MR. WARDLEWORTH IN REPLY TO
MR. SIMPSON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Having, in your number for May 25th, perused an article written by Mr. Simpson, of Manchester, wherein he states, that “if wonderful success were dependent on unhesitating assumption and unwarranted conclusions, the right of possession, without precedent, would be awarded to him,” (*i.e.* me). What he (Mr. S.) desires to be understood from such high-flown jargon I know not, unless he means that the assertions which I have made respecting the action of the ergot are untrue. In reply, I beg leave to state that the opinions I have formed are deduced from personal observations in the parturient chamber, and not from any theoretical notions respecting the action of the ergot. It likewise appears that Mr. S. is in possession of some supposed facts respecting the 1500 cases in which I administered the ergot, and that some aerial phantom had excited my prolific imagination to overcome my better judgment in stating I had given the ergot to that number of patients. Now, to Mr. S.’s assumed facts;—he states that I have not been a licentiate of the Apothecaries’ Hall for more than six months. Had Mr. S. referred to the published report of the Apothecaries’ Company, he would at once have discovered that it is within a few days of twelve months since I passed my examination. Then he leaves you, Sir, to judge whether a practitioner could attend 1500 cases within that time. I may here state, in explanation, that I was articulated to my father in the year 1827, and that from 1827 to 1833 I had attended upwards of 1000 cases of midwifery; and that while officiating, also, as an articulated assistant, I attended more than 1500 labours, as attested by my note-book. From the total aggregate of the above numbers I have notes of upwards of 1500 cases in which I had recourse to the ergot; but in 1500 of that number I had the most positive evidence of its parturifacient effects. These are the plain facts of the case, and I now leave it with the profession at large to judge between the sapient Mr. S. and myself; for I consider it imperative on my part to refute, through the medium of your Journal, such unfounded personal assumptions as those made by Mr. Simpson. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

T. H. WARDLEWORTH, Surgeon.

Rochdale, May 31, 1839.

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London, Saturday, June 8, 1839.

THE medical profession is, perhaps, more favourable than any other to the cultivation of truth. When the student begins to dissect, and to investigate the structure of the body, he has not to take anything upon trust; he listens to the Professor, admits what he sees, and is bound to believe nothing that cannot be demonstrated. He seeks the truth, and has no bias or interest to lead him into error. In physiology, HARVEY, SPALLANZANI, HALLER, GALL, and other ardent inquirers, held unrestrained intercourse with Nature, and made important discoveries; they never felt themselves fettered by foregone conclusions, sworn articles of faith, or retaining fees. While their studies extended the knowledge of Nature they exalted and purified the mind. When the medical practitioner is questioning the patient, observing the effects of remedies, watching the sufferer’s return to health, or tracing the ravages of disease, he is still searching after truth. In medical science the past has no sanctified errors, the present no lucrative lies. Although falsehood, however, be driven from the medical highways, it is not extinct; it lurks in by-paths and alleys, ever ready to caress the profligate, to mislead the unwary, and to rob the unguarded of honour, self-respect, and a good conscience. What temptation is there not held out to quackery,—to the invention of cures,—to the discovery of new remedies,—to the solemn affectation of wisdom,—to writing bad books upon clap-trap practical subjects? In real life the medical man is called upon to repudiate all these surreptitious aids, and sometimes to brave neglect and poverty,—to endure contumely,—to dash the sparkling cup of riches and success from his lips, rather than live on a sullied integrity, and feel a conscious falsehood burning for ever at his heart.

At the present time we wish to call attention to the prevailing medical-certificate