

Correspondence.

A POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL IN LONDON.

SIR,—I have read with great interest the letter which appears in your issue of August 2nd, p. 150, signed by "Observer." It expresses what has been in the minds of many of us for months past, for we have noted with disappointment and regret the valuable time that has been spent—I might say wasted—by the gentlemen who have, I think, for over two years been considering and planning how a really national scheme for post-graduate training could be established in London. Schemes have been devised, revised, and re-revised, but no businesslike steps have been taken to realize any of the schemes. A few months ago we hoped that at last they would "get a move on," for a well-attended meeting of really representative people was held in the Royal Society's house, presided over by Sir William Osler, and beautiful resolutions were formulated and carried with acclamation.* The meeting, I believe, formed itself into a "Post-graduate Association," and appointed an executive committee, but is there such an association in any recognized understanding of the word? Indeed, has anything effective been done since that meeting? I believe I am right in saying that nothing has been done beyond further talk. Had the project been in the hands of really businesslike men with power of organization the post-graduate school might have started within three months of the first proposal. *Vires acquirit eundo*, and it would have been infinitely better to have made a start, no matter how humble, in faith that the thing would grow, instead of waiting until an ideal scheme could be elaborated in every detail, which only time and experience could prove to be of real value.

The profession is indebted to the Royal Society of Medicine, which generously gave its hospitality to the Fellowship of Medicine, a committee of which, when the call came about last Christmas for post-graduate work to be arranged for returning army medical officers, made a start in about three weeks, and as most of us know, with brilliant success. If the *soi-disant* Post-graduate Association had more at heart the tremendous importance of London being recognized as a great post-graduate centre rather than the realization of their own dreams and schemes, and if, recognizing that however distinguished they might be professionally, they are not organizers, and would hand over the whole thing to the Fellowship of Medicine, many of us feel sure there would be a businesslike post-graduate scheme in full working order by the beginning of October. If something practical is not done at once the London profession will have lost an opportunity that will probably never recur, and while we would rather see post-graduate centres in New York and in Paris than in Vienna and Berlin, post-graduate students will have lost probably for ever the opportunities which London possesses for such work—greater than any city in the world.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Aug. 1st.

W. ARBUTHNOT LANE.

SIR,—Your correspondent, "Observer," rightly urges that we will lose the unique opportunity in our history of making London a great post-graduate centre if we do not promptly establish a full and permanent curriculum of study and instruction.

Not only is New York enlarging and organizing her post-graduate instruction, but Philadelphia and other cities are preparing schemes of study for the post-graduate, either separate from graduate classes or in the same institutions as the latter. The prospect of success of these ventures is enhanced when we recollect (1) the abounding prosperity of America at present, (2) her population of 100 millions, with a proportionate number of medical men, (3) the eagerness of these latter for instruction and for "keeping up to date," (4) their readiness to pay well for value received, (5) the great facilities in U.S.A. for obtaining cadavers for technical training and for operative surgery, and (6) the liberality and patriotism with which wealthy American citizens give pecuniary support to teaching and research.

But all this, even if very successful, would not militate

* The proceedings of the meeting were reported in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of May 3rd, 1919, p. 551.

against thorough and well organized teaching in Europe. All Americans have a strong and very natural desire to see and study in the schools on this side, and it adds to their reputation to have enlarged their views and experience by crossing the Atlantic. At the present time, in spite of anything the yellow press or politicians for their own ends may say to weaken it, there exists, in all the professional circles I mixed in during a recent two months' visit, the very warmest feelings of esteem, admiration, and affection for British medicine and surgery, as well as for its exponents, its literature, and its history. Those American colleagues who have mixed with us here or in France during the years of war are loud in their expressions of appreciation of our good fellowship. I have heard them not only in England, but even more warmly enunciated in America. Transatlantic *confrères* who have come here in former years, duly accredited or with letters of introduction, are equally warm in their gratitude for the welcome given them, and for the wealth of clinical and pathological material made available for them. But some of the rank and file, on the other side, occasionally, but courteously, gave me to understand that they had received nothing but "the cold shoulder"; that there was nowhere for them to apply for information on any matter of medical interest; that they found no organized classes; that they lost much time in wandering from one hospital to another; and that, not infrequently, after many futile efforts, they packed up and went on to Vienna or Berlin. One of the leading surgeons in Canada told me that, wishing to learn the technique of cystoscopy, he came—naturally—to London. There he spent three weeks in trying to get the necessary instruction and practice, but, meeting with no success, he went on to Berlin, where, in three weeks and for a fee of £6, he obtained the teaching and the training he was in search of.

No Canadian and no American I met ever wants to enter a Berlin or a Vienna clinic again, if he can get what he requires in this country. It is therefore entirely "up to us" not to throw away this great occasion. If we lose it we will have only ourselves to blame. A Canadian physician, who is connected with the largest medical school in his own country, who has been over here for four and a half years on war service, and who therefore knows well the conditions on both sides of the ocean, assures me that if we do not seize this moment he is certain that within five years the post-graduate classes of Vienna and Berlin will again be crowded, chiefly by English-speaking students.

But the opportunity is not lost, and has not been neglected. The Fellowship of Medicine, which aspires to other duties as well, has by its emergency post-graduate scheme so well satisfied the 400 surgeons of the Dominion and American armies who have registered at No. 1, Wimpole Street, since the beginning of this year, that they are returning to their own countries full of gracious gratitude for what it has been possible to do for them under the still present difficulties of war's aftermath. The Post-graduate Association has worked out plans for the difficult task of co-ordinating the various and detached teaching interests of London. Had the aristice not come upon us rather unexpectedly, these plans would doubtless have advanced to a practical programme. Now, it only requires the amalgamation of these two efforts—namely, the temporary scheme of the Fellowship and the broad-based plans of the Association—to secure a united front and a successful effort. There is certainly not room for two ventures, and we have learnt from the war by the failure of unconnected efforts to appreciate the motto of Belgium—"L'union fait la force."

The first steps in this amalgamation have already been taken. When it is completed the profession can unite in supporting it, and in appealing to the Government and the public for helping what can most certainly be called a "work of national importance."—I am, etc.,

London, W., Aug. 5th.

STCLAIR THOMSON.

THE TEACHING OF MEDICAL HISTORY.

SIR,—The broad issues of historical research, the discussion of methods to make plain the significance of those who *quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt*, must be left to such scholars as Dr. Singer, but I can, without presumption, support his plea for other reasons.

In the ten years during which I have had charge of the