Tropical Medicine. Fee £2 2s. On October 12 and the three succeeding Wednesdays, Dr. C. B. Heald will give lecture-demonstrations on Treatment by Electro-Therapy at 5.15 p.m. Fee £1 1s. At the Chelsea Hospital for Women there will be a fortnight's course in Gynæcology, starting on October 17. This course consists of operations and lectures and occupies most afternoons and some mornings during the fortnight. Fee £5 5s. During the same fortnight there will be a course in Diseases of Children, given by the Paddington Green Children's Hospital and the Victoria Hospital for Children. The sessions will take place alternately at the two hospitals and the post-graduate will find sufficient work to occupy him both morning and afternoon. Fee £3 3s. The last course to begin in October is that at the Royal Eye Hospital, taking place from October 24 to November 5, and consisting of demonstrations and lectures each afternoon (fee £1 1s.). Besides these courses the Fellowship of Medicine has arranged a series of lectures starting on October 17, and to be given in the Medical Society lecture rooms, 11, Chandos Street, at 5 p.m. on Mondays. The first lecturer is Sir Humphry Rolleston, Bt., K.C.B., who will speak on "Diagnosis and Treatment of Some Endocrine Disorders." On the following Monday, Mr. Herbert J. Paterson will lecture on "Some Surgical Hints," and on October 31 Mr. A. Lawrence Abel will speak on "Some Points in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Pyuria." The series is entitled, "Practical Hints in Medicine, Surgery and the Allied Specialities," and will continue until Christmas. During the same week, beginning October 17, there will start series of weekly demonstrations in medicine, in surgery, and in ophthalmology. The medical-clinical demonstrations in October will be given by Dr. Bernard Myers at 3 p.m., October 21, at the Royal Waterloo Hospital; by Dr. Bruce Williamson at 3 p.m., on October 25 at the Royal Northern Hospital; and by Dr. Donald Paterson at 2.30 p.m. at

the Great Ormond Street Hospital, on October 31. The surgical-clinical demonstrations will be as follows: October 20, at 3 p.m. at the All Saints Hospital, by Mr. H. L. Attwater, Mr. Ainsworth Davis, Mr. R. Coyte and Mr. F. M. Loughnane. October 24, at 2 p.m., at the Royal Northern Hospital, by Mr. J. B. Hunter, and October 31 at 2 p.m. at the Chelsea Hospital, by Mr. J. Bright Banister. The Ophthalmic clinical demonstrations will be given at the Central London Ophthalmic Hospital, but the details are not yet ready. The above lectures, and clinical demonstrations, are open to all members of the profession, without fee. Copies of syllabuses of Courses, Lectures and Demonstrations, and information on post-graduate work in London may be obtained from the Fellowship of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, W. 1.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SPECIAL DIPLOMAS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL JOURNAL."

SIR,—In your "Editorial Notes" for the current month you offer an approving welcome to the continued multiplication of "Special Diplomas" for medical practitioners. Will you permit me a word in opposition? These documents are now to be found in various departments of practice, and they show signs of increase. With a little encouragement, and this I gather you are anxious to afford, the list you quote may well be extended to neurology, cardiology, gastro-enterology, endocrinology, dermatology, and indeed to any subject to which a group of individuals may be attracted by the offer of a distinctive and decorative label. When this position arrives, as it well may, the possessor of so slight a thing as a medical and surgical qualification will doubtless shrink into an appropriate obscurity. Not for him the guarantee of particular parchments.

Now in my judgment the cultivation of these special diplomas is opposed to a sound educa-

tional ideal, is misleading and confusing to the public, and is unfair to a large proportion of those engaged in active and responsible practice.

One obvious effect of these certificates is to suggest that excellence in any branch of practice is attained only by those who have followed such juvenile exercises as passing examinations and gaining alphabetical distinctions. The absence of evidence of this order will be interpreted to the prejudice of diligent, capable, and experienced students of their profession, who, for economic or other reasons, have not cultivated the compulsory curriculum. The prejudice will tell in private practice and will tell particularly when formal appointments are in question. To create and to exalt these special diplomas is to ignore the record which shows that many practitioners by following less formal and less pretentious methods reach a position of all-round or specialized efficiency, and this greatly to the advantage both of the medical profession and of the public. Indeed, this fashion of development is one of the attractions of medical practice and is in accord with the free and liberal atmosphere of the profession. Why should it now be placed at a disadvantage? To discourage it, even in an indirect fashion, is a policy which, as it seems to me, ought to stir, not the commendation but the opposition of those who desire the promotion of post-graduation development on dignified and robust lines.

On the public mind these specialized decorations must inevitably produce confusion. Already the various styles and titles which indicate the possession of a qualification to practice are complex enough. What must be the future uncertainty when every university and licensing body multiplies its formal certificates in the direction you desire? Not only are the public confused; they are also misled. For to them the absence of the parchment, when others are decorated, means the absence of fitness, and this in substance is to deny the qualification which the collegiate authorities themselves gave to the practitioner as a warrant for his admission to the Medical Register.

This qualification certified the practitioner as trained and examined in a fashion that entitled him to undertake the practice of medicine, surgery and midwifery in their several departments. No doubt it is understood as a matter of common sense that an approach to efficiency can be secured only by added experience and effort; also that the practitioner must at any

stage judge for himself what manner and degree of responsibility his capacity warrants him in undertaking. But is it quite fair that the very authorities who have pronounced the practitioner to be qualified to cultivate all departments shall now create a privileged class marked with an indication that in certain directions these alone possess ability and merit?

The purveying of these special diplomas is, of course, a profitable business for the teaching and examining authorities concerned, and the enterprise satisfies an ambition to possess a formal and inscribed record of personal worth duly attested by official signatures. But neither the one motive nor the other is an effective defence in the absence of public or professional advantage.

I recognize that a distinction must be made. Thus, in connection with public health and with tropical medicine, there are individual features which provide a justification for some form of authoritative warrant, though even here the great triumphs have been achieved by those who knew no curriculum and boasted no diploma. A feature common to these two subjects is that they do not come into competition with a general medical qualification. But the other diplomas in your list seem to me quite without excuse. In particular, the latest creation, that is the one which has stirred your enthusiasm into expression, is in my judgment the very worst of the series, for surely the capacity to afford guidance in "ante-natal care, in midwifery, and in infant welfare" can be, and is, to put it mildly, cultivated as successfully by experience and study in general practice as by a compulsory curriculum of lectures and demonstrations and baby shows and hurried out-patient departments. Not that I object to this latter scheme of discipline for those who desire it. But I do venture to say that there is substantial objection to an arrangement which proposes that those alone who have followed these scholastic methods can be certified as competent.

By all means increase educational opportunities. But at the same time do not suggest that these exist only in the form of a compulsory curriculum, and that the private and personal opportunities open to individual effort is training of an interior order and properly doomed to remain in a position of undocumented inferiority.

Yours faithfully,

C. O. HAWTHORNE.

London, September 3.