mess store-rooms, for two reasons—first, there is now great loss of space from the necessity of having the ship's side unencumbered; secondly, the obviating of wounds from shattering of bottles in time of action.

Diagram, showing the arrangement &c. on the orlop deck of a ship of the second-rate, fitted on the improved plan, of which we have already one illustration in commission.

N.B.—The greater dimension of all these cabins is the transverse, and this is variable, while the fore and aft extent is equal in all.

In this symmetrical arrangement there are three spare cabins, in addition to the appointed positions for numerous objects not contemplated in the old arrangement.

Note.—The compartments most deeply shaded by the engraver are those appropriated for the general service of the ship; those least shaded are the store-rooms of the officers' messes; and those shaded in an intermediate degree are cabins, (see the small diagram in the previous page; and for examples Nos. 1, 7, 2, &c., among the compartments on the ship's deck in the first diagram.)

THE NEW GALACTAGOGUE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—By the following extract from the narrative of a voyage to the coasts of Chili and Peru, performed during the years 1712, 1713, and 1714, by M. Frezier, engineer in ordinary to the French king, it would appear that the Spaniards of Peru were acquainted with the lactagogue qualities of the leaves of the castor-oil plant, so far back as the early part of the eighteenth century.

M. Frezier's ship, the *San Josef*, on the outward voyage, stopped for some days at San Vincente, in the Cape de Verde. In his description of that island, M. Frezier states, that among other plants, he saw there the "Palma Christi, or Ricinus Americanus, by the Spaniards in Peru called Pillerilla; and they affirm that the leaf of it applied to the breasts of nurses brings milk into them, and applied to their loins, draws it away. The seed of it is exactly like the Indian pine-apple kernel. In Paraguay, they make oil of it."

Dr. Tyler Smith, in his excellent paper on the lactagogue, and other qualities of the castor-oil leaves, published in this month's number of the *London Journal of Medicine*, has fully demonstrated the efficacy of the plant in causing a secretion of milk in the breasts of females in this country; and I trust that the property of drawing the milk away, assigned to it by M. Frezier, will also be specially tested by the same accomplished and painstaking observer.

I would fain be allowed here to express my thanks to Mr. Henry, surgeon, of the Commercial-road, for his kindness in drawing my attention to the passage in question, and procuring me the loan of M. Frezier's work.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

Trinity-sq., Tower hill, Oct. 16, 1850. J. O. McWILLIAM, M.D.

ON A METHOD OF DISSOLVING STRYCHNIA, AND REMARKS ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF ANÆSTHESIA IN PARTURITION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having read in THE LANCET of the 31st August a case of poisoning by strychnia, in which case the strychnia was given in cinnamon-water, I cannot refrain from expressing an opinion that the method of exhibiting so dangerous a medicine was very incautious. We know that strychnia is insoluble in water, and yet three grains of this deadly poison were put into ten drachms of cinnamon-water, with directions for twenty drops to be taken three times a day in a wineglass of water. Now, supposing no mistake had been made as to the quantity of the dose, it is more than probable that the patient would have been poisoned before the whole of the medicine was taken, because the powder, being insoluble, would sink to the bottom of the bottle, and shaking the bottle would not altogether prevent it, and the last few doses would contain nearly the whole of the strychnia. I should not be so anxious to point this out if there were no remedy; but fortunately there is, and as, perhaps, it may not be generally known, I will state it. Strychnia is soluble in spirits of nitrous ether in the proportion of one grain to one drachm, and I always keep it dissolved for use, and never think of sending more than enough for two days' use, which quantity, if accidentally taken at one dose, could not prove injurious. I also always send it in a six-ounce phial, further to obviate any mistake.

As I am addressing you, I will take the opportunity of making a short observation on the use of chloroform or any other anæsthetic agent in parturition. It is recorded in your journal, that out of twenty-seven cases in which chloroform was used, four had laceration of the perinæum. This is a frightful result; surely the gentleman who employed it must be satisfied of its mischief; it is quite fearful. I do not suppose its equal was ever heard of in the history of obstetric practice. I have been in practice more than thirty years, and have attended at least 3000 cases, but such an accident has only happened once in the whole number. And I am not singular; hundreds of practitioners will tell you the same. And that case was caused by the use of the long forceps: there was slight difficulty at the brim of the pelvis, the woman was weakly, and it was her first child; Nature, finding the difficulty, refused to act; the pains left. With the forceps, I brought the head into the pelvis, intending then to remove the forceps, but the resistance being overcome, Nature set up her action again, but so forcibly and rapidly, that I had not time to withdraw the forceps before the head, with one long, continued pain, was pushed through the os externum, and the back part was torn with the forceps. What is the reason of so many as one-seventh of the cases treated by chloroform having lacerated perinæums?—the absence of pain. We know, that when a pain comes on, it goes on urging the head forward, stretching the os externum, until the violence of the pain is so great that Nature obeys the warning, the pain ceases, the head recedes, and the perinæum is saved; and so on with a succession of pains, until, by degrees, the parts become relaxed, and the head passes without any laceration. Do away with the pain, Nature's safeguard, the forcing power of the uterus is unchecked; on goes the head, and the almost inevitable consequence ensues—laceration of the perinæum. Although I always gently press my hand on the perinæum, I very much doubt the practical use of the process; I doubt whether any amount of support short of that endangering the rupture of the uterus by its resistance, can be of any avail in retarding the descent of the head. In the use of anæsthetic agents, it should never be forgotten that they are all deadly poisons, and that a very little more than is just sufficient to prevent the feeling of pain is just sufficient to kill the patient. And who is to know the exact dose? That which one patient can bear with impunity will destroy the life of another. And suppose such a lamentable event to occur, even but once in a thousand times, who is the man with hardihood enough to take such a fearful responsibility upon himself. I maintain, that for the single purpose of doing away with pain in parturition, a natural and healthy action, no man is justified in saturating the system with a deadly poison. I know by experiment, that ether and chloroform permeate every tissue of the body, that for days the flesh both tastes and smells of it; and can such an agent be diffused through the blood, the very principle of life, over the whole system, without the fear of after evils, even should no immediate ones ensue? Have not numerous cases of puerperal fever and mania been caused