

CORRESPONDENCE

Osteopathy Registration Bill

SIR,—The full text of Lord Moynihan's speech in the House of Lords (*Journal*, December 22nd, 1934, p. 1163) should be studied by every thinking practitioner of medicine. It was moderate in tone, cogent in reasoning, and admirably illustrated by a broad sketch of the history of medicine. Lord Dawson supported him in an equally able speech, but in spite of their combined efforts to secure the rejection of the second reading of the Osteopaths Bill they failed to carry conviction to the majority of their fellow peers. Not only did they fail to convince, but their speeches aroused such fierce antagonism that Lord Amphill exclaimed that they had used "language of exaggeration such as I have never heard in this House."

Speeches by other peers favourable to the Bill were given, and some related their own benign experiences at the hands of the osteopath. One said that hunting people were overwhelmingly against Lord Moynihan and in favour of the osteopath. Hunting people and a celebrated dramatist who satirized them unmercifully are thus at one. Extremes meet in admiration of that strange cult from the Occident—osteopathy. Love, even worship, of the horse is notorious among hunting people. Are they prepared to extend the virtues of osteopathy to the cure of the troubles of this noble animal? The horse has certainly a longer backbone than man, and surely would afford a larger field for the exercise of the highly cultivated tactile sense of the osteopath, and so lead to the cure of the troubles of horseflesh which so often baffle the ordinary "vet." Again, many peers are breeders of cattle and pigs. Surely they would not wish to limit the advantages of the osteopathic system to their own kind, but would naturally extend it to the speechless creatures of their shippens and sties. For, after all, pathologically speaking, the pig is but the lesser man, subject to the same diseases—acute infections, tuberculosis, anaemias, tumours, and parasites, and if allowed to live its full life and not turned into bacon at an early age would also suffer from degenerative diseases of the nervous system.

My point is that, for the sake of consistent argument, veterinary medicine and surgery are concerned in this dispute. Animal and human pathology are closely related and intertwined, and the treatment based on them similar in all respects. Everyone should be extremely critical and suspicious of any system of treatment which is limited to man unless it be that specially applicable to his distinctive prerogative—the human mind. Because man has the larger mind and is able by the faculty of speech to communicate his troubles to his fellow man it does not follow that manipulation of the spine, even by the highly cultivated tactile sense of the osteopath, can cure or even alleviate these troubles. Such cure or alleviation does occur, but not with that uniformity or consistency which would justify its recognition as a special system of treatment outside orthodox medicine. Cure or alleviation is attained by a subtle process, which the modest orthodox practitioner finds difficult to explain, but which presents no difficulties to the superb *naïveté* of the confident osteopath.

It is disconcerting to find that certain leaders of the profession are inclined to compromise or concede the claims of the osteopath. The rank and file should stand firm, remembering that some representatives of all political parties are against them on this issue. We have the satisfaction of knowing that, however imperfect may be our methods and results, we are on the right road and in touch with the actualities and realities of life, and that the progress of the past justifies medicine in her claim

to resist official recognition of upstart cults. If the osteopath has anything superior to add to existing knowledge let him enter by the strait gate and join us in the march forward.

The memorandum by the Medical Secretary is an indication of the policy of the B.M.A. to resist the passage of this Bill. Every member should give that policy his or her fullest support.—I am, etc.,

Warrington, Dec. 24th, 1934.

J. S. MANSON.

SIR,—I read with very great concern, in the *Journal* of December 15th, the report of the discussion in the House of Lords on the Registration of Osteopaths Bill. The fact that the Bill has already been read a second time and referred to a select committee is a matter of grave import to our profession, and merits instant and energetic action if we are not to stand by and see the very foundations of medicine and surgery undermined. I am afraid that the medical profession has nobody to blame but itself for ever having allowed matters to drift so far as they have done. Concerted action should have surely been taken long ago to nip matters in the bud before they had reached the present serious degree of development.

The suggested registration of chiropodists was a matter of very small moment in comparison with the now suggested giving of legal status to osteopaths, as the former do not propose to deal with anything more serious than corns and paring of toe-nails, whereas the osteopaths claim to arrogate to themselves the right to extend their activities over the whole body. Now I contend that there is nothing that the osteopath can do which cannot be better done by any surgeon who cares to devote his time to the study of that particular branch of his work, and consequently there is no call whatever for the granting of legal status to the osteopath. The osteopaths' chief backers are, of course, the popular newspapers, which have always shown themselves ready and willing to extol the charlatan to the disadvantage of the medical practitioner, their reason being that the charlatan brings much grit to their mills in the shape of elaborate and expensive advertisements, whereas the medical profession brings none.

If the medical profession does not now wish to suffer a severe reverse it is up to its members, collectively and individually, to shake off their lethargy and adopt measures much more active and militant than any they have hitherto taken.—I am, etc.,

Kirk Michael, Isle of Man, Dec. 24th, 1934.

E. G. FENTON.

** A memorandum on osteopathy appears in this week's *Supplement*, and a leading article at page 20.—ED. B.M.J.

London University and its Medical Schools

SIR,—Dr. A. M. H. Gray's letter printed in your issue of December 22nd, 1934, suggests to me that one of the reasons why we never seem to get anywhere in discussions of London medical education is that we never seem to be able to discuss one thing at a time. Sir Ernest Graham-Little's general question was a fairly simple one. It was whether the London students who had completed the second M.B. had received a course of education comparable in cultural value with that received by a Cambridge poll man or a London pass B.Sc. He suggested that if the answer were "Yes" such a change of the regulations should be made as to permit the student at this point to graduate. Professor Lovatt Evans has pointed out that very slight modifications of the present rules would enable us to answer "Yes" to Sir Ernest's question.

I should differ from Dr. Gray on any question of university practice with the utmost reluctance: he knows