to practice his own favorite branch without full and ample general experience, than he has already done in the preface to his admirable work on "Puerperal Diseases." He says:—"At the present day, for the first time in the history of the world, the obstetric department seems to



be assuming its proper position as the highest branch of medicine, if its rank be graded by its importance to society, or by the intellectual culture and ability required, as compared with that demanded of the physician or surgeon. A man may become eminent as a physician, and yet know very little of obstetrics; or he may be a successful and distinguished surgeon, and be quite ignorant of even the rudiments of obstetrics. But no one can be a really able obstetrician, unless he be both physician and surgeon." Now, as obstetrics is only part of the duties of the specialist who devotes himself exclusively to the diseases of women, is it not absurd for any one to attempt to practice or to claim attention as a specialist in this department, unless he is well qualified in general medicine and surgery? There is not, as far as I am able to learn, a single exception in the long list of great obstetricians and gynæcologists who have not been good general practitioners ere they attained distinction in the branch to which they subsequently devoted their time and attention.

I was led some twelve years ago to pay some special attention to diseases of the skin, mainly at that time for the purpose of differential diagnosis in certain diseases in which cutaneous lesions formed a prominent part. The interest which I felt in this class of affections was shortly after increased by my appointment to the class of Skin Diseases, in one of the largest New York dispensaries. At this time, with a few exceptions, there were really no physicians who held professorships of Dermatology, and none who, so far as I can learn, paid exclusive attention to skin diseases. I am satisfied that the well-educated physicians of that day understood and treated skin affections far more successfully than they

are now treated by the newly-fledged dermatologists of the present hour.

In speaking of the decay of the University of Vienna, Dr. Jacobi says :—"Their great merit is to teach some young foreigners who go to Vienna for the purpose of "brushing up," as the phrase goes, or of returning, after a few months' drilling, as eminent specialists in some 'ology.'" The fact is, it is useless for any one to think of or to attempt to become a successful dermatologist unless he be a proficient in the principles of general medicine. The successful study of skin disease necessitates a knowledge on the part of the student, whoever he may be, of diseases in general; and he alone can treat cutaneous ailments satisfactorily who is master of the details of general therapeutics. If any of my hearers want any additional evidence of the truthfulness of my remarks concerning this branch of medicine I will only ask them to devote an hour to the published discussions of the New York Dermatological Society, where all knowledge of the co-relation of other branches of medicine seems to be studiously—maybe innocently—ignored.

The same arguments apply, and the same requisites are essential in the pursuit of syphilodology, laryngoscopy, neurology, tumorology, electrology, and that other specialty which has recently, according to its advocate, been the means of exposing the wretched pretensions of the Creator in the structure of his favorite image! These faulty conditions are said to be only overcome by the specialist who submits all his patients to operations in utter violation of all anatomical or pathological considerations. SIR HENRY THOMPSON, who is, beyond question, the best living authority in this department of surgery, says :—"Now, I don't know that this fashion

has as yet been adopted here, but I do know that it exists elsewhere, and I raise my earnest protest against it." I mention this to-day, because I believe it to be one of the evils of the hour that should be denounced in every quarter where the infection might by any possibility be conveyed.

It may perhaps not be out of place to mention that in France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland no one is permitted to practice a "specialty" without having first passed through a state-examination, which embraces the theory and the practice of all branches of medicine and surgery, natural sciences, and chemistry, botany, etc. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain the course is a severe one. No one can matriculate in medicine who has not been graduated in arts, or passed a satisfactory preliminary examination which is an equivalent.

Without any desire or intention of offering compliments to your own University, I am, in justice, bound to say that I know of no Medical School that numbers so large a proportion of Alumni who have been previously graduated in arts. It speaks well for this Medical School. It affords the best evidence of the appreciation of your faculty by the best cultivated class of students. Indeed experience has shown that those graduated from this college have maintained the best credit in all competitive examinations in which they have taken part.

Now, one word for myself. I feel that I have detained you longer than I ought to have done on such an occasion, but the subject is one fraught with so much interest and importance that I know you will pardon the detention. I have explained, as far as time would permit, the nature and the remedy for the evils which are working such injury in our

profession. Let the Alumni of this University strike the blow for reform—let them show in their own attainments the strength and advantages of sound and thorough knowledge and culture, and wherever they may go or wherever they may practise, I can assure them they will meet with a good and substantial reward.









