HEARING TESTS FOR SEAMEN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET for 1889 (vol i., page 727) I endeavoured to point out how much depended on the accuracy of a sailor's hearing and how little had been done in the matter of ensuring that a ship's navigating executive were possessed of normal ears. What I said was endorsed by you in an annotation on page 800 the following week. As I am of opinion that the subject should not be allowed to drop, may I draw your attention to the experiments at the Naval Exhibition on "International Tone Signals" as reported in to-day's *Times* (Aug. 4th)? Mr. W. B. Chalmers has invented an instrument on the principle of an organ, but worked with high pneumatic pressure through the aid of a key board. Its success depends on the facts that a pure tone penetrates much farther than mere noise, and that a code can be worked with a limited number of notes. Such a system is badly needed, and if adopted will strengthen the necessity for making sure that the officers and men can hear properly with both ears. Some time ago Mr. Bickerton of Liverpool drew my attention to a fact not generally known in the profession. During the disastrous collision between H.M.S. *Iron Duke* and *Vanguard* in a fog off the Wicklow coast it appears that one of the "look-out" men was actually deaf in the ear which was on the side of the approaching vessel. This was brought to the notice of the House of Commons by Lord Brassey, and reported in "*Hansard*." I know of only one steamship company—the Cunard of Liverpool—who take the precaution of having their officers and men examined for hearing as well as for sight. All candidates for certificates are examined by the Marine Department of the Board of Trade for vision and colour. The Board also make what are meant to be elaborate regulations for signalling and safety in fog, but they take no steps whatever to test a candidate's power of hearing. The importance of this subject can be fully appreciated only by those who have been at sea or in crowded waters during dense fog. The experiments at the Naval Exhibition again show how increasingly important the subject is, and I trust that some reasonable measures may soon be taken to protect lives and property in moments of supreme danger from the blunders and bungling of men whose imperfect senses are not those of the standard or normal man.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

FRANCIS EDWARD CANE, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S. Edin.

Piccadilly, W., Aug. 4th, 1891.

DELAY IN OBTAINING JUSTICES' ORDER IN LUNACY CASE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Having had occasion this week to remove to an asylum a non-pauper lunatic, I sought the services of a magistrate. Before obtaining the signature of one of these gentlemen, I made no less than eight applications to seven justices, the seventh consenting to do what was required. In order to obtain this favour the patient and I had to travel thirteen miles out. The lunatic spent five hours in the carriage and I seven hours on the road. The nature of the case did not demand the urgency order. This search for a justice who would act occupied a period of two days. I need hardly say how it affected the physical comfort of the patient and the working of my practice.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Aug. 1st, 1891.

PROVINCIAL F.R.C.S.

"TELEPHONIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LONDON HOSPITALS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—My attention has been drawn to Mr. Davy's letter in your issue of the 1st inst. He apparently is not aware that there is telephonic communication between this hospital and the Westminster, and that it is used by the secretary of that hospital and myself for the purpose he advocates. There is one little inaccuracy I should like to correct. The reason for the boy not being admitted here was because there was no bed, not because he had been previously treated at Westminster.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

ARTHUR E. READE, Secretary.

Charing-cross Hospital, Aug. 4th, 1891.

LIVERPOOL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Cruelty to Children and Almsgiving.

THE cupidity of some parents and the profitableness of begging by children as a trade were forcibly illustrated by two cases which came before the local stipendiary magistrate some days ago. In the first case the boy had, by crawling on his knees on the pavement, contracted a bursa on each knee, and earned by so doing a sum stated to average 8s. a day, all of which went to his mother. The boy was carried to and from the locality where he excited the compassion of the passers-by. On her promising to send him to be an in-patient of the Royal Infirmary his mother was let off with a fine of 10s. and costs. In the other case the boy, a cripple, was taken every day by his sister to the Exchange flags, where he attracted the attention of gentlemen by pulling their coat tails, and their compassion by his pitiable appearance. It was said that 10s. a-day were his daily average earnings. Those who sternly refuse to give to beggars in streets have every justification for their conduct.

The Murder and Mutilation of a Boy.

The trial of John Conway for the murder of the boy Nicholas Martin, on May 16th last, commenced on July 31st, and concluded on the following day with a verdict of guilty. The case presented some features of medical interest, and was a very remarkable instance of circumstantial evidence; the chain, which was formed by the evidence of nearly forty witnesses, given independently of each other, being complete in every link. The facts were as follows:—At an early hour on the morning of Tuesday, May 19th, a black bag was seen floating in the Sandon Basin by the dock-gates men on duty, and was brought to land. It was found to be a black water-proof bag, such as is used by sailors, and to contain the dead body of a boy, each of the legs having been removed by a knife and saw, not for wanton mutilation, but to enable the body to be got into the bag. Inside the bag, and covering the body, were also found two blankets, some brown paper, with an irregular piece torn off it, containing part of a label, the rest of which remained, a knife, and saw. The body was removed to the mortuary at the Prince's Dock, and carefully examined by Mr. Paul, F.R.C.S., professor of medical jurisprudence at the Liverpool University College. The throat was cut in such a manner as to show that it was the cause of death, while the appearance of the severed limbs showed that they had been amputated after death, and after rigor mortis had set in. The next day (May 20th) a post-mortem examination was made by Mr. Paul and Mr. Lowndes, surgeons to the Liverpool police, when it was found that the wound in the throat was exactly six inches in length. It commenced on the left side at the edge of the sterno-mastoid an inch and a half below the jaw, and ended under the right ear. The divided tissues were retracted, and there were coagula in the wound. The larynx was severed through the crico-thyroid membrane; the only vessels implicated were the right jugular veins, the external one being severed and the internal one opened. No artery was wounded. The wound was a perfectly clean sweep from left to right, and must have been done by a sharp weapon. There were no indications that the boy had been abused. There were some abrasions on the face, the right leg had been severed two inches and a half, the left an inch and a half below the knee; the skin and muscle were divided by clean, circular cuts; the bones were evenly and smoothly sawn. The stomach contained partly digested bread food; it was removed for more minute examination, and Mr. Davies subsequently obtained twenty-six grains of absolute alcohol by distillation from the contents. The body was identified by the parents, and within three days the police had obtained evidence which enabled them to discover the prisoner and the chain of evidence which he had wound round himself. He was seen in company with the deceased boy on the evening of May 16th between 9 and 9.30 P.M. The boy's last meal consisted of bread-and-butter, tea, and an egg; this was between 6 and 7. He was never seen alive again, but the prisoner was seen later on that evening carrying a pair of boots such as had been worn by the boy; these were subsequently picked up, having been thrown over walls, as was also a razor identified as belonging to the prisoner. On Monday the 18th he purchased the bag in which the