

## REFORM IN MEDICAL NOMENCLATURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—All liberal-minded members of the medical profession have, doubtless, learned with satisfaction that the approaching consideration by Parliament of the bill recently prepared by the Council of "The Provincial Medical and Surgical Association," will afford a favourable opportunity of effecting some improvement in the social status of those of our professional brethren popularly known as "general practitioners."

The bill, which is yet in embryo, is still susceptible of important emendations. I am glad to find that the contemplated measure of medical reform will, if sanctioned by the legislature, abolish the inappropriate and offensive title which the Court of Examiners of the Society of Apothecaries at present inflicts upon the candidate, who, after subjecting himself to a comprehensive curriculum of study, and subsequently passing a rigid examination in medicine and several of the allied sciences, has been declared to possess a competent knowledge of his profession; but the licentiate has hitherto only regarded the certificate, or licence, received on the occasion as "a document it is desirable to hide in the secret recesses of his *écritoire*."

All must admit the utter inadequacy of the title of "Apothecary" as the characteristic designation of those legally authorized to discharge the multifarious and highly responsible functions appertaining to the office of the medical advisers of at least 9999 out of every 10,000 of "the millions of people in this country subject to the infirmities and diseases incidental to the highest and most complicated part of organized nature."

Are not men so eminently characterized by intelligence and scientific attainments, and who, moreover, unequivocally manifest so much philanthropy in the performance of very onerous and arduous duties, entitled to occupy a better position in the social scale than that which they now have?

Considering the nature of the examination which candidates for the licence obtained at "the Hall" undergo, it is certainly most unjust to impose upon them a title derived from the secondary, and almost menial, functions which they perform, and which, in fact, are more frequently performed by deputies than by themselves.

I humbly suggest that it is highly desirable the new Examining Board should be a faculty authorized to confer the degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery upon those who become members of the College of Surgeons, and also obtain the triple licentiate of medicine, surgery, and midwifery.

The new order of general practitioners would then have, in common parlance, the courtesy title of Doctor,\* which, I would observe, is the ordinary designation of the medical adviser of all classes in Germany, and in other parts of Europe.

While the proposed courtesy Doctor would probably be considered by some persons of merely analogous value to the spurious title of Esquire, accorded, even by the highest classes in the community, to professional men and persons of patrician rank, not actually esquires by creation, office, or legal privilege,† the great majority of the members of the profession would, I believe, consider the Bachelorate I suggest as well calculated to improve the status of those who will enter into general practice under the new régime.

The M.B.S. would occupy a position nearly equal to that of the M.B. proceeding to the degree of M.D., upon the attainment of which he possesses the legal rank of Doctor and Physician.

All circumstances considered, I think the proposition will not be deemed an unreasonable one, more especially after taking into consideration the fact that a large proportion of the M.D.'s in practice have purchased their diplomas at Giessen, Leipsic, St. Andrew's, Aberdeen, or other *Doctor-factories*, where there is either no examination, or the prescribed ordeal is not superior, if even equal, to that undergone by the physician-apothecaries, who are now inappropriately dubbed apothecaries by the medical corporation to which the public is so largely indebted for the vast improvement effected in the education of the "general practitioner."

Some elaborately-framed and well-digested propositions for the substitution of a Doctorate in surgery for the membership

of the Royal College of Surgeons, have been lately promulgated by the medical profession of the Isle of Man, and are worthy of careful consideration.

I believe that a suggestion somewhat similar to that which I have offered in reference to the general adoption of the title of Doctor, would have emanated from the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, if a large portion of the presidents and secretaries of the branch associations had not been graduates of some of the universities to which I have alluded, and had not consequently an interest in discouraging attempts to effect changes which would counteract their efforts to establish themselves in what they consider to be a higher grade than that to which the immense majority of their rural brethren belong.

The contemplated amendment of the laws which regulate the medical profession and the medical polity of the kingdom, will fall very far short of what expediency, reason, and justice dictate, if it does not considerably improve the status of the members of the general body of the profession, by placing them on as good a footing in society as the general practitioner in other European countries.

If the members of the new college are merely to have the name and style of Licentiate, all idea of materially improving the social position of the general practitioner may be at once abandoned.

The establishment of a Royal College of "Medical Practitioners," in lieu of the Society of Apothecaries, as suggested by Mr. Brookes at the Shropshire Medical Reform meeting, would be much better calculated to effect the object which the framers of "the bill" profess to have in view, than the resuscitation of an order of bipeds to be known as Licentiate.

Instead of perpetuating the degradation of the larger portion of the profession, by maintaining broadly-marked distinctions for the purpose of preserving a medical aristocracy, every available means should be employed to qualify the rank and file of the profession to move in the higher grades of society on more equal terms than they do at present.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient humble servant,

F. J. SANDFORD.

Stowmarket, March 1852.

## MIDWIFE'S MIDWIFERY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At five o'clock A.M., on the 29th of February, I was requested to visit a woman, aged forty, who, her husband informed me, had been delivered of her eighth child by a midwife between eight and nine o'clock the previous evening, and was now suffering from a discharge, or something of that kind. On entering the patient's room, I soon discovered the state of affairs. Everything appeared saturated with blood, the woman's skin was cold and clammy, the pulse not perceptible at the wrists, and the uterus distended. I immediately gave her some gin, that being the only stimulant in the house, introduced my hand, and removed a quantity of coagulated blood, also a portion of placenta between three and four inches square, which was slightly adherent towards the fundus; and by pressing externally with my right hand, while I gently withdrew my left, I got the uterus to contract, though feebly. But it was too late, for I had but just time to apply a tight bandage, under which I placed a pad, before my patient expired. During the time I was thus occupied, which was little more than five minutes, the midwife was talking about her experience, and saying she considered it a false conception, as she had removed all the afterbirth piecemeal, on account of its being rotten, and she was sure she had done her best; but to which I replied, I supposed she had, but it was a pity she had not sent for a medical man earlier.

The husband, not feeling satisfied about his wife's death, wished for a coroner's inquest—a wish I rather encouraged, in the first place to clear myself, and in the next to expose the ignorance and negligence of the midwife, who had allowed the woman to continue flooding from before nine o'clock P.M. till five A.M.

An inquest was accordingly held on the 5th instant, when I had no hesitation in saying the woman's death was caused by flooding, through the gross ignorance and neglect of the midwife. The room was cleared, and after some time, a verdict of "*Died of natural causes*" was returned, with a polite caution that the midwife should in future send for proper medical assistance earlier. I shall not attempt to say anything about the verdict, fearing I might say too much; but must I bow my head, and in future pretend to believe that all causes of death are natural?

\* When the authority to practise has been acquired, the German Doctor has full power to officiate in medicine, surgery, and midwifery. By a Bavarian decree, passed in 1843, a subordinate class of practitioners was partially suppressed and declared unqualified to practise either surgery, medicine, or midwifery.

† The eldest sons of Doctors of Divinity are in this category.