

parents could not tell their own offspring. What purpose are we to suppose an editor has who changes the name and transmogrifies our productions so that we cannot call them ours?

I am astonished at the want of courtesy into which Dr. Simpson has allowed himself to be betrayed, and I trust Dr. Rankin will despise noticing the expressions I allude to. When Dr. Simpson condescended to settle certain of Dr. Rankin's omitted passages as *foolish and obscure*, of course we were expected to take his dictum, but it would have accorded better with good taste had Dr. Simpson given the passages, or withheld his rude remarks. But this is quite of a piece with his editorial code of morals, *ex uno disce*, &c., you know the rest.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sept. 1850.

J. B. T.

\* \* Our correspondent has furnished us with his name.—

Ed. L.

### NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

WARNING NOTICE TO YOUNG MEDICAL MEN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Observing that there were seventeen entries into the naval medical service, during the year 1849, notwithstanding the repeated warning voice of the whole profession, civil as well as naval, I beg leave, through the medium of your valuable paper, again to remind and caution those, who even now may be at all dubious about joining the naval service, what an act of folly they would commit.

Let them well reflect on this, one of the most momentous periods of their life, when they are about to select a path which may lead to professional distinction and honour, or one fraught with failure, self-abasement, and professional dishonour, and let me put to each one who may think of entering the naval service, the following questions:—

Have you read the pamphlet entitled "An Exposition of the Case of the Assistant-Surgeons, Royal Navy"? Are you, then, ready to undergo much personal discomfort, as found in a midshipman's mess; where your chest and hammock comprise your wardrobe, toilet, library, and bed?

Are you prepared to suffer indignities of such a character that many have been crushed under their weight, or sought relief in that stream of temporary oblivion, drunkenness; or, still worse, have been induced, through cerebral disease caused by mental anxiety, depression, and irritation, to seek in the grave that rest which, from accumulation of indignities and injuries, was denied them whilst alive?

Do you feel inclined to pass the prime of your life, when the mental energy should be the strongest, ambition the greatest, and health the most perfect, in a second nursery, with boys (although they may have been educated at Eton or Harrow) learning the rudiments of their profession, and where you are ever subject to the unseasonable and boisterous mirth, the obscene retort, the blasphemous jest, the taunts, and not unfrequent, unfeeling, and wholly uncalled-for comparisons between civilians and executives; and this from boys? Is this, think you, the fit abode for members of a learned profession, the proper exercise of which imperatively calls for serious and deep reflection with attentive observation and study?

Will you rest satisfied to be treated and considered as a youngster by the captain and ward-room officers, many of whom are your inferiors in education, and juniors in age? To be debarred the relaxation, pleasure, and advantage of society, whilst in harbour, because you belong to the gun-room mess or berth, and class with the young gentlemen, as the mess at large is termed, and to whom invitations seldom extend, owing to the ignorance of those living on shore, and to the suppression or wilful misconstruction of such invitations by those on board?

Will you be content, from the impossibility of studying, and irritability of mind, to become negligent and apathetic in your profession, and, instead of keeping pace with the present rapid march of medical and surgical science, to retrograde, and finally to lose your self-respect?

Lastly, have you not sworn to support the dignity of your profession, and therefore, by your entering the service in its present humiliating and degrading position, with your eyes open to all the evils attending it, do you not compromise your honour? are you not tacitly taking part with the oppressors of your professional brethren, and are you not thus openly arraying yourself under the banner of our enemies, who have been understood to declare they will stand or fall by the question at issue, which is of such vital import to yourself and the profession at large?

Reviewing all these positions, can you, I say, conscientiously, still doubt what should be your course? If you still can, then must we indeed blush for you, and exclaim, with one of our ablest and warmest friends, that "you are assuredly of a different stamp from those who entered blindly," ere their true position and grievances were made public, and only became acquainted with them when too late to retreat. Such can never be your case.

I have been induced to write these few lines, not with the idea of advancing any new argument, or fact, but simply to enforce what has already been said on this subject, and that every letter may prove a beacon to all our professional brethren, pointing at the danger, and warning all to steer clear and wide of a similar fate.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN ASSISTANT SURGEON, R.N.

### THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is the duty of every medical man who uses his best endeavours to bring to their senses the insane assurance companies, to publish the result of his experience; I therefore beg to forward the following bad case of "imperial assurance," amounting either to little short of insanity on the part of the company from whence it proceeded, or supposed mental imbecility on my part; but there lies the doubt.

Medical Reference.

Imperial Life Insurance Office, August 14, 1850.

SIR,—An insurance having been proposed to be effected with the Imperial Life Insurance Company, of London, on the life of Mr. —, of —, and reference given to you, as the person best acquainted with his present and general state of health, you are requested to answer the questions on the other side, at your earliest convenience, and return them agreeably to the address thereon.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Mr. C. Pritchett.

SAMUEL INGALL, Actuary.

On the outside was the following address, stamped:—"To the Directors of the Imperial Life Insurance Office, 1, Old Broad-street."

Then followed a list of questions of a more than usually stringent character, concluding with—

"13. Are there any other circumstances within your knowledge which the directors ought to be acquainted with, to enable them to form a correct estimate of the risk they are about to undertake?"—which, (without going over a subject that has been so often discussed,) I may observe, evidently acknowledges the obligation they are under: the party running the risk, and asking for information to lessen that risk, ought, in the name of common sense and justice, to pay for it.

I returned the following answer, having first stated to my patient my objections, and the grounds thereof, in which, as a reasonable man, he perfectly acquiesced:—

To the Directors of the Imperial Life Office.

GENTLEMEN,—In reply to yours of to-day, allow me to observe, that, as I practise my profession for a livelihood, my services are not open to the public gratuitously; and I cannot but express my surprise that you did not ask the price of what you require, which will be a guinea. On the remittance of the fee, or a promise to that effect, I shall be happy to accommodate you; or if you can enlighten me, by pointing out why the same principle should not prevail in the present instance, my services are equally at your command; but to answer the list of queries that you have forwarded, (of so responsible a nature,) without adequate remuneration, appears to me posterous in the extreme.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

Limekiln-hill, Limehouse, Aug. 14, 1850.

CHARLES PRITCHETT.

I have not received a reply, for the proposer being a healthy subject, the information might, in all probability, be dispensed with; (I have not heard the result:) but the omission has caused no disappointment; for it was quite in keeping with the style of the communication. In conclusion, allow me to observe, that the gratuitous principle in business, under any circumstances, is wrong: it lessens the value of the transaction, and works badly. For the sake of present security, we are too apt to shrink from the risk of a principle; but to maintain the latter would indeed, in the long run, be no risk, for in due time it must return interest.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Limehouse, Aug. 21, 1850.

CHARLES PRITCHETT.