

THE AMENDED MEDICAL PROFESSION BILL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Medical legislation occupies a prominent part this session of Parliament.

The Amended Bill presents a few points for consideration, which, with your permission, I will briefly review. The Council is cut down to thirteen in number, the elective privilege is given up, and the Crown appoints instead. The registration clauses are retained, and we are to have six new boards for the United Kingdom, two for each country—preliminary and professional.

With regard to England, I would, Sir, submit it for opinion, whether it would not be as well for the professional board to relieve themselves entirely of surgical examination, and, in place of it, demand the diploma of the London College of Surgeons. As the matter at present stands, Lincoln's-inn-fields is altogether thrown into the shade. The Council would certainly appoint some of their body examiners, but that is all.

It appears to me, if this new professional board for England performs the duties of the Society of Apothecaries satisfactorily, that is all that is wanted. The claims of the above-named Society are recognised in this Act, by appointing some of the examiners from amongst them until 1865. The cry of "wolf" has been so often raised in medical reform of late years, that the profession will be surprised if any measure is really enacted during this session.

Sir, it cannot have escaped your notice to see how many are entering the profession with only one qualification, the diploma of the London College of Surgeons. Where ten pass the College, (if we may trust the published lists,) only four or five obtain the Hall licence; and be assured, Sir, that this is entirely because no examination in Classics is demanded at Lincoln's-inn-fields, while the contrary, and a more searching ordeal, is required at Blackfriars. If this Act passes, the Council will do well to decree that no one shall after a certain time practise medicine with a surgical diploma only; and again with regard to the pure surgeon, why should not the law compel him to obtain the licence of the professional board before he presents himself for the fellowship examination? It would make him all the better practitioner.

From beginning to end, this Bill ignores the apprenticeship system. It has been the fashion of late years to decry it; but I maintain that unless a student previously passes a certain time with a practitioner of medicine and surgery, and witnesses the daily routine of actual practice, he will nowhere else attain a most essential part of his education. He will blunder at the very threshold, and before he commences practice will have to learn the alphabet of his profession.

As in the original Bill, so also in this, there is no direct penal clause. If the irregulars are to be met by indirect means only, why not require an inquest on every person who dies under a quack's treatment?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Faversham, June, 1856.

W. N. SPONG.

MEDICAL ORGANIZATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On looking over a work on "Foreign and English Medical Organization," published in 1847, by Mr. Edwin Lee, so well and so favourably known to the profession by the information he has communicated on various points connected with continental medicine, I was gratified to find the following propositions for improving the state of the medical profession, which it will be seen are almost identical with those of the Amended Medical Reform Bill, the chief difference being, that Mr. Lee advocates the elective principle of nominating the members of the Council.

A supreme council of health, composed partly of medical members elected by the profession, and partly (one-third) of non-medical members, to take cognizance of and decide upon matters relating to the regulation of the profession, and of medical education, as well as those appertaining to hygiene and medical police.

Students, whether intending to practise as physicians, surgeons, or general practitioners, to go through the same course of study in the first instance.

That there be two examinations before the licence to practise be granted: the first (preliminary), upon the accessory sciences; the second (practical and clinical), at the age of twenty-two years, before a joint board, composed of professors and examiners from the colleges, who should receive a fixed

salary not dependent on the number of those who obtain the licence or diploma.

That the candidate having passed this examination be allowed to practise under the title of licentiate in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, and be immediately eligible to present himself for examination for the College of Surgeons, who would test his proficiency in surgery; and that at twenty-six years of age, he be further eligible for the fellowship. That licentiates of the faculty be eligible to present themselves for examination before the College of Physicians at the age of twenty-six years, producing testimonials of additional attendance on hospitals medical practice.

That none of the universities or colleges be allowed to grant licences to practise, which should be obtainable only by passing the examinations at the central boards in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin; but that certain privileges (as dispensing with the preliminary examination) be awarded to graduates of universities.

That licentiates of either of the three metropolitan boards be authorized to practise in any part of the kingdom, the examination fees being the same in all.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

London, June, 1856.

MEDICUS.

CLUBS: THEIR ABUSES AND DOCTORS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of Saturday, June 28th, appears a letter under the above heading, certainly not one which some future compiler of a *reading exercise* shall transfer to his book, for the benefit of the rising generation, as a specimen of elegant composition, but one which nevertheless takes a very one-sided view of what he styles "the system of farming clubs." That these institutions do contain evils is undeniable; and let me ask "Fiat Justitia," what human institution is free from them?—but at the same time they do unquestionably exercise a vast amount of influence in elevating the morals, improving the social status, and developing the principles of self-reliance and independence amongst those who come within the sphere of their benevolent operations; and possessing such advantages, they merit the countenance and support of every generous and well-constituted mind.

If man were to live solely for his own unsocial ends, if his *organ of acquisitiveness* were to be exercised to the prejudice of other more ennobling craniological developments, "Fiat Justitia's" line of reasoning might pass for the current coin of the realm; but I am happy to say that such is not the case, and there are gentlemen, whose "status and respectability" are not inferior to his, who undertake the medical management of clubs, and make them, by diligent attention to their interests and requirements, the stepping-stones to fame and honour. Most of our best surgeons here have, in early life, held such appointments, and they have been the means of acquiring for them an opportunity of getting into notice; otherwise they might have been "born to blush unseen" during the term of their natural lives; they have been the means of enlarging their views, and giving efficiency to their professional knowledge.

I happen to be acquainted, Sir, with one medical gentleman in this town who has the management of 900 club members regularly under his *surveillance*, and he declares that at the present time he has not one single individual requiring his attendance. This, I am aware, is a very rare, perhaps an unusual occurrence; he is nevertheless paid for them after the rate of 3s. per head—i. e., £135 per annum; but he does his work to our satisfaction, and we consequently pay him with much pleasure. But it is indirectly that he derives benefit from his devotion to our interests. There are few indeed amongst us in whose families he is not the regular attendant—"their guide, philosopher, and friend." Does "Fiat Justitia" see no advantage to the young surgeon "just let loose from school," in the sprinkling of *prosperous, respectable tradesmen* amongst his constituents in these *farmed clubs*? Is it not through such individuals that many a man

"Climbs the steep

Where Fame's proud temple shines afar?"

Do we not hear of many a man of talent and ability being shut out for ever from respectable practice through a false pride in neglecting to avail himself of the means of introducing himself to public confidence and public notice which such institutions, well managed and properly attended to, must inevitably have procured for him? Have not the assistant-surgeons in our navy