

the guilds which existed by virtue of charters from the Crown, granted in return for services or for valuable consideration to the sovereign or to the State, were generally monopolies in trade or commerce, and had no doubt a tendency to abuse the privileges which had been conceded to them. For example, the guilds or burghs in Scotland and England had stringent by-laws to the effect that no one who was not free of the borough or guild should be allowed to keep a shop for the sale of merchandise, or work at certain trades within the borough. Those exclusive privileges were finally withdrawn and abolished in Great Britain as being contrary to public policy in the tenth year of the reign of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

The objection to the Medical Act can scarcely arise or be due to a disbelief in the efficacy of medicine or in the advantages of medical or surgical science, for such a disbelief has never been found to exist among mankind in any country or at any period of the world's history. The objection would appear rather to arise partly from the jealousy which naturally exists of corporate bodies or individuals enjoying at the expense of the community special privileges of a valuable kind, or privileges to which they are not entitled, or for which they do not give sufficiently valuable services or consideration in return. And probably the greatest objection urged against the Medical Act is to its restrictive and penal features, the power of preventing the practice of any of the branches of medical or surgical science or of obstetrics for hire, gain or hope of reward, by all who are not specially authorized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

That the Act excludes the most accomplished physicians and surgeons of other countries from engaging in practice and deprives citizens of their rights and privileges to receive treatment and medicine from those who would be the physicians of their choice, and therefore trenches upon their liberty as British subjects.

That the Act permits a tendency towards monopoly by excluding a large class of well qualified persons, and by exacting exorbitant fees from candidates presenting themselves for examination it gives power to restrict the supply of the service and thereby lessens competition and increases the charges which the public have to pay.

The question to be met by the defenders of the Act is therefore as to whether it is in its entirety, with the features to which exception is taken, an Act in the interest of the public generally, the repeal or material alteration of which would be a public injury—materially and morally. If the question can be answered in the affirmative, the defence should not be difficult; if in the negative it would be hopeless. And the Act should either be amended or eliminated from the statute book.

Very few sane persons will contend that medical science, medical knowledge and surgical skill have not been of immense benefit to the human race; all, I think, will admit that the better acquaintance with sanitary laws and of the causes which produce or favor the development and propagation of disease, combined with a knowledge of the best and most effectual means of preventing and curing diseases, has added much to the sum total of human comfort, has saved millions of lives, has lessened the death-rate and lengthened the average duration of human life in all civilized countries. Even the few persons who obstinately oppose compulsory vaccination must admit that the application of Jenner's discovery has materially lessened the ravages of a loathsome and fatal disease, and at this moment the grand discovery of Pasteur, of what would appear to be a beneficent law of nature, is being applied in India as an antidote to the fearful bubonic plague raging in that famine-stricken country.