

AN ACT RESPECTING THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, AND DEATHS IN ONTARIO.

SIR,—The above Act, lately passed by the Legislature of Ontario, although an improvement upon its immediate predecessor, still leaves much to be desired, in that it still requires the great burden of the registration of deaths to be borne by a small class of the community, and thereby inflicts a grievous injustice upon that class in direct proportion to the smallness of their number as compared with the community at large. The one redeeming feature of the measure, considered from a medical point of view, is that the iniquity of compelling medical men to register all births at which they may have professionally attended, has been removed, and that obligation imposed upon the parents or certain other individuals.

A large amount of money has already been expended in the Province in order to secure a correct return of vital statistics, and, so far, with anything but gratifying results, for the simple reason that in the anxiety to secure such statistics the principle was lost sight of that all should contribute their respective proportion, to be determined alone by fate, to the accumulation of facts desired. Under just circumstances medical men would be placed in an exactly similar position with the rest of the community, since unfortunately their friends and relatives are as liable to die as are those of other people; but in the state of affairs lately existent with regard to the registration of births and deaths, and still in full force as far as the lethal clauses are concerned, the whole onus of registration virtually fell upon the medical practitioner, and because the imposition was so great and unjust, and the medical profession as a body too intelligent and influential to believe that irrational penal clauses could be enforced against them, the provisions of the Bill were ignored or disregarded, and the law became finally a dead letter. A similar fate awaits the present measure unless it be speedily materially amended.

Instances of the hardships consequent upon an enforcement of the law need not be here adduced, since they are, of necessity, familiar to all of your readers. Medical men are at all

times willing and happy to furnish to the friends of their deceased patients certificates of the cause of death upon application for them, and when they have done this surely they have performed their part, and it ought to be incumbent upon the friends rather than the medical attendant to attend to the registration of such certificate. The law should be so amended that it would be impossible for any body to be interred without a certificate from the proper Registrar, of a due registration of the death and its cause; and by this means the friends or others would be compelled to seek a certificate of the cause of death, and to transmit it to the proper Registrar before the burial could take place. Section Six of the Bill provides that the fact and particulars of the death shall be registered by some person other than the medical attendant, and the registration of the cause simultaneously with the particulars would be no more trouble than the registration of the particulars alone. Thus the trouble would be impartially divided and a full and correct return secured.

Were it not for the existence of the ancient Latin proverb "*Nil admirari*" I should be inclined to say, that it is a matter of considerable surprise that an Act so crude in its construction, short-sighted in its providence, and so unfair to the profession, should have emanated from a House in which the disciples of *Æsculapius* are so largely represented, and one is almost inclined to suppose that their proverbial self-sacrificing disposition has led them to forego the opportunity of urging and maintaining not only their own rights and privileges but those also of their professional brethren; but doubtless the unseemly haste manifested in the desire, to get the measure through its various stages, constitutionally or unconstitutionally, before the adjournment for the Christmas recess, in order that the law might come into force on the first day of the now current year, is in no small degree responsible for the present imperfect and inequitable character of this enactment.

Yours, &c., M.B.

THE HEBREW CHARITY FAIR recently held for the benefit of the Mount Sinai Hospital, of New York, realized net profits to the amount of \$135,000.