

MEDICAL REFORM.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Session after session has gone by, and yet no Bill embracing that full and ample measure of reform, so long and loudly called for in our profession, has passed the Legislature, or even been allowed a full and free discussion in the House, either owing to a want of unity and determination in the supporters of reform, an uncompromising opposition in its opponents; or, what I fear to be the real state of the case, the meagre and unsatisfactory principle of the Bill or Bills themselves to the majority of the profession. Now, sir, as I think the present crisis is peculiarly favourable in forwarding the views of all *real* and *genuine* reformers, what I would most humbly, but strenuously, suggest (conscious of the influential position that medical men must hold at the ensuing elections, and the great influence their calling gives them in their several localities) is, that a leading question put to every candidate coming to the hustings should be (no matter what may be the colour of his political creed)—Will you promise, by the best of your power and ability, to aid in supporting and carrying out a Bill, to be introduced during the ensuing session of Parliament, for the abolition of the abuses (so freely acknowledged at all hands) now existing in the profession; and placing on a permanent and equitable footing, the future management and government (as the case may be) of our medical corporations, making them responsible bodies; or at least to declare that your best attention and consideration shall be given to the subject. Of course, sir, I cannot define the exact wording of the pledge; but what I wish my readers to understand is, that they should not allow any of their representatives to take their seats in Parliament without impressing upon their minds the present disgusting and irresponsible state of our numerous diploma-shops; the glaring evils arising to the public at large, from the close and corrupt management of those vending-houses; the exclusion of the great mass of the profession from the slightest participation or management in their own immediate concerns. This, sir, I think would be advisable, and I have no doubt would be received by every liberal and enlightened mind in a becoming spirit. If there could be, at the same time, organised large and simultaneous meetings of the profession in the three kingdoms, corresponding and uniting with each other, each appointing a delegate to meet in London as soon after Parliament is assembled as possible, so as to prepare a Bill on a large and extended scale, receiving, if possible, the *united* sanctions of the hon. members for

Finsbury, Lambeth, and Bridport, but if embracing rather too extended a field for reform, for the two latter gentlemen; then, *Deo volente*, let the hon. member for Finsbury be entrusted with the entire management of it; and if past actions are a *sure* criterion for future conduct, he is the man; and I have not the slightest fear that, before the end of the session, those strong holds of peculation and corruption will be levelled with the ground; the members of a fine and enlightened profession raised to their proper standard in society; public confidence in our art revived again, and an impetus given to learning and science, that interested jobbers and corrupt monopolists would in vain put a stop to, who endeavour, without effect, to hide beneath a press avowedly advocating medical reform, but, in reality, composed and *edited* by men, themselves examiners and teachers in a corporation, whose watchword was, *ab initio*, monopoly and corruption, *is* corruption and monopoly, and will for ever remain monopoly and corruption of the blackest and foulest die. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. B. M'EGAN, Surgeon, &c.

Chelmsford, June 15, 1841.

NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—The subject of assistant-surgeons in the navy messing with their superior officers is, I see, again mooted in your valuable and extensively-circulated Journal, and by a gentleman, too, who, although his service as a member of a ward-room mess could only have been in times of piping peace from his seniority, might have heard his seniors say how injurious it would be to the best prospects and interests of a young man just entering the service that he should be so placed. I had hoped the subject was given up as untenable, and wished to let it sink into the oblivion I think it deserves, unanswered; but another attempt being made to disseminate discontent amongst those who have not experience for their guide, it may be excusable if (as Dr. Tweeddale's senior officer) I should at least *try* to undeceive them.

In my opinion those who prevent the assistant-surgeons from messing in the ward-room, are doing them the greatest possible service in more than one point of view. It is often the case, that a young man, in paying for his qualifications to enter the navy, has expended the last shilling which his friends can advance; and in such a situation, Is it any favour to be under the necessity of competing with his better-paid superiors, in keeping an expensive mess, and other extravagancies? Again, his crude, inexperienced opinions would be