

**HUSBANDS IN BED-ROOMS
DURING PARTURITION.**

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The public papers at first informed us that during a late accouchement the lady was surrounded by no less than four doctors,

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her husband being present in the room. In a later paper it is stated that the three supernumerary doctors were in an adjoining room, and that only the accoucheur-in-chief and the husband were in the lying-in-room. However this may have been, is it right or proper for any husband to be in the room while the nurses and professional man are in attendance on the female during parturition? I bring this subject before the profession with the view of raising some discussion, and taking the sense of practitioners at large upon it. After nearly thirty years' practice I have recently been twice vexed by the intrusion of the husband into the lying-in-room. In one case I remonstrated with the female attendants, whose feelings of delicacy were somewhat outraged also, on the impropriety of the husband's coming into the room from time to time, and gave him some significant looks, intimating that his presence could be dispensed with; but I was told by the nurse that when the lady was confined in *London*, Dr. — made no objection to his remaining in the room from first to last.

In the second instance, which was a first labour, the patient being also a *London* lady, with a *London* nurse, the husband persisted in being at the bedside during the whole of the parturient process, to my great discomfiture. This may be the fashionable "*London practice of midwifery*," but I confess it did not square with my old-fashioned notions of delicacy or propriety, and I doubt whether in either case I ought to have submitted to it. What say my professional brethren to the complaints of a

COUNTRY DOCTOR?

November 16, 1841.

HUSBANDS AT ACCOUCHEMENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In reply to your correspondent in this week's LANCET, I beg to observe that I think a medical man steps very far beyond his province when he endeavours to prevent a husband being present at the accouchement of his wife. Man and wife are one, and it is a matter between themselves with which we have nothing whatever to do. I wish, indeed, that the practice were far more general, as then a husband would be able to appreciate the delicacy and decorum with which the proceedings are conducted on the part of surgeons, and thus dissipate prejudices which are, not unnaturally, sometimes entertained upon this subject. However, either from unwillingness to witness the sufferings of his wife (sometimes from indifference to them), her own objection that he should, the tittle-tattle of the women who are with her, or the black looks to which your correspondent alludes, it happens that the husband is very seldom present; but, when he desires to be so, I would caution the practitioner against joining the nurse and her coterie in wishing to throw an unnecessary mystery around the proceedings of the lying-in room. Whether the practice be, as the country surgeon states, an exclusively London practice, I know not; but, if so, I doubt not, eventually, by reason of the example given by the most exalted and most exemplary married couple of the realm, that it will soon spread, together with the various other improvements emanating from the metropolis,

even into the most remote provincial districts. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
JOHN CHATTO.
Great Coram-street, Dec. 11, 1841.

HUSBANDS IN LYING-IN ROOMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was somewhat surprised at reading in your Journal of the 18th December, no less than three letters on the subject of the presence of husbands in the lying-in room, and in all the writers encouraged the system. I can only say that I have been in active and extensive practice for fourteen years, and that I have not met with the circumstance of the presence of the husband during the progress of the labour more than three or four times; indeed, it is so seldom in this neighbourhood, that when it does happen it is made a subject of general remark among the gossips. I must confess that I have a great dislike to it; not because I have anything to apprehend from the observation of the husband, but *because I do not think it is delicate or decent*. We all know what offices we have to perform in the lying-in chamber, and I am sure that in forty-nine cases out of fifty the female herself does not desire the presence of her husband *till it is all over*. The husband can do no good in the room; and it surely cannot be any pleasure to him to see the progress of the labour, and watch the movements of the medical attendant. Of course, I should not *object* to the presence of the husband; but that does not imply that I should approve of it. As to any prejudices which some men may entertain on the subject, I do not believe them to be in any way general; nor am I aware of “the reserve which is sometimes felt towards the accoucheur in his future visits to the family;” so far from that, I have ever been kindly and handsomely treated by husbands on and after such occasions. At all events, the practice alluded to is not common about here; and for the sake of decency I do not wish to see it. At the same time, I certainly should never object to the admission of the

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husband if the wife requested it; or if she were in imminent danger, or if the husband urgently desired it; but if the case were going on well, I think his presence would be indecent, unbecoming, and unnecessary.

W. K.

Bury St. Edmunds, Jan. 10, 1842. .