THE HONORARY STAFF OF THE MOUNT VERNON HOSPITAL AND THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your issue of July 12th you published a letter under this heading signed by certain members of the honorary medical staff of this hospital in which they resign their appointments as a protest "against the attitude which for the past few months the committee of management has adopted in reference to the medical board, and its recommendations." This letter also appeared in the *Times* newspaper on July 10th, where it was replied to by me as chairman of the committee.

It appears that I should have replied to this letter in *THE LANCET*, but having dealt with it in the *Times* it seemed to me to be unnecessary to repeat myself. However, as certain statements have been made, and as the interests of the hospital are gravely prejudiced by the issue of warning notices and by the circulation of statements which are without foundation, it is necessary for me to ask you to allow me to refer to the matter in your columns. I am informed that the issue of the warning notice is based upon two assertions: first, that the two junior members of the honorary medical staff, Dr. F. W. Price and Dr. A. J. Whiting, had been dismissed from their appointments; and second, that in view of the expressed desire of the committee to place the beds at Northwood in the hands of the senior members of the staff, an injustice had been done to Dr. Tunnicliffe, the senior member of the honorary staff, who, it is said, was not offered beds at Northwood. It is, therefore, with these statements that I wish to deal. With your permission I will repeat what I have said elsewhere as to the original statements contained in the letter of resignation. In the first place it is untrue to say that any members of the staff were dismissed. This is proved by the simple fact that they resigned their positions more than two months after the alleged "dismissals," one of them meanwhile retaining his seat as a member of the committee. The duty of visiting the patients at Northwood was allotted to them for one year, and that period had long expired. It must be remembered that the Mount Vernon Hospital consists of the two establishments at Hampstead and Northwood respectively, and the out-patient department at Fitzroy-square, and there was never any appointment to one of them exclusively. It is all one institution, and the by-laws provide that the allocation of the duties of the honorary medical staff rests entirely with the committee of management. The medical staff are represented by two of their number at the meetings of the general committee as members of that committee, and one of them, Dr. Tunnicliffe, was present at the committee meeting on March 19th, when I gave notice of motion in regard to the new appointments. It was on this date that Dr. Tunnicliffe on hearing me give notice of the motion asked to be excused from visiting Northwood, so at his request I withdrew his name. Dr. Tunnicliffe reported to the medical board on April 1st all that had transpired at the committee meeting. At the following meeting of the committee of management on April 16th I moved the appointment of the senior physicians, omitting Dr. Tunnicliffe's name, to the care of the beds at Northwood, and the motion was carried

unanimously. In regard to the statement of Dr. Tunnicliffe in the *Times* that beds were not offered to him as senior acting physician, the facts are as I have stated. While it is true, therefore, that at the meeting of April 16th Dr. Tunnicliffe was not included in the list of physicians to whom beds were allotted, it is equally true that the omission was of his own seeking because of his strongly expressed objection to undertake the duty. The whole of these circumstances are in the recollection of the members of the committee present on that occasion.

The other matter which demands attention is the statement that a request was made for a conference to discuss the new appointments and *other questions*. No such demand was ever made. On May 6th the medical board demanded a conference to discuss the appointments which had already been made, but there never had been a request to discuss *any other question*. My committee therefore naturally declined to reopen a question which had been disposed of by them by a unanimous vote, and which was wholly within their province.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

C. JOHNSTON,

Chairman of the Committee.

7, Fitzroy-square, London, W., Nov. 18th, 1913.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—One day last week I received by post, addressed to me as "Dr.," a title to which I have no claim, a pathetic but amusing letter from a gentleman unknown to me, who drew a touching picture of my sad condition as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He assured me, with all the emphasis which capital letters could supply, that in College matters I have *NO* vote and *NO* rights, that he and others are "fighting" to give me both, and that a contribution to the war chest would be accepted. I am deeply grateful to these champions of my cause for their solicitude; but in the fiftieth year of my Fellowship I am compelled to regard their labours in my behalf as superfluous, and I most sincerely hope that their "fighting" will not expose them to any risk of injury. At the same time, I should be glad to place on record my conviction that the change which they advocate would be highly prejudicial to the status and progress of surgery in this country, and therefore in the long run highly disastrous to those who practise it. The chief object of the College, as I understand it, is to maintain in England the highest possible standard of what (in contradistinction to *minor*) may be called "major" surgery, such as is commonly practised by Fellows and only seldom by Members. A transference of the government of the College to the latter body would almost certainly cause this chief object to be more or less set aside in favour of others which, however desirable in themselves, would be better sought through the agency of some other organisation. The supposed "claim" of the Members is supported by a money plea, which is even more fallacious than it is ignoble. The question is not one of money, but of the promotion of science; and, even if this were not so, it must be remembered that every Member obtains value for his payment in the shape of a legal qualification, and that nearly every Fellow has paid his fee for the grade, not in substitution for that for the Membership, but in addition to it. Moreover, in the name of common