Hall for disposing of the sewage of London, it appears to me to be open to the following objections:—

1. To construct a double system of drains—one for the waste household water, and the other for water-closets—would entail extra expenses and extra risks.

2. To turn waste household water into the Thames instead of into the general sewers, is open to the objection—first, of emptying into the Thames waters containing animal and vegetable refuse; secondly, because such waters contain manure, which might be turned to account; thirdly, because the possibility of washing or flushing the sewers would be thus put aside.

3. To collect all the solid sewage of London at one or more places in or near London, you must first ensure its then meeting with a constant sale, otherwise you merely collect enormous masses of corruption. But it is evident that a constant sale could not be guaranteed; and, indeed, it might be made a question whether at any time the manure would pay the expense of carting by railway cars, as proposed.

It appears to me that a plan analogous to that of Mr. Mc'Clean is the best—viz., to carry the sewage, by tunnels or drains, down into Essex and Kent, and, if necessary, on to the German Ocean. By this plan you could have, at stated intervals, reservoirs, where the sewage could be deodorized and sold as demanded, but when not sold passed on. By this plan you enhance the value of land to a great extent along the entire line of the main drains. In the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, land so favoured lets at £30 an acre per annum, land in Kent and Essex being now let at 40s. and 50s. an acre. Such being the case, little, if any, of the sewage would be ultimately permitted to reach the German Ocean.

Having given much attention to this subject, I trust you will find space for these few observations.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

London, Dec. 1856.

GEO. WYLD, M.D.

THE TRUE NATURE OF PHTHISIS.

[LETTER FROM DR. ANDREW CLARK.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It appears to me, from a perusal of last week's LANCET, that Dr. Smith has written a disingenuous letter; and that he has stirred up a dust of abstruse words and ideas to cover his retreat from an untenable position.

I think that a plain subject may be discussed in a plain way without expressed reference to metaphysical abstractions or logical forms; and that if we will accept common terms in their current signification, there need be no obscurity in the statement of the question at issue, and no difficulty in forming a judgment of its truth or error.

I cannot follow Dr. Smith into his misstatements, and they are sufficiently obvious to render it unnecessary. Neither can I hope to enulate the subtleties of a logic which converts a denial of *inspiratory* action in the air-cells into a denial of *respiratory* action in the lungs. I must restrict my reply to a final restatement of the question under debate in its original and uncomplicated form. And this is necessary because Dr. Smith appears to confound the movements of respiration with the blood changes to which these motions are subservient, and because the real point to be discussed is becoming quickly overshadowed by a cloud of words.

By *inspiration* or *inspiratory action* is meant the drawing in of air into the lungs.

By *expiration* or *expiratory action* is meant the throwing out of air from the lungs.

Neither inspiration nor expiration constitutes respiration: they are movements inseparably allied with, and subservient to it.

By respiration is meant the interchange of certain elements between the atmosphere and the blood.

Now, if there is any settled relation between words and ideas, it follows from these received explanations of terms that when a man speaks of the inspiratory action of the air-cells, he must mean the action which they exert in drawing in the air; if he avers that he does not mean this, then his words are no representations of his thoughts, and we can never hope to know what he means by what he says.

One or other position must be assigned to Dr. Smith in the present discussion. Dr. Smith considers that phthisis is "*a diminished inspiratory action of the air-cells.*"

It is universally admitted that the air-cells do not draw air into the lungs; in other words, that they do not perform the inspiratory act.

It will be seen, however, that Dr. Smith does ascribe an inspiratory action to the air-cells, and that he makes a diminution of that action the peculiarity of his view of phthisis.

I am constrained by all these facts, therefore, to repeat that Dr. Smith, in framing such conclusions from his observations, has committed a physiological error, and developed from it a theory, which is, for that reason, fundamentally untenable.

In conclusion, I beg to assure Dr. Smith, that, in the composition of my former letter, I was actuated by no such feelings as he imputes to me; that I am too deeply conscious of my own deficiencies and needs for indulgence to fall consciously into such presumption; and that I am heartily sorry that anything I have written, even in haste, is susceptible of the construction put upon it.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,
Montague-place, Russell-square, Dec. 1856. ANDREW CLARK.

THE NON-RESIDENT FELLOWS OF THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF EDINBURGH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to make a few remarks on the letter of "A Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh," contained in THE LANCET of the 29th ult.

Your correspondent begins by deprecating the tone of your article on the subject of the non-resident fellowship. Any one, however, but a fellow of the College, would admit that it is scarcely possible to avoid a tone of raillery at the exceeding simplicity of supposing that such a measure would be acceptable to the profession. Even your correspondent would laugh if the Government, as a means of raising the revenue, were to announce their readiness, for the moderate sum of £25, to bestow the title of M.P., with all the privileges of the real senator, except that of attending the House of Commons, or interfering, in any way, with the affairs of the nation.

The project of the College reminds me of a little trick that I have sometimes attempted to play off upon my children when they were *very* young, by turning an empty egg-shell, with the broken end into the cup, and presenting it to them. But their answer was always very much the same as that of the profession to the College—"Oh, papa! I know it's only a humbug!"

It is evident that the framers of the measure have been misled by the fact that "a desire was expressed by many to possess the fellowship of a college at a price considerably reduced, on the ground that they were unable, from distance, to reap its full advantages." But the error consisted in the supposition that this desire would be gratified by the possession of a mere make-believe title. As well might you expect that a miser, who hoards up wealth useless to himself, would be satisfied with counterfeit bank-notes.

Your correspondent states that no privilege enjoyed by the residents is withheld from the non-residents, except the right to vote at their meetings. Let us see how far this is the case. The circular of the College expressly says that non-resident fellows shall be denied, not only the privilege of voting, but also that of attending the meetings. The resident fellows are eligible for election as office-bearers, with the consequent status in the profession and with the public; it is absurd to suppose that this eligibility can be extended to those who are debarred from taking any part in the proceedings of the College. The resident fellows are entitled to the use of the library of the Edinburgh University. This privilege they enjoy by an agreement made some years ago, when the College made over their library, on condition that their fellows should have the use of that of the University. It is, however, very questionable whether, by the spirit of this agreement, the College can extend this privilege to any whom they may constitute merely nominal fellows, more especially if residing out of Edinburgh. It would be of advantage if the College would say, explicitly, what privileges the non-resident fellows will enjoy. I do not know of one, except that of putting F. instead of L. after their names.

Your correspondent says, for himself and others, that they voted for the late measure without any idea of its finality, and as a step in the right direction. This will give satisfaction, as it excites a hope that more liberal measures may be expected; but it is probable that many will wait to know what those measures are before they accept the offer of the College. In the meantime, it may be of some advantage to canvass in a wider arena than within the College walls what these measures ought to be. Permit me, therefore, to say a few words on this subject.

I suppose the chief objection to conferring the right to vote on the non-resident fellows is, that active and intriguing resident members might occasionally endeavour, by canvassing, to bring forward non-residents to enable them to carry their point in disputed matters. It must be admitted that there is considerable force in this objection, and it appears reasonable that the decision of disputed points should be left to those who, by habitual attendance, are thoroughly acquainted with the subject. This objection, however, might easily be avoided simply by subjecting the non-resident fellows to the same fines for non-attendance as are now enforced against those resident in Edinburgh; but giving them the privilege of being, at their own request, exempted from the fines, such exemption to carry with it the exclusion from the privilege of voting, and a notice of three months being required of their wish to be restored to the roll.

I cannot suppose that anyone will attempt to justify the exclusion of non-residents from attendance at the meetings and from joining in the deliberations, whether allowed to vote or not. Indeed, so groundless is such an exclusion, that its being contained in the late Act of the College appears almost like an intended insult.

Non-resident fellows might also be made eligible for election as office-bearers, by the creation of a few additional councillors and office-bearers, to be selected from the non-residents. The benefit of this, as providing a worthy object of ambition to the provincialist, is too obvious to require comment.

It would be a great boon if the use of the University Library could be secured to the non-resident fellows, as it would tend to supply a want that has been long and severely felt by country practitioners.

It is stated by your correspondent that some in Edinburgh object to the late Act, as being calculated to deluge the College with provincial mediocrities. Whether a deluge of provincial may be more offensive than one of metropolitan mediocrities, may be disputed. But, as many would desire the fellowship chiefly as an honour, it would be very desirable that some means should be provided by which the fellowship, whether resident or non-resident, should be a test of something higher than merely the ability to pay a specified sum.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Dollar, N. B., Dec. 1856.

JOHN M. STRACHAN, M.D.

DENTISTRY PRESENT AND FUTURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It would appear that dentists of all denominations in London consider some course of education necessary to elevate dentistry from its present anomalous position. I assume this to be a fact for the following reasons—viz., that I have recently received circulars from two societies, professedly having this object in view.

The first Society that honoured me with a circular I declined being connected with, from the fear that qualified and unqualified gentlemen might not agree in council, and thereby frustrate the common object in view.

The second circular I received was from the Odontological Society. This Society, in their circular, gave the names of their president and council, also a copy of their bye-laws, regulations, &c. On perusal of this list of names, I felt if I were anxious for intercourse with the members of my profession, and the advancement of dentistry, I must of necessity accept the honour intended me, and join the Society. Having accepted the honour, I beg to say there is much that I admire and agree with in the rules of this Society; but as they are at present constructed, I must consider them those of a scientific and not those of a surgical society, the last of which I consider they ought to be. The rule I consider wanting is the following:—That after a certain lapse of time (say two years) no gentlemen be considered eligible for membership except those who have qualified themselves as surgeons. I give the two years in order that vested interests may not be interfered with.

I suggest this rule through your paper, not with the view of coercing the learned council, but in order that my opinion (which I honestly believe to be correct) may obtain that weight and importance which publicity in your valuable journal can alone give it. If what I suggest as a rule be established as such, I have not the least doubt but that in time this Society will be recognised by the Colleges of Surgery and hospitals throughout the kingdom.

I remain, Sir, your very obedient servant,

SAMUEL MACLEAN, F.R.C.S.I.

Brook-street, Bond-street, Dec. 1856.

THE ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

INCREASED CHARGE FOR EXHIBITIONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As it has been ascertained that the next meeting of the Council of the Royal Medical Benevolent College will not be held until Wednesday the 7th of January next, may I request you will be kind enough to give space for this letter in your journal, as it will much assist the cause. The memorial requesting the Council to convene an extraordinary meeting will be presented on that day. A deputation will attend for that purpose, and also to hold a conference with the Council as to the best course to be pursued in order to bring the matter at issue (if possible) to an amicable termination. It is hoped that the deputation will succeed in obtaining such a statement of accounts and of the calculations on which the supposed necessity for the increased charge is based, as will enable all parties to form an impartial judgment upon the question. The following signatures, to which considerable additions will be made, have already been appended to the memorial.

Walcot-place West, Kennington, MATT. FRENCH WAGSTAFFE,
December 10th, 1856. (for Committee.)

* * Here follow the signatures of 117 governors of the Institution.

SCOTLAND.

(FROM OUR EDINBURGH CORRESPONDENT.)

THE result of the election for the Council of the Royal College of Physicians is alike satisfactory to the profession generally as it is creditable to the good taste and judgment displayed by the fellows in their choice. Dr. Macalagan is president, Dr. J. Begbie vice-president, and the other members of the Council are Drs. Robert Christison, J. B. Malcolm, C. Bell, Seller, and Peddie. By this it will be seen that a complete revolution has been effected. While some fellows of the College wish to combine the College of Physicians with the College of Surgeons, others are desirous that, if any combination be necessary, it should be joined with their Alma Mater. In this election the advocates of the latter have triumphed. Thus two successes have been gained by the majority of fellows.

The first ordinary meeting of the Royal Society took place on Monday evening, the 1st of December. An eloquent opening address was delivered by Bishop Terrot, who made a pathetic allusion to the members who had died during the past year, mentioning especially the names of Ballingall and Madden. The rev. gentleman passed a graceful eulogium upon their scientific acquirements and private worth. A communication was read before the Society by Joseph Lister, Esq., on "The Minute Structure of the Involuntary Muscular Tissue." The paper displayed considerable research, and was listened to with marked attention. At its conclusion Dr. Alison complimented Mr. Lister upon the acquisition his observations would prove to science. Professor Bennett also congratulated him upon the results he had arrived at—his proofs of the contractility of the minute vessels. The professor said that last summer he had made careful experiments upon a frog. Carefully securing and chloroforming it, he had applied hot water as a stimulus. The vessels thereupon contracted from 7 to 5, and 13 to 8, according to their measurements; those which did not were filled with blood corpuscles. Mr. Paget had said that, upon applying stimuli to a frog's foot, the vessels were paralysed: this was now fully proved to be erroneous. Mr. Wharton Jones had stated that, instead of being contractile, they were inert, tubes; but Mr. Lister's paper and careful experiments enabled them to arrive at different results. It appears that Professor Bennett and Mr. Lister differ but slightly. Mr. Lister says the minute vessels are arteries, and the professor believes them to be capillaries. This will, however, soon be determined, and then we may hope for an elucidation of all the mysteries involved in the word "inflammation."

At the Royal College of Surgeons, on Friday evening, the president and fellows held their first *conversazione* for this season. Dr. Andrew Wood, the president, having made some suitable introductory observations, announced that during the present season lectures would be delivered by Professors Balfour, G. Wilson, Allen Thomson, of Glasgow, Dr. Sanders, &c. Mr. Lister then delivered a lecture on "The Early Stages of Inflammation," as evident, under the microscope, in the foot of a frog. The lecture was a more elaborate account of the