

I take it that there are very few people to be found at the present time who condemn the use of chloroform to mitigate the throes of parturition on the ground that it is an interference with the penalty pronounced upon the mother of mankind. I do not believe there are many who will seriously contend that the inducement of anæsthesia in surgical or obstetrical operations can with safety or impunity be entrusted to an inexperienced or ignorant person. In this respect public opinion is advancing; it may be slowly but at all events perceptibly.

The benefit of educated medical skill to the individual and to the community is almost universally recognized in every rank and condition of life. Both rich and poor avail themselves of its usefulness in the various ailments of mind and body which afflict the human family from the cradle to the grave. It is considered indispensable to fleets and armies in times of peace not less than in time of war. During the prevalence of epidemics or the approach of plagues, or the pestilence which walks in darkness, the eyes of the community rest upon the medical profession as the best and indeed the only human agency to which they can apply for advice and assistance.

And it has come at length to be cordially admitted that the great teacher of antiseptic surgery whose cautious and patient investigations and final triumph over hospital gangrene and sepsis in its varied forms—after having been honored and applauded by his professional brethren and by the aristocracy of science in every part of the globe—is at length, in the evening of his days, considered worthy to be called to a seat in the House of Lords, the second estate of the realm, many of whose order are no doubt men of the highest character and splendid intellectual attainments, and not a few are men distinguished for neither character nor ability. The event is chiefly remarkable as being the first instance in the history of the British Empire in which a member of the medical profession has had what is considered so great a social and political distinction conferred upon him as to be called to a seat in the august chamber of the Peers; and the first time to partially illustrate from a national standpoint the Scriptural statement that it is better to save life than to kill.

While the service and benefits of the medical profession are conceded by the majority of persons, there are some who believe and take the ground that it is an unwarranted restriction upon the liberty of a subject to prevent his treating, or his being treated, medicinally or surgically by whomsoever he may choose to employ or whosoever may choose to employ him for that purpose. They say they are quite agreeable that men or women should qualify themselves if they choose by long and severe courses of special study and even receive diplomas from schools or colleges certifying as to their proficiency, but that neither State or any corporate body empowered by the State have any right to dictate in a free country who should practise medicine any more than they should dictate who may teach or preach religious doctrine, or carry on any particular trade or commerce. And it is difficult for the ordinary citizen to see the justice or equity of a law which could prevent the most skilful physician in Great Britain, or Ireland, or the United States, or Germany from practising in Ontario without the special permit of the Medical Council. The lay mind would raise no serious objection to debarring the ignorant pretender or illiterate quack from practising or administering medicine, but would draw the line at the educated graduate of a school of high standing though outside of the provincial limit.

The answer to those objections may be briefly stated.

That it is the duty of the State to defend its citizens against frauds and imposters who, by false pretences, would obtain the money or property of honest people without giving value in return.