

T H E

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEDICAL COUNCIL FOR CANADA.

At last, after long years, during which without success one project after another has been suggested and ventilated for removing the disadvantages under which our profession labours here in Canada, the first active step forward has been achieved, and legal sanction has been given to the bill setting forth the constitution and powers of a Medical Council for the Dominion. We do not pretend that the measure as passed is all that we should desire, yet we cannot but recognize that its passage is a notable achievement; as again that the profession in every province from one end of Canada to the other owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Roddick for his long-continued and strenuous endeavours, directed with a single mind and with absolute disregard to personal convenience, to improve the status of medicine in this country. For this is a beginning of better things: a beginning of such a nature that now it is given to us ourselves, unhampered by legislative interference (so long as our action lies within the limits and intent of the Bill), to develop a higher and more satisfactory state of affairs. And though assuredly the terms of the Bill, as passed, do not make advance too easy a matter—though some people rage and others imagine a vain thing, in fact many vain things—we cannot but believe that the sterling common sense of the medical

men of Canada as a body, and the obvious benefits to be derived from the operation of the Bill, will eventually overcome all the opposition, and provide us with a portal through which all who so desire may enter into the unrestricted exercise of their profession in any part of the Dominion.

For this, after all, is the main disability to be relieved. As matters are at present, though we are all Canadians and of a common nationality, it is forbidden to us under pains and penalties to cross the provincial boundaries and minister to other Canadians seeking our help, unless we have fulfilled every exaction of the licensing board of the province we seek to enter,—in other words, unless during our undergraduate days we happened to have followed the exact course demanded by that province. The British Columbian whose interests call him east is absolutely debarred from settling in Ontario and there practicing his profession unless he has in the past completed the course and taken the examinations demanded by the Ontario Board, or unless he is willing to spend years repeating his undergraduate work, in the process of taking the exact courses required. Our French-speaking compatriots settling in Ontario, Manitoba, or New Brunswick, cannot obtain the services of a fellow-countryman as a village doctor because of these same embargos, save in the rare case of a bilingual French physician who has ventured to enter, and has succeeded in passing, examinations in a language not his own, and upon subjects taught in a manner different to that in vogue at Laval. For undoubtedly the French tradition in medicine differs from the English.

That this should be the case is preposterous, and the only way to overcome the difficulty is that proposed in the measure before us. The rights of individual provinces have to be fully protected; each province must retain the right to determine the curriculum and the minimum standard of knowledge to be exacted from all who seek to practice within its borders; but if a central Dominion Council, composed of representatives from all the provinces, establish a curriculum and a standard of examination fuller and more severe than that demanded by any individual province, then the interests of each individual province are safe-guarded. What the province demands regarding qualifications to practice is fulfilled and more than fulfilled, and the Provincial Board may safely license holders of the qualification of the Dominion Council, on condition that the licensee on his part promises to abide by those regulations of that Board which bear upon matters other than the curriculum of study.

Also there can be, and there is, no compulsion brought to bear on the individual provinces to agree to subscribe to the measure. Any such compulsion would be invasion of provincial autonomy; the measure

only determines the method to be followed in securing the interprovincial pact. By its terms there can be no interference with the regulations of the Medical Board of any province concerning the course and the examinations to be taken by those who elect to practice purely within that province. Should political influence ever show itself, and the Dominion qualification ever become lower, or its restrictions more elastic, or should these be thought to have become lower than that of any province, it is in the power of that province to withdraw from the pact. At most the establishment of the Dominion qualification may indirectly lead to the gradual raising of provincial qualifications throughout the country, though equally well it might lead to the reverse, and the development of a higher and a lower order of practitioner, though we admit that this is most unlikely.

Here we would note what appears to us a wholly unnecessary paragraph and one constituting a serious weakness in the Bill. We are unacquainted with the reasons which led to its admission. We refer to the paragraph to the effect that the Council shall only begin its existence when *all* the provinces have legislated to the desired end. We can see no satisfactory reason why the Bill should not have been so drawn as to afford a means by which, say, a majority of the provinces could enter into an agreement to accept the diploma of the Council as adequate for admission to practice within those provinces. It is true that according to the British Medical Acts, Canadian practitioners cannot obtain imperial registration until common action is taken by all the provinces. But however much we may desire to see our Canadian graduates recognized, as they ought to be, outside Canada, this is of secondary import compared with the need for the establishment of what we may term "fair trade" within Canada itself at the earliest possible moment.

We would also have preferred a less cumbersome Council. Its very size may from pecuniary reasons alone, render it difficult to call it together. Considering that, throughout, each provincial medical board would have the means of directly influencing the Council, i.e., that it could under the present constitution break up the Council by withdrawing from the pact, if the Council did not fulfil its demands regarding attendance upon courses in and examinations upon all the subjects required for its own particular license—it strikes us strongly that at most two representatives from each medical board to represent the Provincial interests, and with that, the general practitioners of each province, and a single representative from each medical college, to represent the more purely educational interests, would have afforded a perfectly adequate corporation. For as we say, according to the

constitution set down, the council is practically controlled by the provinces. Were it to legislate for medical education and qualifications in general the matter would be quite different, but this it cannot do ; it can only arrange to see that the terms of the interprovincial agreement be carried out.

We know, however, that in this matter Dr. Roddick had to steer his barque according to the currents, and not irrespective of them. The representatives appointed by the Federal authorities must clearly be regarded as a "sop to Cerberus" and as giving the Government a continued interest in the Council. The regulation that the representatives of the medical boards are to be unconnected with any teaching body, is evidently intended to gain the good will of the general practitioners throughout the country. The regulation concerning the number of representatives according to the number of practitioners in a given province, is obviously a concession of the demand from Quebec and Ontario for greater representation than, for example, that given to Prince Edward Island. All the same we regret that political considerations have thus hampered the efficiency of the proposed council.

This subject of due representation has undoubtedly been a grave difficulty. Our French colleagues in Montreal have realized what is here stated, and have given a loyal support to the measure during its passage through Parliament ; they have comprehended that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of this Province of Quebec can always exercise an effective control in the interests of French-speaking graduates and undergraduates. Unfortunately other influences have been at work in Quebec city and neighbourhood, where a violent agitation has been conducted against the Bill, notably by our young colleague, *Le Bulletin Médical*. With an inflation and imaginative powers that are truly Tarasconnais, alas ! but in a spirit that is the reverse of Tartarinesque, the profession is informed that this is an insidious attack upon the French-Canadian people ; that it is an imperialistic measure ; that it is an attempt to force upon the French of this Province the professional education favored by English-speaking people ; that it is a covert attempt on the part of Dr. Roddick to establish McGill as the eventual Dominion school of medicine, to which all who require the higher degree will be bound to come ; and, in short, that the measure is a subtle but shameful attempt to trespass upon, if not eventually to do away with, provincial autonomy, and to coerce and nullify the French medical schools. The very excess of this hysterical attack has defeated itself, and we hope sincerely that the cold water treatment administered at Ottawa by the leaders of the French-speaking people of this country, has had a most salutary

effect. The pity of it is in the after effect. The expression of sentiments so uncalled for, so unjustified, as those to which the *Bulletin Médical* has given utterance, is certainly not calculated to make us in this province dwell together in unity and brotherly love.

Tempora mutantur. It was in Quebec, and in the Quebec Medical Society, that the movement in favour of Dominion Medical legislation had its birth and this in 1867, even before confederation was an accomplished fact !

As regards McGill, we would point out to the *Bulletin Médical* and to others, what must be evident to any one who thinks for a moment, namely, that Dr. Roddick in his anxiety to conciliate other interests has converted his Bill into a self-denying ordinance, so far as regards the Faculty of which he is now head. The leaders in our profession in all the larger centres are associated with the teaching staffs of the various medical schools, and the Federal Government therefore, in appointing its representatives and seeking out leading men, is likely to choose a majority of those who hold university and teaching appointments. In this province it is almost inevitable that the Government appointee will be selected from the French majority. The consequence is that whereas Laval, the University of Toronto and the schools in other provinces, may frequently have two representatives on the council, McGill University can never expect to have more than one. "Is this ambition" ?

ON A RETIREMENT FROM THE EDITORIAL STAFF.

It is with keen regret that the Editorial Board of this Journal has complied with the request of its Senior Member that his resignation be accepted. For now twenty years Dr. Roddick's name has appeared upon the cover of this Journal and we his colleagues have consistently received his loyal support and time and again have profited from his wise advice. But over and above his services to the Journal as such, we as a Board experience a sense of personal loss in his absence from our meetings. If it be permitted to strike this personal note we would say that to each and all of the Editorial Staff the monthly meetings of our body have been a most valued institution, bringing us together in a way which no other occasion has shown itself capable of doing, so that the departure of one of our band from among us on these occasions is a rude interruption of old associations. Not but that we have become gradually prepared for this loss. Now that the Act for the establishment of a Medical Council has been passed we may let our readers know that, from the very beginning of the public crusade which has had this successful ending, Dr. Roddick has constantly urged us to accept his resignation, in order that we might feel