

which has led Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH to place himself in such a singular position as he has in fact taken up with reference to the British Institute of Preventive Medicine, and the Royal British Nurses' Association. Both these Institutions have applied under the Companies' Act for a licence which will enable them to be registered as associations not formed for profit, without the word 'limited' as a part of their respective titles. The Act which gives to the President of the Board of Trade jurisdiction to issue such a licence, gives by that very enactment the right to the company in a proper case to get the benefit of this provision; and the case which is to be considered a proper one is not only sufficiently obvious from the effect of the licence, but is also indicated in precise terms by the definition included in the section, of the case which its promoters are to prove to the satisfaction of the President of the Board of Trade. That case has respect only to the pecuniary commitments and powers of the company. If it is intended that it shall devote any profit that it may realise or other income to the advancement of its objects, and if it is formed to promote commerce, art, science, religion, charity, or any other useful object, and will prohibit the payment of any dividend to the Members of the Association, then the Board of Trade may issue the licence asked for. The effect of such a licence is that the official title of the company does not contain the word 'limited,' that its name need not be painted up outside its place of business or otherwise published in accordance with the Companies' Act, and that it is not called upon to furnish the registrar of Joint Stock Companies with a list of its members, directors, or managers. That a company satisfying the condition prescribed, as to its working for the advancement of a cause and not for the profit of its members, should be denied the benefit of these purely commercial advantages on any collateral ground seems unintelligible. But this is what Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH has undertaken to read into the Act of Parliament. He says to the promoters of the Institute of Preventive Medicine: 'I cannot approve your project, because you contemplate experiments on living animals calculated to give pain, and I cannot issue the licence for fear of being thought to have approved your undertaking.' To the Royal British Nurses in the same strain he writes that, 'after careful consideration of the objects of the Association and of the representations made in opposition thereto the

Board of Trade are unable to satisfy themselves that the means which the Association propose to adopt are either adequate to carry out their objects satisfactorily or so free from objection as to warrant the Board of Trade in the issue of a licence." Not VIVIEN'S robe was more transparent than this garment of official zeal in which the President has dressed out his antipathy to these two Institutions, and his determination to use his jurisdiction to prevent them from attaining their objects. Does he, we wonder, consider himself committed to approval of all the objects of the sixteen companies which he so licensed in the year 1889, dealing with matters as diverse as the raising of sheep and the incorporating of solicitors? Did he satisfy himself when he licensed the Midwives' Institute that the means which it proposed to adopt for obtaining a Bill to compel the Registration of Midwives were adequate to that object? The thing is absolutely preposterous, and Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH does himself less than justice when he puts forward such trumpery arguments. The truth is that he means in this matter to play the autocrat. But we think that he will find his duty more exacting than his conscience. The law stands even above the Minister, and we shall be much surprised if it does not turn out that the President of the Board of Trade has greatly misunderstood the law. If he can upon capricious grounds deny these licences, he can on similar grounds refuse a licence to hold more than two acres of land; and religious, personal, or other irrelevant considerations may become the determining factors in the exercise of any part of his jurisdiction. If the law be so, it must be altered; but until it is judicially declared, we shall decline to accept any such construction of the section under which Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH affects to act. We do not believe that the Legislature, by a couple of short enabling clauses, has created a censorship so irresponsible and so odious as the Board of Trade is now claiming to exercise.

It is not too late for Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH to reconsider a decision which is likely to be fraught with serious consequences to the community, besides opening up a prospect of contentions in all kinds of subjects which can be of no service to the cause of progress. In the month of August there is to meet in the metropolis a great international assembly of men devoted to sanitary science. It is humiliating to reflect that England, the pioneer in this great work, will be bound to confess before the world

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