about the house and in the locality. I believe all these diseases had a common origin in the bad drainage. I consider that it is a most iniquitous thing to permit houses anywhere to be occupied until there has been a thorough inspection of the drains and of the house generally by a proper sanitary authority, and until a certificate of fitness for human occupation has been given by the aforesaid authority. Until the law is altered to this effect we need not be surprised at outbreaks of puerperal diseases.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

JOHN COCHRANE, L.R.C.P. and L.R.C.S. Edin.,
Medical Officer of the Parish of Lochgoilhead and Kilmolich, and
District Medical Officer of Health, Argyll County Council.

Nov 28th, 1893.

"THE LANCET SPECIAL ANALYTICAL SANITARY COMMISSION ON SMOKE PREVENTION AND PERFECT COMBUSTION."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It was with much pleasure I read the able, exhaustive, and scientific report on Smoke Prevention and Perfect Combustion in the last number of your journal. THE LANCET continues worthily to sustain its reputation for public spirit in prosecuting such an inquiry, one which should long ago have been undertaken at the public expense. Is it too much to hope that the Legislature may be now induced to intervene to rid London of a nuisance universally acknowledged and deplored? In THE LANCET of Aug. 6th, 1892, you did me the honour of inserting a letter on the Smoke Nuisance in London. Since and before that date, in print and in private, I have urged the moral of the same lesson; but the public is closely wedded to its prejudices and is difficult to move. If Parliament will do nothing it is only by steadily keeping this important subject before the eyes of the people that improvement can be expected. The evils are known; a remedy is at hand. That remedy, as you have shown, and as I have long contended, is the substitution of gaseous fuel for coal. It may not be an ideal or a perfect substitute; but, on the whole, it is the best we can at present employ. If we wait for perfection before moving in any given direction we might wait for the millennium—and should continue to suffer meanwhile.

There is one point on which your report has not touched, I think; perhaps it was not strictly within its scope. I allude to the volumes of unconsumed smoke poured out by factories. I believe an Act of Parliament exists dealing with this matter. If so, it seems to be regarded as one of those laws made to be broken. No doubt if every factory in and round the metropolis was compelled to consume its smoke efficiently the amelioration we should experience would be but slight while innumerable private chimneys continued to roll out their murky contents. Still it would be a beginning, and it would induce an appreciable benefit, which again would lead to further steps being taken of a wider kind. I know few questions more worthy the attention of medical M.P.'s, for it concerns the comfort and health, not of London alone, but of all the large towns of the kingdom. Who has not noticed the filth-laden condition of the atmosphere in the Black Country, in parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, in Glasgow, Newcastle, Bristol, and other places? Fogs may be a necessary incident of our latitudes; smoke assuredly is not, being an artificial evil produced by ourselves. If the evil was slight we could afford to neglect it; but it is already huge, is growing every year, and threatens to envelop a great part of the country to the injury of its inhabitants and to the destruction of the fair face of nature. Like practical Englishmen let us put a stop to this. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

H. R. OSWALD, M.D. Edin.

Thurloe-place, S.W., Nov. 29th, 1893.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF ELECTRIC LIGHTING CURRENTS FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As the writer of the articles on "Current from the Main," which appeared in THE LANCET of Dec. 19th, 1891, and April 9th, 1892, I beg to advert to the concluding sentence of an article on the same subject which has just appeared. Its writer states that "with an 8-candle lamp permanently fixed in the [100-volt electric light] circuit with the patient he cannot become the path of a current of really

dangerous magnitude." Let it be considered what this may mean. Even on the assumption that current in the electric light lead cannot rise above 300 milliamperes, that every lamp is protected by a fuse which will break without fail immediately the proper current is exceeded, and that the resistance of the body never falls below a thousand ohms, the possible current in such a circuit (allowing 200 ohms as the resistance of the lamp) would be 80 milliamperes. But can such assumptions be considered as safe? As to the first, the writer quoted admits that a sudden rise of pressure in the mains is not yet quite impossible. Now, it is recognised that incandescent lamps of the class referred to will sometimes allow two or three times their proper current to pass before breaking; in such contingencies, therefore, a current approaching 1000 milliamperes may possibly pass through the body. As to the second assumption, as a matter of fact lamps are seldom protected by fuses. Fuses are really placed in electric light circuits to protect wires against the results of short-circuiting and will therefore pass several amperes before acting. As to the body, there are conditions under which its resistance may be less than a thousand ohms, and, of course, diminished resistance means increased current. I pass over for the moment other points in the article which are open to criticism; but the above statement appears to me to be so serious as to call for immediate comment.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Brighton, Nov. 27, 1893.

W. S. HEDLEY.

MEDICAL AID ASSOCIATIONS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am in receipt of the following letter from the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, the contents of which being of great interest to the profession in general and to the licentiates of the College in particular, I venture to ask you to publish:—

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin,
Nov. 13th, 1893.

Dear Sir,—In reference to your letter of Aug. 17th, I beg to enclose the following copy of a resolution passed by the President and Fellows of this College on the subject you refer to:—"Resolved—That the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland desire to express their disapproval of their licentiates accepting office in medical aid associations as at present conducted in England, inasmuch as the independence of the physician is destroyed by the system, and the services of the physician are used so as to produce a profit for lay persons."

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) G. P. L. NUGENT, M.D.,
Fellow and Registrar.

Dr. Leslie Phillips.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England, recognising the evils which must arise from its Members associating themselves with "trading institutions for treatment of disease," most properly passed the following resolution: "That it is degrading to the profession and injurious to the public interest that Fellows or Members of the College should associate themselves with trading institutions for the treatment of disease and allow their names to be advertised in support of the practice of medicine and surgery by persons not legally qualified." Perceiving the applicability of the terms of this declaration to medical aid associations, to individuals, and to insurance companies carrying on medical aid businesses, I applied to Mr. Edward Trimmer, the secretary of the College, for verification of my surmise, and in his reply he says: "Having regard to its terms—i.e., the terms of the resolution—I am of opinion that, on the assumption that such associations are to all intents and purposes trading institutions, it is clear that they must be included in its scope." I need make no comment on the beneficial importance of these resolutions to the profession or on their significance to the licentiates of the respective Colleges who hold office in medical businesses of the medical aid type.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

Nov. 25th, 1893.

LESLIE PHILLIPS.

"SOME POINTS WITH REFERENCE TO THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF TYPHOID FEVER."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Nov. 25th Dr. Edmunds writes that he is under the impression that the cases referred to in my address on typhoid fever were those of young children, and that as such they are not "comparable with a set of cases having an essentially different rate of mortality." As stated in my paper the cases were taken consecutively from