

and by coroners, magistrates, and even judges who retained a personal objection to the new form of oath prescribed by statute.

Since that time correspondents have brought to my notice many instances of the same kind. The *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, and, indeed, all the medical papers, have persevered in strongly upholding the right of every witness to be sworn without 'kissing the Book,' and they not unnaturally complain that those who administer the law should place hindrances in the way of witnesses who claim only their legal right when they ask to be sworn in Scotch form.

Two recent occurrences of the kind are in such flagrant violation of the Oaths Act that I venture once more to call attention to the matter in your columns, in the hope that this constant cause of friction in legal proceedings may thereby be diminished, and perhaps even removed altogether. On one of the occasions referred to the rector of a country parish was called upon to give evidence before the magistrates. He asked to be sworn in Scotch form. The chairman said to him, 'I should like to know, Mr. —, why you, being a clergyman of the Church of England, object to kiss the Book?' The witness answered, 'I have a strong objection to kissing the Book in these days of infectious diseases.' The magistrate exclaimed: 'He is afraid of catching an infectious disease from the Bible!' The other occurrence took place in one of our London County Courts only a few days ago. A witness, who was a Scotchman, objected to 'kiss the Book' on the ground that 'hundreds of people had kissed it before him that day, and some of them probably had infectious diseases.' It is incredible, but the report states that the witness was bullied by the usher who was administering the oath, reprimanded by the judge, and made to kiss the Book. I enclose cuttings from newspapers in verification of these statements. I merely refer to these occurrences as an illustration of what is going on.

I need not insist at any length on the legal question involved. There is no doubt whatever about it. The Oaths Act says (section 5): 'If any person to whom an oath is administered desires to swear with uplifted hand in the form and manner in which an oath is administered in Scotland he shall be permitted so to do, and the oath shall be administered to him in such form and manner without further question.' The form of the Scotch