THE DELIGHTS OF SERVING AS SURGEON IN MERCHANT VESSELS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you allow me, through the medium of your valuable journal, to draw the attention of the junior members of the profession to a most important subject, as I know many of them, after they have obtained their diplomas, in consequence of their youth, are diffident about settling in private practice, and will gladly avail themselves of an opportunity of making a voyage as surgeon in a merchantman. Most, probably, are novices to seafaring ways, and are little aware of the treatment they will receive from the hands of some captains, very many of whom are uneducated, illiterate, brutal, and men of very low ideas, and by no means proper associates for a well-educated man: and beware, should you happen to offend them in any way; they will take every opportunity of venting their malice against you, knowing that you are not in a position to better yourself, or indeed help yourself, and thus render your life unhappy. The motive that induces me to trouble you with this subject is in consequence of having seen an advertisement on Monday in the "Times," to the following effect:—"An eligible opportunity for a surgeon to proceed in a first-class vessel to the East and West Indies, for which a premium will be required, in lieu of passage-money." Now, here is a regular bait laid for the unwary. Government has allowed ten thousand hill coolies (or Indian agricultural labourers) to be imported to the West Indies, and this ship is chartered, on her arrival at Calcutta, to proceed with her live cargo to the West Indies; and a *premium*—God knows to what amount—is required for the honour of the pleasant office of surgeon to an Indian emigrant ship. Many of the unfortunate individuals, when they come on board, are affected with loathsome diseases, and it is by no means uncommon for the small-pox to break out after you have been at sea a few days. Here is a pretty system, and I think it high time it should be checked. The captain or the owners pocket the gratuity money allowed by government, and in many instances, where troops are sent out to India, and the East India Company have no officers of their own to send, the owners of the ship having the power of selecting a surgeon, have pocketed 15s. a head for each soldier, and given the surgeon-superintendent £20 for his services, and, in some instances, nothing. Another point: in many ships of a certain class, the *doctors*, as they are termed, are no more than druggists' boys, and instances have come under my own personal observation, where buboes have been treated for hernia, and a dislocation of the os humeri for a sprain. Pray, is there no method of checking such a monstrous evil? In conclusion, I trust you will excuse me for troubling you, but I am wishful to open the eyes of my fellow brethren, so that they may not be caught by some artful broker, and subscribe myself, sir, yours, very obediently,

AN OLD SAILOR, AND ONE WHO HAS BEEN ENGAGED
IN THE COOLIE TRADE IN 1843.

Sept. 3, 1844.

MIDWIVES' MIDWIFERY.

NO. II.

BY W. H. REED, ESQ., M.R.C.S., TIVERTON, DEVONSHIRE.

I HAVE just read, with much interest, in page 699 of the last volume of THE LANCET, the account of a midwifery case, detailed by Robert Barnes, Esq., and cannot repress the impulse of imparting to you and the medical world a short notice of a similar piece of consummate ignorance on the part of a midwife in our neighbourhood, which I shall feel obliged if you will insert, as I think no time should be lost at this juncture in shewing the non-medical world to what horrible dangers they are exposed when not under the surveillance of qualified medical practitioners.

I was requested, some time since, by my friend Mr. Quick, surgeon of this town, to accompany him to the house of a cottager, about three miles in the country, where there was some supposed difficulty in a midwifery case, and a female midwife was in attendance. On arriving there, we were told that the child was just born, but dead, which we found to be a very fine male infant of full size. In the course of our inquiries, the following remarks fell from the midwife, in the peculiar dialect of this county:—"I tell'ee what I did, zur. The chield com'd footlung, and as zoon as he com'd down zo fur that I cou'd git at the string, (the umbilical cord,) I tied 'en, and cut 'en; and that was right, wazzen it?" (nodding her head with much self-satisfaction at the clever feat she had performed.)

As the husband and three or four friends were in the room where this information took place, I did not make any remark, thinking that perhaps he might feel disposed to push the old

woman into the river Ex, which was hard by, but earnestly requested Mr. Quick, at his next visit, to explain to her that she had, through sheer ignorance, caused the death of a fellow-creature, and to recommend her never more to have anything to do with midwifery.

This case requires no comment further than this: that I would solemnly request Sir James Graham and his advisers to pause, and consider well, before they persevere in getting a bill passed into a law which is calculated to increase, rather than diminish, the miserable consequences attendant on ignorant persons, with shameless audacity, boldly undertaking the highly responsible duties which ought to devolve exclusively on properly educated medical men.

"Ne sutor ultra crepidam."

MEDICAL TITLES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As it appears evident that the council of the College of Surgeons have finally resolved to abide by the illiberal construction they first put on the charter lately granted to *them* by her Majesty, I beg leave to suggest to my medical brethren who are surgeons, and also to those who are physicians, (no matter where their degrees come from,) the utility of adding their medical or surgical qualification to their signatures in all prescriptions, all certificates, and all letters of an official or medical character: thus, in place of M.R.C.S.E., which is not understood by the majority of non-medical people, I would say, John Jervis, surgeon; Richard Banks, M.D. or M.D. and surgeon. This would help to prevent the *moral effect* which the F.R.C.S.E. is intended to produce on the public, and would be retaining titles exactly as they stand at present. The public would soon learn that Sir B. Brodie and Mr. William Lawrence can claim no greater honour than that which Sir A. Cooper and Mr. Abernethy were so proud of—viz., to be surgeons, in the enlarged sense of the word, not *pures* or *fellows*.

As to myself, and others similarly situated, we feel ourselves precisely the same as before the charter was granted, that is, we do not consider ourselves a bit lower, or Brodie, Lawrence, &c., a whit higher than heretofore.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

W. SIMPSON.

High-street, Bloomsbury, Sept. 17, 1844.

THE CASE OF JERVIS-STREET HOSPITAL, DUBLIN.

WE have received the following letter from the gentleman who reported the case of operation for presumed aneurism inserted in THE LANCET of Sept. 21:—

In reply to a letter from Mr. Ellis, which appears in the LANCET of Sept. 21, relative to the report made by me of the unfortunate case which lately occurred at the Jervis-street Hospital, I beg to say that no unkind feeling actuated me in bringing it under the notice of the medical profession.

Mr. Ellis complains of his name being unjustly used, and states that he was not consulted about this case, consequently he could not agree or disagree on the propriety of an operation. I never said that Mr. Ellis agreed to an operation; I had no means of knowing whether Mr. O'Reilly consulted with the other surgeons of the hospital or not. I said that Mr. Ellis assisted in the operation, which I now again distinctly repeat; and I cannot for the life of me imagine what Mr. Ellis means by denying that he assisted in the performance of the operation. Was he not nearly opposite to Mr. O'Reilly while he applied the ligature? Did he not tell Mr. O'Reilly, when he was about to tie the ligature, that all was right, when some of the other surgeons said a small nerve was included? Mr. Ellis says, an ordinary reader would infer from the manner the following sentence is reported, that Jervis-street Hospital was only attended by three surgeons.

"The operation was performed on the 20th of July, in the usual manner, by Mr. O'Reilly, assisted by Professors Harrison and Ellis, (the other surgeons of the hospital,) and Mr. Adams, one of the surgeons to the Richmond Hospital."

I maintain that the above sentence is quite correctly written; but Mr. Ellis alters it materially by the addition of a parenthesis. Now, if any extraordinary reader has fallen into the serious error of imagining Jervis-street Hospital, with its thirty patients, is attended by only three surgeons, I beg to set him right by telling him that it has the benefit of seven surgeons, two physicians, and an apothecary. I hope Mr. Ellis will not surround the two physicians in a parenthesis, and imagine them the same as the seven surgeons. In justice to Mr. Kirby, I beg to state that he was not present at the operation.

Dublin, Sept. 25, 1844.