



## YE DOCTORS AND LAWYERS

1683

*Jersey Justice In Olden Days*

1780

Gabriel Thomas, writing in 1698, expressed a rather low opinion of lawyers and physicians. "Of them I say nothing," said he, forsooth, "because this country is very peaceful and healthy. Long may it so continue and never have occasion for the tongue of one and the pen of the other, both equally destructive to man's estate and lives; forsooth they hang men, have a license to murder and make mischief."

The common treatments of that day were purgings, bleedings and blisters. For ordinary ills, the housewife used herbs, the leaves and roots of which were dried for teas, powders and lotions. The Indian Medicine Man came around in the summer months and gave a show on the green and sold bottles of colored water between the acts as a cure-all for everything. This led the General Assembly to pass a law, in 1772, providing that every physician, surgeon or montebank doctor who traveled through this colony and "erected a stage for the sale of drugs of medicines of any kind shall, for every such offense, forfeit the sum of twenty pounds."

The law required that every person desiring to practice medicine "be examined before a Justice of the Supreme Court who may seek the assistance of experienced persons to conduct the examination. The Doctor must deliver his Bill of Particulars to his patient in plain English words or nearly so as the article will admit of. "The Court examined the accounts" upon request of the patients

Nevertheless, the Quacks and Indian Medicine Men staged shows in the Olde Towne, up to and including the summer of 1895, on Broad and Prospect Streets, and one of the song hits of the star entertainer was about a man who was so bad he was afraid of himself. He went from bad to worse for about a week. Reserved stands in the front row sold for 25c a bottle.

Attorneys had no legal status until 1698, and were not allowed to appear in court. "In all courts, persons of all persuasions may freely appear in their own way and according to their own manner and there personally plead their own causes themselves, or, if unable, by their friends, no person being allowed to take money for pleading and advice in such cases."

Justices of the Peace were not allowed to practice law except in behalf of the King's Lord's Proprietors or in their own personal controversies. Sheriffs, their Deputies and Court Clerks were prohibited, also.

In West Jersey, the Quakers were subject to the discipline of their Meetings and all differences between Friends were referred to selected members of the society for settlement. The charter provided that "no person or persons shall be compelled to fee any attorney."

After the Union of 1702, the judicial system followed the English custom, and the Courts prescribed "the rules for their own conduct and those who pleaded before them."

Charles S. Boyer, 1931