

**MEDICAL  
PRIESTCRAFT: A  
NATIONAL PERIL**

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Medical priestcraft: a national peril by John Shaw

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MEDICAL PRIESTCRAFT,  
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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"ANTISEPTICS IN OBSTETRIC NURSING."

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"THE 'OTTO SCHMIDT' SPECIAL TREATMENT  
FOR CANCER :

A CRITIQUE BASED ON PERSONAL OBSERVATION."

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"FIBROID TUMOUR :

A NEW TREATMENT FOR FIBROID TUMOUR

AND

SOME OTHER DISEASES OF WOMEN,

WITHOUT OPERATION."

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"THE CURE OF CANCER :

AND

HOW SURGERY BLOCKS THE WAY."

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"CANCER :

A WORKING THEORY

FOR ITS

PREVENTION AND CURE."

# MEDICAL PRIESTCRAFT, A NATIONAL PERIL.

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Fellow (late Vice-President) of the British Gynaecological Society ;  
Fellow of the British Electro-Therapeutic Society.*

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1907.

DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE TO WHOM  
PATRIOTISM APPEALS BEFORE PRIESTCRAFT  
AND  
HUMANITY MORE THAN CLASS-INTERESTS.

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PER ANGUSTA AD AUGUSTA.





## PREFACE.

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THE present work is written in fulfilment of my promise to endeavour "*from the outside* to rouse the conscience of the profession and the consciousness of the people and their Parliament to the grave need of the amendment of the Medical Acts, and of the far greater dangers" (as I allege) "*of the Medical Acts Amendment Bill*, some of the provisions of which are calculated not only to aggravate the ills from which the rank and file of the profession are suffering, but to constitute a public peril of the first magnitude."

The anomalous position created by the refusal of the Executive Committee of the General Medical Council to accede to my request and remove my name from the Medical Register—a refusal, the object of which is fairly evident—is exposed in the correspondence with the Registrar of the Council. This action will enable the profession and public to judge of the lengths to which the Committee is prepared to push its malignant powers,—if any fresh evidence were desirable on the subject. For my own part, the decision of the Committee in nowise obscures my line of duty. I thought it more honourable to attack grievous evils *from the outside*; that the Executive Committee suspend my release, presumably in the hope of coupling my name with "infamous conduct," is but in consonance with the actions of a hierarchy who find in the term "infamous conduct" a terror analogous to "excommunication with bell, candle, and book," which,

curiously enough, to my knowledge, has been afterwards accounted the most honourable episode in the career of two eminent men with whom I had the privilege of being personally acquainted.

I thought it right to leave the profession because I received from the Censors' Board of the Royal College of Physicians a letter censuring me for having done that—*which to have left undone*--would have convicted my conscience of *lèse-humanité*—treason to the race. "The gravamen of Dr. Shaw's offence," said *Truth*,<sup>(a)</sup> in an article on "The Priestcraft of Medicine," "lies in the fact that he rejects the current opinion of the profession in a matter of profound importance, and that, being silenced by a sort of professional boycott, he appeals directly to the public by showing them what he believes to be the truth. This is the unpardonable sin, to punish which the professional machinery is set in motion, and it is to escape the punishment which would have inevitably fallen upon him, unless he had undertaken to withdraw his book from circulation, and hold his tongue in future, that he has to resign his diploma and remove his name from the Register." "It will be seen at once," it had been said earlier in the article, "that the question which the Royal College of Physicians has thus raised is one of supreme importance to the public at large." And, I would venture to add, not less to the rank and file of the profession of medicine.

It is a strange coincidence that on the very day on which the letter was dated (January 19, 1907) when I resigned the membership of the Royal College of Physicians and requested erasure from the Medical Register, two letters were to be found in the correspondence columns of that day's issue of the *British Medical Journal*, the one pointing out the terrible straits to which many of the rank and file of the

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(a) *Truth*, Feb. 13, 1907.

profession are reduced, and a second which read as follows :—  
“ Every member of the Association must feel that some recognition of the splendid services rendered to it by Sir Victor Horsley should be made. I suggest that the annual meeting of the Association should be held in London, and that Sir Victor Horsley should be nominated as President.”  
The letter was signed by a gentleman whose name will be met with again in the present essay.

An extract from the former letter, too, is worth quoting :—  
“ One of the speakers at the Westminster Division meeting brought out a most interesting point when he alluded to the fact that the very men who suffer most from the unfair conditions of practice are by reason of their consequent overwork deprived of the time required to agitate for redress. It is all very well for the men who have ‘arrived,’ as the French say, to look down on the mass of their discontented brethren and talk of the nobility of medical work. We also appreciate this, or we should even now sell our practices, and with the capital obtained make a small fortune in grocering or some other trade. I think it is just this that will always keep the ranks of the medical profession well filled—namely, the feeling that grows stronger in the doctor’s breast day by day that there is no other work he could find a life-interest in. On the other hand, absorbing interest, honour, and even gratitude cannot completely oust the worry and anxiety due to an uncertain and inadequate income.”

The writer just quoted saw in the unfair competition of hospitals one of the immediate causes of the straitened circumstances to which that noble body of men constituting the humbler ranks of the profession are reduced. The present essay will attempt to prove that the origin of hospital abuse (as of the other evils which afflict the profession and injure the public) is to be found in the hierarchical government of the profession, in the constitution of which vivisection and scientific surgery (so-called)—of which Sir Victor Horsley