

MRS. ARTHUR MEAD,
PUPIL OF MR. CHARLES * VOICE PRODUCTION.
SANTLEY, LONDON. AND SINGING.
Studio: Milner & Thompson's, Christchurch.

Removal Notice.

DR. J. BINNS SOUTHAM,
Specialist in Diseases of Children
7 LONDON STREET DUNEDIN.

MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope.



THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1907.

ANTI-QUACKERY LEGISLATION



HE quack was a meagre incident in the social life of bygone days. Yet even as far back as Lucian's time he found dealing in irregular nostrums a royal road to wealth. 'If any quack came to them', said Lucian, 'a man of skill and knowing how to manage matters, he made money in no time, with a broad grin at the simple fellows'. Nearer

our own day, the eighteenth-century quack, Graham, kept a 'Temple of Health' in Pall Mall (London), and so captivated a confiding public that he was able to secure in advance from wealthy patients as much as £1000 for his 'elixir of life'. In the same century, Long, the son of an Irish basket-maker, started 'pouring drugs of which he knew nothing into bodies of which he knew less'. The London 'smart set' of the day took him to their arms. Harley street (where he hung out his sign) was frequently blocked with the carriages of clients who almost tumbled over each other in their eagerness to be greased with his marvellous liniment, and to inhale his life-giving mixture through a tube. Like Lucian's quack-salvers, he made a rapid fortune—fobbing (it is said) as much as £13,400 in a single year. The schoolmaster has been a good deal abroad in our day. Yet this is, of all others, the golden age of quacks and quackery. To give one instance only: For years white people in Victoria paid fancy fees to a Chinese 'doctor' in Melbourne for a wonderful pill about the size of a ping-pong ball. It was a salmagundi of honey, dates, earth, sawdust, ground horn, and half-a-dozen other equal variegated ingredients. It was named by Ching—with perhaps unintended irony—ning-shin-yoon, 'repose to the spirit'. Some that ate it found the 'repose' where the lilies blow. Others recovered by the blessing of God, sound constitutions, or non-lethal doses. And the sound of the clods that fell upon the coffins of the patients that 'went before' was drowned by the hosannas which the survivors sang to the praise of ning-shin-yoon.

A quack in Christchurch draws some of his fees from medicaments that are cheaper and more bland. Last week there was an inquest upon one of his patients who had died of diphtheria. The quack treated the dire malady with frequent doses of 'powders'. And the powders (according to the colonial analyst for Canterbury, Professor Bickerton) 'contained nothing but sugar'. We take the following from a report of the case sent out by the Press Association:—

'In charging the jury the coroner said that quackery was rampant throughout the world, and there were persons afflicted with diseases not readily amenable to skilled treatment who clung to the hope that a quack with no qualification recognised by the law might afford relief. After all, it was a matter for legislation. So long as the law remained in its present state, so long would such people prey upon the public by holding themselves out to cure diseases that the best physicians and surgeons found great difficulty in coping with. Until the Legislature thought fit to place a check upon those people who escaped through a loophole from the consequences of the law, and advertised themselves in such a way as (though doing nothing actually illegal) to make people believe they were qualified and consult them accordingly, these quacks would continue to thrive upon the ignorance and credulity of the community. No doubt they might be able to treat some cases, but he (the speaker) drew the line at diphtheria, which was a very dangerous disease, and certainly not one to be taken in hand by an unqualified throat specialist. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the law to prevent the quack from doing his best so long as people were satisfied to place themselves in his care. It was quite clear that the relatives of Greaney, from what they had heard, were misled into thinking that Stanton was a qualified man. The only other extent to which the jury could go was to say whether the young man was so treated by Stanton as to cause his death. It was clear that Greaney came by his death through diphtheria, and if the jury were prepared to express any opinion as to the treatment by Stanton, they were of course at liberty to do so. It was not for him to say. No doubt the result of the present agitation against quacks would probably lead to legislative action of some sort. But until that day came neither the speaker nor the jury could do much to prevent those people trading upon the credulity of the public.'

A considerable portion of our adult population are, in regard to the claims of quacks, 'in statu pupillari'—in a condition of baptismal innocence and infantile credulity that demand the protection of the law. The best asset of a country is the lives of its citizens. And it seems to us as obviously the duty of the State to protect these from the risks of the medical charlatan as from perils arising from unprotected flywheels, insanitary drains, bubonic rats, and other dangers by flood and field that have been made the subject of our legislation. As the law stands, an irregular practitioner may independently give a prescription to a patient which a chemist is not allowed to fill independently unless he holds a diploma. Says the Christchurch 'Press':—

'It is contended by medical men that it is an illogical position for a Government to take up to force men to study for five years before being allowed to treat patients medically, and yet allow any quack to treat people medically without evidence of any study whatever. As to patent medicines, they contend that it would probably be sufficient in the case of any medicine that contained a drug of a poisonous nature, that a clear statement be made on the label that such drug or poison forms part of the preparation.'

Legislation in restraint of quacks is a pressing need in this El Dorado of quackery. The poor are the chief sufferers from the 'treatment' of the irregular practitioner. The 'Press' says: 'The Chief Health Officer for the Colony holds strong opinions on the subject, and it is probable that an amendment of the law dealing with these cases will be proposed next session.' We hope that it will take the drastic lines followed last year by Mr. Hornsby's Quackery and Other Frauds Prevention Bill. If the provisions of that Bill found their way, even substantially, to the Statute-book, the occupation of the medical charlatan would be pretty well gone.

CIVIL AND HYDRAULIC
ENGINEER,
LICENSED SURVEYOR.

F. J. WILLIAMS
(Late Chief Hydraulic Engineer Waipori Falls
Hydro. Electric System).

43 | CRAWFORD STREET | 43
DUNEDIN.
WATERWORKS A SPECIALTY.