

THE SERVICES.

Brigade Surgeon J. J. Thompson has arrived at Aldershot, and taken over the duties of sanitary officer of the division from Brigade Surgeon Carter.

By order of the War Office authorities, Quartermaster Lackey and forty-four non-commissioned officers of the Army Hospital Corps proceeded from Aldershot to Tilbury on Wednesday and embarked on board the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer *Carthage* for passage to Suez.

YEOMANRY CAVALRY, MONTGOMERYSHIRE.—Surgeon Richard Marsden Pilkington Low, M.D., resigns his commission.

ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS.—4th West Riding of Yorkshire (Sheffield): Acting Surgeon William Jackson Cleaver, M.B., to be Surgeon.

ADMIRALTY.—Surgeon M. Murray Ritchie Mackenzie has been placed on the retired list of his rank from the 6th inst. The following appointments have been made:—Fleet Surgeon Simon A. Willis, to the *Castor*, vice William J. Baird; Fleet Surgeon Godfrey Goodman, to Sheerness Dockyard, vice S. A. Willis; Staff Surgeon William S. Fletcher, to the *Euphrates*, vice Goodman; Surgeon Everard H. Saunders, to Devonport Yard, vice William S. Fletcher; Surgeon James W. H. Hawton, to the *Minotaur*, vice E. H. Saunders; Surgeon Charles W. Hamilton, to Plymouth Hospital, vice Hawton; and Surgeon Robert W. Anderson, to the *Stork*, vice Joseph Anderson, deceased.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

STRANGULATED OMENTAL HERNIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—An interesting question is raised in Mr. Rushton Parker's tract on "Abdominal Hernia," reviewed in THE LANCET of July 21st I mean the reality of the occurrence of symptoms of strangulation in hernie containing omentum only, and the cause of such symptoms. Mr. Parker, as you observe, seems to doubt the fact altogether, though he does not expressly deny it. In order to establish its reality, I turned to the "Hernia-book" of St. George's Hospital. A record of operations for "strangulated" hernia commenced many years ago, when I cases. Out of these (which are consecutive and unselected cases) I find there were five in which the sac contained omentum only. In one of these, however (a case of umbilical hernia), it may, I think, be fairly questioned whether the hernia was strangulated or only "incarcerated" or "obstructed." The other four were all cases of femoral hernia. In three the tumour was of small size; in one the symptoms are said to have been slight; the other two seem to have had the usual symptoms. All these recovered after the operation. In the fourth case there was a large piece of omentum in the sac, much congested; the symptoms were severe; peritonitis set in before the operation, and the patient died.

All these cases occurred many years ago, in the practice of older and better surgeons than myself. I have not searched over later records, but these, I think, justify the statement in my book, that "the strangulation of omentum only produces symptoms identical in kind with those of strangulated bowel, though possibly not so severe."

How, then, is the fact to be accounted for in the face of the undoubted fact that a ligature tied tightly round the omentum contained in a hernial tumour produces no such symptoms? Mr. Parker suggests three explanations. Some of these cases, he says, may have been tumours in which there has been bowel as well as omentum; but the bowel has been reduced before the operation. I suppose Mr. Parker means that this reduction has taken place immediately before operation in the last efforts which are usually made under anæsthesia; otherwise the symptoms would have subsided and the operation would not be performed. But surely an experienced surgeon would be conscious of the sensation of the reduction of the gut; and, besides, the place which the empty bowel had occupied would be seen during the operation. I cannot think that this explanation

is probable, at least as applied to the practice of surgeons who have had large experience of strangulated hernia. In other cases, Mr. Parker thinks, the symptoms were due to the dragging of the displaced omentum on the transverse colon. The same explanation has suggested itself to my mind, and it may very possibly apply to cases of umbilical hernia, as to the one above mentioned; but it does not apply to those in which the neck of the sac is tightly constricted, and the hernia is far from voluminous, possibly very small. Mr. Parker's third explanation is, that inflamed omental hernia with peritonitis may produce symptoms which some would describe as "strangulated omental hernia." This, I think, is not only possible, but very probable; but it cannot in any way apply to three out of the four cases of femoral hernia above mentioned, seeing that the hernia was not inflamed, and that there was no sign of peritonitis.

I must therefore repeat what I said in the book quoted by Mr. Parker, that "I find it difficult to account for this fact on purely mechanical principles." My own impression is that the function of the intestines is suspended by some reflex action originating in the nerves of the strangulated omentum; and in an interesting conversation which I lately had with Mr. Parker on the subject, he told me that he believes Mr. Lister to have expressed a similar view in the Proceedings of the Royal Society for 1857, but I have not had an opportunity of looking for the passage.

The subject is one which has long interested me, and is, I think, worthy of more attention than it has received from the authors on hernia.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Great Cumberland-place, July 23rd, 1883.

T. HOLMES.

INTRODUCTION OF CHOLERA TO LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The very excellent letter from Mr. Cheshire in your impression of last week on the introduction of cholera to London confirms all I have said and written for months past to the Metropolitan Board of Works respecting the susceptibility of London to the disease, and the means of averting it by purifying the Thames. By desire of the Metropolitan Board, I went to Crossness some months ago with authority to examine everything there to enable me to show how the river could be purified. The result of my examination left no doubt in my mind that London was reposing on a bed of horizontal cesspools. What then but pestilence must naturally follow, in all probability, such a state of things? Yet the remedy was certain. I showed the Board how the whole of the sewage of London could be utilised in a dry and solid form, and not a particle or drop of either solid or effluent be passed into the river. There would be nothing then to poison the stream, and the river would of course be pure. Moreover, I pointed out to the Board how London could be supplied with many million gallons of perfectly pure water a day, in addition to its ordinary supply. That such a state of things would be a boon to London and the country at large, no one, I think, can doubt. The Board of Works too, I believe, were impressed with the importance of the undertaking, and very naturally referred the subject to their engineer, Sir Joseph Bazalgette. Of that gentleman I would not, if truth can help it, say a word disparagingly. His progress from Portsmouth Dockyard to his present position has been one of honour and advance, and helps to prove the belief that when anything of good is contained in a human vessel it will sooner or later find its way out. It has been so with Sir Joseph, and all honour to him I say. He was the designer of a great and grand scheme for draining London, although withal it was somewhat expensive, for the line from Deptford to Crossness cost the substantial amount of £40,000 a mile. Yet with all that cost the scheme was imperfect, for Sir Joseph Bazalgette was unable to dispose of the sewage without poisoning the Thames with it. Therefore, though he did a good act by draining London as it then was, he made the Thames a pestilential ditch, and London obnoxious to pestilence and disease. My remedy would cure it, and he has not in all our correspondence been able to show that it would not. I have reason, however, to believe that in secret he opposed the adoption of my process, the scientific soundness of which he cannot disprove, and, if report speaks truly, he would purify London and the Thames