ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As St. Bartholomew's Hospital has lately been more than once adversely criticised in your columns, I should be reluctant to bring it again in an unfavourable light before your readers, were I not encouraged to do so by the fact that steps have been taken lately to remove only such defects as have been laid bare. I now specially beg you to give me space, not only because the most important and hardest working set of men at the hospital need your helping hand, but because in the point at issue are involved the chief causes of its medical school presenting the worst organised system of education of any in London.

The four house-surgeons of this hospital are offices filled by the annual appointment of qualified men, and confer considerable responsibility and authority on their holders, inasmuch as, in the absence of the surgeons, they are their fully empowered representatives. Their duties thus necessitate an unlimited power of prescription; and though an obsolete rule of this ancient institution forbids them to order all the more useful medicines for any but in-patients, not only have they been in the habit of prescribing for out-patients in the surgery for years past, with the full concurrence of the professional and lay authorities, but they have been provided with a printed form to enable them to do so the more conveniently.

On the 20th of May last, however, the chief lay authority, without communicating either directly or indirectly with the house-surgeons, instructed the dispensers to send away without medicine all patients who presented these prescriptions. Of the courtesy of this unexpected proceeding I will say nothing; but by way of clearly explaining, in as few words as possible, the position it created, I simply copy the memorial which the house-surgeons presented to the Medical Council of the hospital two days after:—

"GENTLEMEN,—We beg formally to bring to your notice the following facts:—

"1. That the casualty prescription papers, specially printed for our use, have, after being duly signed by us, been systematically rejected at the dispensing department of the hospital.

"2. That, being thus deprived of the means of treating such patients as are in excess of the number specified as being entitled to out-patient letters, we have recommended them for extra out-patient letters, with the result that yesterday (May 21st), some twenty of such patients were dismissed from the hospital without professional advice or relief of any description.

"3. That the greater number of such patients as were by the above-mentioned means withdrawn from our treatment, and did eventually receive out-patient letters, were prescribed for without restriction by unqualified students, mostly junior to our own dressers.

"And we beg to suggest that it is not only calculated to detract from the efficiency of the hospital that we should be deprived of the right of signing casualty papers, but that it is anomalous that our right of prescription should be limited, while that of the house-physicians is unlimited. And we respectfully beg you to use your influence to bring about such changes, either in the rules or the administration of the surgery practice, as will enable us to fulfil our recognised duties without being hampered by restrictive regulations."

But this restriction affects the holders of dresserships even more seriously than the house-surgeons; the office of dresser is the only opportunity afforded to the large majority of the students of becoming practically acquainted with surgery. It is true that, with very little trouble, they can obtain permission to prescribe in the out-patient room without any reference to their capabilities, and many junior, as well as some senior, men avail themselves of the opportunity; but it will be seen that, as most of the former know nothing when they prescribe, and only do so by means of some empirical memoranda, compiled from a text-book, or from their observation of some one, perhaps no better informed than themselves, who has preceded them, and that the latter have had far better opportunities of observing the effects of treatment in the surgery, it still remains true

that for the present generation of dressers, many of whom will have to return into the country on the expiration of their dresserships, or will be obliged to devote their attention to medicine, the surgery practice was their only opportunity of properly learning that minor surgery which forms the daily routine of general practice.

But now these men, who, with the exception of four holders of gratuitous dresserships, have paid for their opportunities at the rate of £18 18s. for six months, in full confidence of receiving the customary advantages, find one of the most indispensable means of learning their profession suddenly, and without explanation, withdrawn from them.

They also, therefore, sent in to the Medical Council a petition, containing a statement of their grievance, and praying that, considering the urgency of their case, they might be at once installed as writers in the out-patient room by way of compensation. And they appended a clause calling attention to the fact, that on his day of duty, each dresser is obliged to be in attendance in the surgery for at least thirteen hours at a stretch, without being provided either with a meal or a decent sitting-room.

Having at a great expense of your valuable space explained this domestic grievance, allow me as briefly as possible to call particular attention to the manner in which it has been dealt with. The Medical Council speedily matured an excellent scheme, which would satisfy the claims of the petitioners, and not only relieve the state of dead-lock to which the out-patient practice had been brought, but place it in a greater state of efficiency than before the alteration. This scheme was handed over by their formal representative to the supreme lay authority, without whose sanction it cannot become law, nearly seven weeks ago. With what result? No action whatever has been taken; but the wants and difficulties of the house-surgeons and dressers, and the representatives of the Council of the staff, are treated with that perfect indifference which, together with a want of harmony between the two centres of authority of the hospital, not in this instance only, but in many other ways, prevent the adaptation of the hospital practice to the purposes of teaching, and render abortive, as well, schemes for the improvement of that practice itself.

But, laying aside the fact of the just complaints of the students being treated with contemptuous indifference, is it not imperative that this policy should no longer be allowed to stand in the way of improving an out-patient practice, which, even before the present misunderstanding, entailed almost daily the scandal of enfeebled patients, who had presented themselves soon after 9 o'clock in the morning, being obliged to sit on hard benches, in crowded rooms, without any refreshment, till late in the afternoon, in order to have their case inquired into?

Let us hope that, as the principles of justice and good taste seem powerless to bring this matter to an issue, the publicity you give it may hasten so desirable an end.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

St. Bartholomew's Hospital, July 14th, 1869.

OMEGA.

THE
INITIAL SIGN OF SYPHILITIC INFECTION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Objection has been made to the use of the term "infecting" to designate that species of chancre that is followed by constitutional syphilis, and the word has been regarded as a "misnomer" because the chancre itself is merely the initial lesion of the constitutional disease, and not its cause, properly so called.

The objection is perfectly just if the term be applied to the initial chancre of an individual who subsequently manifests the symptoms of the constitutional disease. But the term "infecting" does not refer to the action of the poison of a chancre on the individual who is the subject of the chancre. The term "infecting" refers to the action which the poison contained in the ulcer of one individual exercises on another individual, producing in this latter constitutional syphilis.

The poison in the chancre of A does not infect the constitution of A, because, as has been justly remarked, it is the initial sign of infection; but it produces in another in-

dividual an ulcer similar to itself; that is to say, it transmits syphilis to that individual, and hence may, I think, be said to have infected him.

I am, however, open to correction; and if any better name can be suggested, I am ready to adopt it. The point, although it turns on the use of a name, merits some discussion, because, until the names of things can be fixed between those who profess to entertain the same doctrines, the public will naturally conclude that the professors are not quite sure concerning their facts.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
St. James's-place, July 20th, 1869. WALTER J. COULSON.

NETLEY APPOINTMENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was rather sorry to read your correspondent "L.'s" letter in THE LANCET of to-day, referring to your very temperate and just remarks, in your number of the 3rd inst., upon the "Netley Appointments."

"L." seems to think that somebody has attacked the professional character of the gentlemen who hold these appointments. He has certainly broken out into a verbose laudation of the whole professional body connected with the place; while you distinctly stated that there was no question about the ability of these gentlemen.

It would have been more satisfactory if "L." had kept to the point, and omitted the eulogium. He might, perhaps, have then told us why these army appointments should not be opened to the general medical staff, as is now the case in the navy. He has not only not done this, but his letter has convinced me that these appointments ought to be strictly limited in time, and it has induced me also to suspect that a move among the professorial chairs might not be amiss.

Nobody, as far as I have seen, ever attacked the professional character of any of the Netley staff, and therefore I cannot but think that "L." was injudicious, to say the least, in bringing forward Dr. De Chaumont's name so prominently, as if he were the great medical Atlas of Netley, upon whose brawny shoulders the safety of the entire establishment depended.

It does not seem to have occurred to "L." that any one of these gentlemen might, for private reasons, resign this appointment. Dr. De Chaumont, being comparatively a junior officer, might possibly be inclined to try the general service; and his ability would decidedly be more likely to gain for him honour and reward in the general service than in his present special post. If, then, this happens, pray where is his successor to be found? Why, among the "unknown," as "L." calls them; but it would be much better if the Netley system produced fewer "unknown," which would certainly be the case if these appointments were open, after a limited tenure, to the now "unknown."

To say the assistant-professorships at Netley are not "appointments" for the army is simply nonsense. If so, why were they originally limited to five years? If so, why, when this time has expired in the case of two of the gentlemen, is the period, on their being re-appointed, limited to three years? If so, why are the assistant-professors at all on the general medical staff list of army surgeons, stopping in their very small way (it must be allowed) the promotion of assistant-surgeons? Why, Sir, "L." must have quite forgotten himself when he fancied such an assertion would bear testing.

It is to be hoped, however, that in future no such monopoly will be sanctioned with respect to any naval or military medical appointments.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

July 10th, 1869.

X.

THE LEEDS CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

THE new Convalescent Hospital opened last week at Cookridge, near Leeds, is not among the least of the important improvements now taking place in the Leeds medical charities.

This beautiful hospital has been built and furnished by the munificence of one gentleman, John Metcalfe Smith, Esq., of Kirkstall Grange, and of the well-known Leeds banking firm Messrs. Beckett and Co. Mr. Smith in connexion with his architect, Mr. Norman Shaw (Nesfield and Shaw, of Argyle-street, London), has taken the deepest interest in the planning and furnishing of the hospital, and has himself personally superintended almost every detail. We are happy to believe that Mr. Smith will find in the pleasure which he will receive from the success of his noble foundation an ample reward for his well-conceived and humane design.

The site purchased by Mr. Smith is on a beautiful wooded declivity about five miles from Leeds, and near the Horsforth railway station. The building is of brick, and presents a very characteristic and charming appearance. The style is the domestic Gothic, and a successful attempt has been made to give to it an air of homeliness and comfort which is sometimes wanting in large establishments. The capacious ingle nooks and large fires for cold weather, and the fine bay windows, with extensive prospects for sunny weather, make the hospital very attractive. The edifice and its extensive grounds have been formally handed over by Mr. Smith to Dr. Clifford Allbutt and five other trustees for the permanent use of the district. The hospital henceforth is to be managed by a committee, and to be supported by subscription.

Mr. Seaton has been appointed the honorary medical officer, and to him the admission of applicants has been entrusted. Mr. Pinder, of Horsforth, has consented to act as visiting medical officer.

The object of the hospital is to find fresh air and good food for a few weeks for patients recovering from acute disease, and threatened with degenerative disease, or otherwise suffering from overwork or other evil conditions of town life. It is not intended to receive patients who are not likely to be soon restored to something like health. Convalescent hospitals are too often made places of temporary refuge for hypochondriacal, troublesome, or incurable patients, to the exclusion of persons who would derive a more solid benefit from the change.

The Cookridge Hospital will hold about 100 patients, and will be open to some extent, at least, during the whole year. The first admission day was on Friday, July 16th.

Leeds, July, 1869.

GLASGOW.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

THE system of rotation of medical officers adopted in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, making a retirement for one year compulsory after six years' service, seems to work well; as the directors of that institution manage matters without partisanship and in a spirit of fairness to all parties. But an exception ought to be made in the case of teachers in the medical schools. The advantages which accrue to an infirmary and to the patients from connexion with a medical school have been pointed out in the columns of THE LANCET; but for such a connexion the Infirmary would never attract as it does the most eminent men in the profession, nor induce them to devote their time to its service; and without such men the treatment of disease would soon sink into insignificant routine. The schools are, therefore, entitled to ask something in return from the hospital, in order to render their teaching as efficient as possible. With our new ideas of medical education, a chair of Medicine and Surgery is of comparatively little value without hospital wards. The University will ere long have an independent hospital for its teachers; but the Andersonian Medical School will depend upon the Royal Infirmary for its clinical teaching, and the Infirmary, on the other hand, will owe its public position as a teaching institution solely to its connexion with the Andersonian University. In this view your editorial remarks in favour of Dr. McCall Anderson's appointment to the vacant physicianship are highly just and in accordance with the interest both of the Medical School and Infirmary.