

control of human activities in every domain. I shall not go further on that line except to say that if this opinion should prevail in the world, it should leave the medical art alone, and leave to the patient the freedom and satisfaction he enjoys in the choice of his own doctor.

I shall not quote any statistics; I do not need them, as they cannot express or even help to make clearer the argument which I wish to use against the establishment of state medicine. I intend to bring into this discussion, however, the results of my personal observations as a general practitioner. For seventeen years I have been in constant contact with the patients whom I have had the opportunity, and I must say the pleasure, of treating for various ailments and diseases. One cannot be directly associated with sick people for many years without learning what qualities they desire in their medical man. State medicine may have and probably has many appealing sides and many advantageous issues for some people. I do not believe, however, that it can replace the genuine satisfaction which is brought to anyone jealously keeping his freedom in the choice of his own doctor, his family doctor, whether he is a general practitioner or a specialist.

State medicine may appeal even to an important part of the medical profession, anticipating the day when every treatment, every pill, every look at a wound will surely bring a monetary compensation. But this same important part of the medical profession, practitioners or specialists, would, I am proud to believe, hesitate to favour a law enacted by parliament which would change this present noble and self-devoting profession into a part of the state mechanism. One may say that devotion does not always bring food to one's family. I agree that that is true. But every doctor can say this, that his first clients were not always rich people; poor people called upon him during the first days of his career; poor people were the ones confident enough to try his skill, his medical judgment even though it were from pure necessity. Anxious to do well and to do good, to bring the happiness that follows physical and moral relief, he answered the call. After a few weeks the young doctor already had a fragment of practice. The poor people who were his clients spread their satisfaction in the vicinity; rich people acquired confidence and began calling the new doctor. Indirectly the free treatments were bringing food and happiness—happiness through success and devotion—to himself and later to his family, when he acquired one.

But what if this young doctor is state-salaried? What sentiment develops in his mind? Absolutely different will be the link between the medical art and the people in general. He will regard himself merely as one obliged by law to give treatments. Will the moral obligation on his side, this consoling and disinterested devotion towards the human being in need of medical care, remain strong enough? Can anyone say that later on, in the course of time, all sensitiveness will not depart from his mind and be replaced by a series of numbers, all alike, to which he has to attend in series at certain times of the day or of the week, whether it be a specially urgent disease or one of those emergency cases so frequent in general or special practice? The medical man cannot be indifferent to his patients. He cannot look at them as he looks at things. If he does, it is no longer the medical art; it is crude materialism in its operations, expressions and results.

I know the danger of materialism for those who spend their time in fighting against matter, especially for those trying to put an impenetrable wall between their physiological and psychological knowledge. Why open a door to this sometimes disastrous danger? As I said, on the patients' side the result cannot be any better. They will be trained to see in their doctor the man in some way imposed by the state. Because if we appoint one, two or three doctors for a special district, the patient will have to take one of these on account of certain regulations that the administering board will have to impose in order to have at least a seeming control.

Can the state act successfully without depriving the individual of the sacred right of freedom, even if he is poor, in the choice of his own doctor, his family doctor, the one he thinks is the best, in whom he is absolutely confident? I do not think so. And if you destroy between the doctor and his patient this certain amount of ease, sympathy and confidence absolutely necessary for the success in many many cases—so important sometimes to produce, in certain maladies, what you would look upon as a miracle—if you ignore the link between the medical art and the people whom you have accustomed to look upon it as part of a mechanism operated by the state, you lower the level which this art has obtained, and in doing so, you do not render a service to society.

My apprehensions are not futile and my words are not delivered in view of a political advantage. I am giving the house my point of view on the matter. To tell this chamber my admiration for the admirable part doctors have played since the opening up of this country, would be superfluous. The public in