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## MEDICINE IN BOMBAY

*THIS* article, like a recent one on the education of women in India, has been written for "The Listener" from the personal experience of a New Zealander, Aroha M. Hardcastle who, by marriage into a Deccani Hindu family, became Aruna Yeshwant Gupte. She is a graduate of Canterbury University College, and recently returned to this country.

NO one should lay down the law even about what she has experienced personally. Circumstances alter cases. But, in general, I and my husband have

good reason to distrust the professional ability and integrity of the average doctor in Bombay. As you may know, the principal Indian medical schools are in Bombay. Students come from farther India and even from across the border to study medicine and surgery at Grant Medical College in Byculla. The standard of education demanded for entrance is B.Sc. Honours. The professors have all studied and obtained diplomas in Europe. The college is wealthy and very well endowed. All modern facilities are there, and the students are also well endowed. Yet, medical treatment is very unsatisfactory, compared with what our New Zealand medicos do as a general rule.

### "Money Comes First"

First comes the money question. When a family or a community have paid to get a young man or woman qualified to practise medicine, they naturally expect to get a fair return for their outlay. Generally the doctor has a large clientele of his family, friends and relations. His charges are low, and are often left outstanding, to be collected when convenient to all concerned. Along with his visiting patients, he keeps a dispenser and runs a very lucrative dispensary. This is how he really makes doctoring pay all the year round. There are not many dispensing chemists in Bombay. There are plenty of chemists, who sell all the fashionable imported nostrums, injections, vitamin and hormone preparations, *ad lib.*, and *ad nauseam*. Indians are addicted to taking the latest medicine and treatments, and the doctors and chemists naturally do very well out of these proprietary scientific charms and spells.

But, since the dispensary is a business, Mrs. Doctor is likely to interfere. I have had Master Doctor turn up half-an-hour after I have left the dispensary, with a note asking me to pay the bearer of the note immediately! Followed by an even sharper note when I told the child that it was not convenient at that minute.

### Tell Him Yourself

Doctors in Bombay will, in my experience, not treat a patient who looks as if he cannot pay. They like the fee to be put down on the desk before they proceed to examine the unhappy victim. They frequently refuse to take a case if they think the woman or child is in a bad way and likely to die. The excuse is that people get very angry and blame the doctor, if he cannot cure the disease so he prefers to do nothing and save his medical reputation.

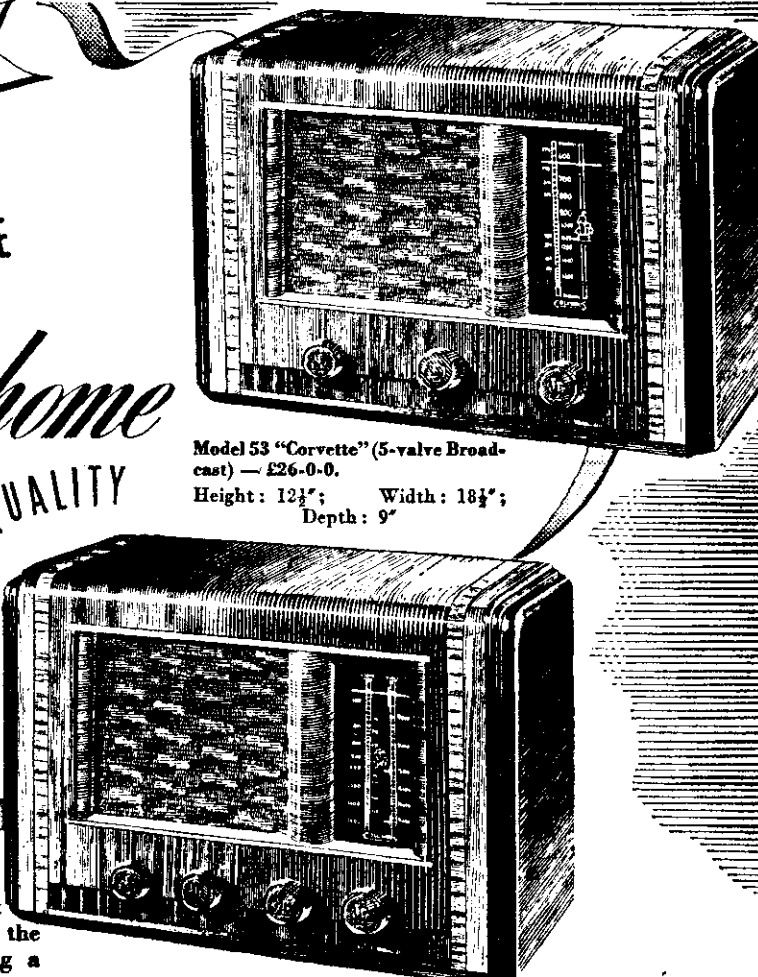
The ordinary G.P. in Bombay is no good at diagnosis. You had best tell him yourself what is ailing you, otherwise he will treat you for whatever is most prevalent, or most profitable. My husband is the pathological photographer at Grant Medical College. All the doctors

(continued on next page)

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