

marked by Dr. Schleisner himself, who was very well acquainted with that confusion, as may be seen from his work *Island undersøgt fra et Løgevidenskabeligt Synspunkt* (Kjöbenhavn, 1849, p. 40), where he states that by far the greatest part of those who are registered as having died of consumption ("tøerende Syge"), had fallen victims to hydatids in the lungs. Some mistakes may also have occurred in the Icelandic medical reports to the College of Physicians in Copenhagen, although I have not remarked them. Be this as it may, it is certain that tubercular phthisis may be said to be unknown in Iceland, except when imported by Icelanders who have contracted it in foreign countries. *This you may rely upon*, although so much opposed to the theory promulgated by Dr. Mac Cormac, that prebreathed air is the only cause of consumption. If this theory were true, few countries would have more of the disease than this; for, in a great many instances, Icelandic huts do not afford more than 100 cubic feet of air to each individual. *Post mortem* examinations become every year more common, and I have myself made numerous autopsies; and yet not a single case of tubercle of the lungs has, up to the present, been in this way discovered. During a period of fifteen years, I have had more than thirty thousand patients, without having met with a single case of indigenously consumption. In order to give you farther information on this subject, I wrote to an honoured colleague of mine who happens just now to be in our little town; and this is his reply:

"In answer to your letter of yesterday's date, regarding phthisis tuberculosa, I shall only remark that, during my thirty-two years' practice in this country, I have not seen a single case of this disease. I have seen a great many cases of other diseases of the lungs, but phthisis tuberculosa never. In all the autopsies I have made, I have never observed the least trace of tubercles in the lungs.—J. Skaptason, Reykjavik, April 27th, 1869."

"To this I beg to add, that Dr. Skaptason is the oldest and most experienced physician in this country; he is an accurate observer and an excellent anatomist. His practice has been most extensive; and, from my knowledge of him, I feel confident that he would write nothing but what he believed to be absolutely true.

"Yours very faithfully, "J. HJALTELIN."

#### PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

SIR,—In answer to a question that I see by the JOURNAL was asked at Leeds about the constitution of this Committee, allow me to state that thirty members are appointed by the branches, with power to add to their number; but that last year, when it was judged by the Committee to be more convenient to present their report at the annual meeting of the Parent Association than at that of the Metropolitan Branch, as was previously done, the additional members, forty-four in number, were appointed at Oxford. This year the Committee had agreed to recommend twenty additional members at Leeds, and I much regret that my late arrival at the meeting on Friday afternoon apparently prevented the meeting from exercising its suffrage on the matter.

It is due to the gentlemen who devote so much valuable time and labour to the work of this Committee that I should explain the steps I took for the due presentation of their Report, etc. On July 15th I wrote to Mr. T. Watkin Williams, the General Secretary, asking him to fix a time and insert it in the programme for its reception. I received no reply to my letter; nine days afterwards I had occasion to write to him on other business, when I alluded to my previous communication; he replied July 25th—"I also duly received your note of the 15th inst., but did not consider it required any further reply than what appeared in the programme as published in the JOURNAL, viz., that reports from the several Committees will be received on Thursday morning." On Thursday morning, as time was precious, with the courteous permission of the Chairman (Dr. Radclyffe Hall), I suggested to the meeting that only the paragraph of the Report relating to the Draft Medical Acts Amendment Bill need be read, and that the rest of the document relating to the irrevocable past might be taken as read; the suggestion was not accepted, so that the Report was deferred until Friday morning, when Mr. Nunneley very liberally gave me precedence, for which I beg he will accept my best thanks, and at the same time my sincere apology for trespassing more than I anticipated on the time allotted to his Address. After a long promised and hurried visit to Saltaire in the middle of the day, I arrived at the afternoon meeting about a quarter past four o'clock, in time to hear a well-merited eulogium on the profession at Leeds, but too late, according to the ruling of the Chairman (Dr. R. W. Falconer's), to submit the list of gentlemen recommended for election as extra members during the ensuing year.

I am, etc.,

SEPTIMUS GIBBON.

Aug. 1869.

#### THE LONDON DIALECTICAL SOCIETY.

SIR,—With reference to the allegations concerning the London Dialectical Society contained in your report of Dr. Beatty's address at Leeds, I am directed by the Council of that Society to state that the whole of those allegations are entirely untrue.

The Society does not advocate Malthusianism or anti-Malthusianism, or any other view or theory of any kind; and, although the utmost freedom of debate is the fundamental principle of its constitution, no member or visitor has ever mentioned, except to reprobate, the odious practice for the carrying out of which it has been stated that the Society has sought the co-operation of the medical profession. Neither has any book whatever at any time been published under the auspices of the Society.

I enclose a prospectus, etc., of the Society (a copy of which I shall be happy to forward to any of your readers making application for the same), from which it will be seen that the following propositions are the basis of its constitution.

That truth is of all things the most to be desired, and is best elicited by the conflict of opposing opinions.

That the Society should afford a field for the philosophical consideration of all questions without reserve, but especially of those comprised in the domain of ethics, metaphysics, and theology.

That it should be unsectarian in the widest possible sense, and allow the most absolute freedom of debate; no subject whatever being excluded from consideration, except on the ground of its triviality.

The following remarks by Professor Bain may be considered to embody the leading principle of the Society, and show the origin of its title:—"The essence of the dialectic method is to place side by side, with every doctrine and its reasons, all opposing doctrines and their reasons, allowing these to be stated in full by the persons holding them. No doctrine is to be held as expounded, far less proved, unless it stands in parallel array to every other counter-theory, with all that can be said for each. For a short time, this system was actually maintained and practised; but the execution of Socrates gave it its first check, and the natural intolerance of mankind rendered its continuance impossible. Since the Reformation, struggles have been made to regain for the discussion of questions generally—philosophical, political, moral, and religious—the two-sided procedure of the law-courts; and perhaps never more strenuously than now."

I am, etc., D. H. DYTE, *Honorary Secretary.*

32A, George Street, Hanover Square, W., August 23rd, 1869.

\*\*\* We feel satisfaction in publishing this official repudiation, by the Council of the Dialectical Society, of any countenance of the "odious practices" properly denounced by Dr. Beatty. At the same time, we must express regret that the Council has so long allowed a grievous charge to hang over the Society, and has not, as far as we are aware, taken steps to remove the prevalent impression, that the propriety of resorting to certain abominable proceedings for the purpose of keeping down the numbers of our population was discussed in, and found favour in, the Society. With Mr. Dyte's letter, we have received a copy of the rules and list of members of the Society, with the titles of the papers and discussions during 1867 and 1868. In looking over the list, we notice the names of members of our profession (such as Dr. Andrew Clark, a Vice-President) whom we cannot believe capable of remaining in a Society which would advocate utterly degrading principles.

#### MR. NUNNELEY AND THE ANTISEPTIC TREATMENT.

SIR,—Mr. Nunneley's recent attack (see the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, Aug. 7th, 1869) seems to me little calculated to impede the progress of the antiseptic treatment; nor do I feel called upon to point out in how many respects he has misapprehended my published views. That he should dogmatically oppose a treatment which he so little understands, and which, by his own admission, he has never tried, is a matter of small moment. But I was grieved to find him stating that his colleagues, who had once adopted the system, were now abandoning it as untrustworthy. It was therefore with much pleasure that I received a very different account of the matter from Mr. Teale in a letter which, with his permission, I now request you to publish.

I am, etc.,

JOSEPH LISTER.

Glasgow, 24th August, 1869.

"20, Park Row, Leeds, Aug. 11th, 1869.

"MY DEAR SIR,—May I call your attention to the attack upon the 'antiseptic treatment' in Mr. Nunneley's surgical address, in which he quotes the experience of his colleagues as unfavourable to it.

"I think it due to yourself to inform you that Mr. Nunneley was in