

[Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Rotherhithe].

Contributors

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METROPOLIS LOCAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1855.



REPORTS

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO

The Vestry

OF

THE PARISH OF ROTHERHITHE,

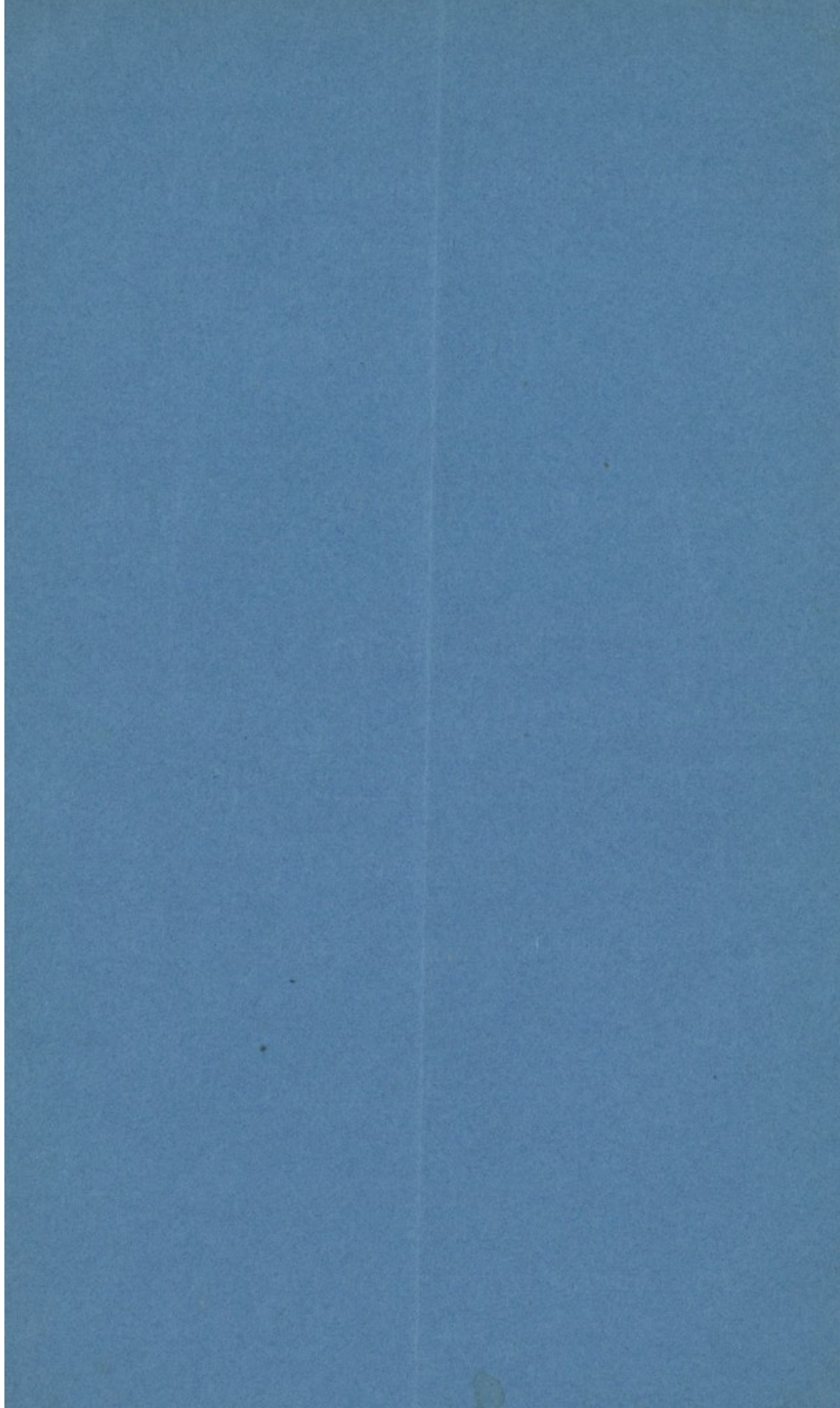
SURREY.

From April, 1857, to March, 1858.

London:

PRINTED BY B. BATT, POST OFFICE, ROTHERHITHE,

1858.



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OF

THE PARISH OF ROTHERHITHE,

SURREY.

From April, 1857, to March, 1858.

By Wm. Murdock M.D.

London:

PRINTED BY B. BATT, POST OFFICE, ROTHERHITHE,

1858.



REPORTS LOCAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1833

REPORTS

ON THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

IN

THE COUNTY

OF

THE PARISH OF NOTTINGHAM

SURREY

FROM 1833 TO 1838

LONDON :

PRINTED BY J. DILLI, 10, ST. MARK'S PLACE, LONDON.

1838

FIFTEENTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

AMONG the various nuisances mentioned in the Agenda Paper, all those connected with the houses are cases of full cesspools or imperfect drainage. Napier's-place alone deserves special mention, this row of houses having been already brought under your notice in a previous report. Things have grown, since that report, much worse, every cesspool in the row is overflowing into the corresponding yard, producing a mass of filth difficult to describe and highly injurious to the health of the inhabitants.

A large quantity of damaged beans (one hundred quarters) had been housed at Hope Granary in Church-passage, emitting fetid effluvia, a notice was served, and the nuisance speedily removed.

On the 21st March I went with the Inspector on a sanitary tour in the neighbourhood of the Railway Arches. The piggery is much improved since my last visit, cleaner and in better order. Many of the arches are used either for the manufacture of patent manure, or as store-rooms for its ingredients, here might be found every species of refuse, sulphate of lime from the candle factories, sawdust impregnated with cocoa-nut oil, ground bones, coprolite, parchment cuttings, animal charcoal from the sugar bakers, and many other substances. The arch 501, enhaled a putrid stench, the proprietor opened all the other arches, but strangely enough could not find the key of No. 501. I have every reason to believe that it contained animal or vegetable matter in a state of decomposition, and caused a notice to be served.

The Table and Oil Cloth Factory of Messrs. Pullinger and Rattenbury was also inspected, they were not boiling linseed oil at the time. On the premises, however, is a proper apparatus by which the vapour arising from the oil is conducted up a tube through a fire, and is burnt before it escapes into the atmosphere, much of the nuisance arising from the boiling is thereby avoided.

Baker's-rents, a row of twelve houses in Rotherhithe-street, is entirely without water supply, the inmates being obliged to

dip from the Thames, all water used for household and other purposes.

A serious inconvenience has arisen to the numerous population of Hanover-street. Since the 16th March or thereabouts, the Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company have cut off the water from Hanover-street, which hitherto had been supplied by three stand pipes. The people are now forced to use water from a pump communicating with a tidal well. I must recall to the memory of the Vestry, how the cholera more than decimated the inhabitants of Silver-street in the year 1849. The whole of that street being then supplied with tidal water only. Since the water has been carried into each house from the Kent Waterworks, Silver-street has become one of the healthiest localities in Rotherhithe. Not a single case of fatal cholera occurred there in 1854, whereas twenty persons, or thereabouts died in it during the epidemic of 1849, before the alteration above-named was made.

The average monthly mortality in Rotherhithe is thirty-seven, the mortality of the month of March last year was forty-three, I am happy to say that during the just elapsed month only thirty deaths occurred, seven below the general average, and thirteen less than in the same month last year.

The parish continues healthy and much freer than usual from epidemic disease, nor is this desirable state of things confined to Rotherhithe alone, for the Registrar General reports on the 14th March:—"The southern division, namely, all that part of London which lies on the south side of the River, is at present unusually free from epidemics. No deaths occurred in it last week from small-pox, only one from measles, four from scarlatina, ten from hooping-cough, two from diarrhœa, and eight from typhus; the total number on the south side from these diseases was twenty-five, being the seventh part of the total number in the metropolis, though the population of the former (south side) is to that of the latter (the metropolis) as one to four."

The number of deaths registered in Rotherhithe during the quarter ending 31st March, 1857, was one hundred and four, viz.:—fifty-one males and fifty-three females. The number of births two hundred and thirty, viz.:—one hundred and twenty-eight males and one hundred and two females, leaving a balance of one hundred and twenty-six more births than deaths.

Yours respectfully,

April, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

SIXTEENTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

AT the request of several members of this Vestry, I turned my attention to the Railway Arches situated in the Parish of Rotherhithe, and to the trades and manufactures carried on in them. The number of arches of the Greenwich Railway in Rotherhithe is one hundred and twenty-five. At the date of my last visit (15th April) seventy-two were empty, ten occupied as stables, carpenter's shops, private dwellings, or by persons in business not requiring the surveillance of your Officers. Two were tenanted by patent varnish makers, two, to which I could not gain admission, were supposed by the Inspector to be used by oil boilers, from a sort of chimney or shaft being connected with one of them, but of this fact I am not certain. Three arches are let to enamellers and makers of American cloth, thirteen to Messrs. Pullinger and Rattenbury, oil cloth and table cover makers, and twenty to patent manure makers, who have converted some of them into factories, and others into store-rooms, for the filthy ingredients of which their manure is composed. All the above numbers are given approximatively. Every arch, with the exception of three or four which are locked up, and whose tenants were absent, was entered and carefully examined by me and notes taken on the spot, relatively to the nature of the trade carried on in it.

The arches in the occupation of the oil cloth makers, enamellers, and varnish makers, smelt strongly of turpentine and such like substances used by them. The nuisance in these trades is occasioned by the boiling of linseed oil; even this, however, may be done innocuously where a proper apparatus is erected for the burning of the vapour as it rises from the boiling liquid. Such apparatus exists on the premises of Messrs. Pullinger and Rattenbury, and was mentioned in my last Report. Mr. Sanders declares that he has been often present while the oil was being boiled on the premises, and that no nauseous smell was perceptible. I entertain, however, strong suspicions that oil boiling is effected clandestinely in the open air in the vicinity of the Railway Arches, from the discovery in a field near St. Helena-lane of a fireplace sunk in the earth, and of a pot which had evidently been recently used for the purpose above-named. The vigilance of the Inspector was invited to this fact.

The manufactory of patent manure is always a nuisance. The nuisance is, however, much mitigated by the employment of calcined bone. Under the Railway Arches *calcined bone is not*

used, but in its stead, sawdust impregnated with rancid coconut oil, parchment cuttings, stinking fish, sugar scum, raw bones, often in a putrid state, and even night-soil, as I have been told, although I did not see any. The consequence of the action of the sulphuric acid upon such materials is the generation and exhalation, in large quantities, of sulphuretted, phosphuretted, and ammoniacal gases, which are so much complained of by passengers on the Railway. Several of the arches were full of sugar scum, emitting a sickening, saccharine smell. I am credibly informed by practical men, that the great quantity of the above mentioned gases sent forth of late years from the various works carried on in Rotherhithe, has had a perceptibly deleterious effect upon the vegetation of the place, more especially upon the fruit trees, which do not fructify and bear as formerly. I caused no notices to be served as I have been in the habit of doing in cases of minor nuisances, but thought it better first to submit the whole matter to the deliberation of the Vestry.

The other nuisances mentioned in the Agenda Paper, are cases of full cesspools and imperfect drainage. All the houses in Adam's-place and the greater part of those in Eve's-place have no water supply. The inhabitants were loud in their complaints to me of the great inconveniences to which they are put by the want of this first necessary of life, without which there never can be any improvement in the social state of the poorer classes of society.

The number of deaths registered in Rotherhithe during the month of April was thirty-five, two below the general average, and eight below the corresponding month of last year. The parish continues tolerably free from epidemic disease, two fatal cases of scarlatina and one of whooping-cough have, however, occurred. An infant died from small-pox in the Commercial Docks, but it was on board of a barge, it is highly probable that the disease did not originate in Rotherhithe, but was imported from without. About half the deaths of the month are of children under three years of age.

Yours respectfully,

May, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

SEVENTEENTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

A LETTER having been sent to me by the Association of the Medical Officers of Health, inviting my attention to the state of the cowhouses in Rotherhithe, I made it my business to visit with the Inspector of Nuisances every place in the district

where cows are kept, and to note minutely all particulars concerning the general appearance of the premises, the drainage, the ventilation, and the condition of the cattle.

There are eight cowkeepers in Rotherhithe, viz.:—two in Paradise-street, one in Albion-street, one in Cow-lane, one in Church-street, one at Ground-cottage, one in Baltic-place, and one at Providence Farm on the Surrey Canal Bank. The first five are in densely populous neighbourhoods, the last three on the contrary are placed each in an open space, and at some distance from the dwellings of the inhabitants.

The number of cows kept by each dairyman respectively, varies much, one, namely, Mr. West in Paradise-street, had at the time of my visit as many as thirty-one, the others have each from two to eight. One shed, that of Mr. Wright, in Albion-street, is of brick, but all the others are of wood and tile covered, their ventilation and drainage good, and the yards clean and in order. The dairymen seem all impressed with the wholesome opinion, that strict cleanliness is essential to the health of their beasts, and indeed almost all the animals looked in excellent condition, nor did I see a diseased cow among the many which passed under my notice.

The practice of most of the cowkeepers in London is the following. A cow is taken a few days or weeks after calving, and tied up in the cowhouse, and milked regular twice a day. To increase the secretion of the milk a highly stimulating diet is given, and some cows under this treatment will continue giving a supply for eighteen months, two years, or even a longer period. The want of exercise generally causes the flesh of the cow to become loaded with fat, and notwithstanding the pains taken to preserve it, the secretion of the milk in time becomes scanty or ceases altogether. The cow is then sent or sold to the butcher, I cannot imagine that such a practice can either produce good milk or sound meat, and I am happy to say, that about half the cow-owners in Rotherhithe, profiting by the meadows and pastures existing in the locality, turn out their animals almost every day to graze, so that we are really more favoured in this respect than many other parts of the capital.

Upon the whole, my inspection was an exceedingly satisfactory one, as I had but little to find fault with. I would, however, suggest that those cow-keepers, who live in the populous parts of this parish, be compelled to have the dungheap removed every day in summer, and every second day in winter, some of them at present allowing the dung to accumulate for a week untouched, which causes, more especially in warm weather, unpleasant and deleterious effluvia to arise. If this latter point be properly attended to, I do not consider the Rotherhithe cow-

houses as nuisances, and I should not recommend at present any other interference on the part of this Vestry.

Of the places mentioned in the agenda paper for your consideration, but one deserves special mention, viz., St. Anne's-terrace, a row of three houses in Gomm-road. There being no sewer or drain near these dwellings, a large cesspool has been dug in the centre of the back garden of the middle house, to receive the drainage of the whole row. At the time of my examination, it had become full, and the liquid portion of its contents fermenting, from the heat of the weather, was overflowing the wooden covering of the cesspool, and running into the neighbouring gardens. The stench was so great, that several of the inmates of the houses applied personally to me to get it abated. The cesspool has been since emptied, and the evil suspended for a time; proper drainage would be the only really efficient remedy.

Sickness and Mortality.

Forty-four deaths were registered during the month of May. Nine inquests were held; two on persons who died suddenly, from disease, one on an elderly woman, 81, who expired from the effect of accidental burning, and six on persons drowned, by committing suicide or otherwise. The oldest person registered, was a male, aged 91, two females attained each the age of 82. The parish continues healthy, and freer from epidemic disease than it was, perhaps, ever known before. One death from typhoid fever occurred in a child, five years old, but not one took place either from measles, smallpox, scarlet-fever, or hooping-cough.

Yours respectfully,

June, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

EIGHTEENTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

COMPLAINTS are being continually made by the inhabitants of Rotherhithe-street, from the southern extremity of Swan-lane to the "Horns," of the foul smells which they have been obliged to endure for some time past. Nor are these complaints without foundation; for in the above mentioned length of Street, about a mile, there are, besides the Surrey Consumer's Gas Works, no less than nine factories for the fabrication of patent manure, that is to say, nine sources of fetid gases. When these factories are in full activity, as they are from the month of December to July, the stores of stinking ingredients used by the manufacturers,

give a permanent smell to some parts of the street, and when the mixing goes on, the action of the sulphuric acid upon the animal and vegetable matter gives out a stench, which has occasioned headache, nausea, vomiting and cough to some of the inmates of the houses adjacent to the factories. I have made many visits to these places during the past month, and have found no reason to alter the opinion, which I have always hitherto expressed to this Board, in many of my previous reports; *i. e.*, that the making of patent manure in open troughs is always a nuisance, and ought not to be allowed in a crowded neighbourhood.

The only remedy then for the present state of things, appears to be the following; either to take legal proceedings against each manufacturer, individually, for the suppression of the nuisance, or to force him to conduct his operations in closed vessels, and to carry the gases evolved in mixing, through a fire and up a shaft, that they may be thoroughly decomposed before escaping into the atmosphere. I should mention that some of the patent manure manufacturers make sulphuric acid on the premises.

The only case of imperfect drainage mentioned in the Agenda Paper, which requires particular notice, is that of the houses 3 and 4, Goldsworthy-terrace. These two houses have a cesspool in common. At No. 4, there is pan and water supply, at No. 3, a privy without either. Now, it so happens, that the cesspool has no outlet, and fills with the water let off at No. 4, and No. 3 lying rather lower than No. 4, the yard of the former is often inundated. The remedy is obvious, to connect the cesspool with the nearest drain.

The Dodds-place ditch is in a filthy state; when cast during the last month, the effluvium arising from it caused great annoyance to the neighbourhood. Much benefit would accrue, were this ditch oftener flushed with water than it has been of late.

The Railway arches have again been objects of my attention. On the 30th June about one o'clock p.m., the unpleasant smell of the vapour of linseed oil extended for a considerable distance round the arches occupied by Messrs. Pullinger and Rattenbury. On application for admission to the premises, it was refused to the Inspector and myself. Admission was also refused at the arch 501. I have every reason to believe that the arch 501 is either a factory for patent manure, or a warehouse for its ingredients.

An overpowering stench was perceived in and about the Tunnel-square, on the morning of Wednesday, the 24th June. It seemed to come from the north-east, and was referred by many to the Gas Works. I therefore made it my business to visit those works repeatedly, and to spend some hours on the

premises ; I must premise by stating, that no means has yet been discovered of carrying on the process of gas-making without offensive odours. In some respects, great improvements have taken place. Sulphate of iron, mixed with saw-dust, has been substituted as a purifier, instead of milk of lime, which was formerly a source of great grievance to the neighbouring dwelling-houses ; when it was emptied from the purifying vessels into an open pit in the yard, emitting, at the time of its discharge, and afterwards, large quantities of hydrosulphurous gas. I caused a purifier, containing dry lime, and another, containing the sulphate of iron to be stirred up in my presence ; I perceived nothing more than the ordinary smell of gas, and that not so strongly as I expected.

I mentioned in my first Report, that sulphate of ammonia is fabricated on the premises, and described the process. A new branch of industry has sprung up since that Report was written, namely, the making of the muriate, or rather hydrochlorate of ammonia. This salt is produced by causing the gas, immediately after the first process of washing and still containing much ammonia, to pass through a solution of chloride of manganese, in a closed vessel. Decomposition takes place, hydrochlorate of ammonia is formed, and the oxyde of manganese precipitated. The mother liquor, containing the muriate of ammonia in solution, is then drawn off and allowed to settle. It is afterwards brought up in large shallow troughs, lined with lead and heated by pipes, through which hot steam is continually passing, the muriate of ammonia becoming deposited as the water disappears.

The vessel containing the solution of muriate of ammonia was emptied out in my presence. A slight effluvium of sulphurous gases was given off, but it did not last long nor extend itself beyond the building.

A fault was originally committed by the Parish of Rotherhithe, in allowing a Gas Company to establish its works so near the dwellings ; but now that these works are established, I think it a part of my duty to visit them occasionally and report thereon to this Vestry.

I have the pleasing assertion to make, that in no month since I have addressed reports to this Board, has the mortality been so small as in June, 1857 ; only twenty-four deaths having been registered in Rotherhithe, ten less than in the corresponding month of last year, and thirteen under the usual monthly average. The parish continues quite free from epidemic disease, nor has a single death therefrom been registered during the just elapsed months. A few cases of mild diarrhoea have occurred, but no fatal one has been recorded.

Rotherhithe at this moment (30th June, 1857), is remarkably healthy.

During the three months, ending June 30th, two hundred and two children were born, ninety-nine males and one hundred and three females; and one hundred and four deaths, from all causes, were registered, fifty-nine males and forty-five females, giving a majority of ninety-eight more births than deaths.

Yours respectfully,

July, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

NINETEENTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

AMONG the various blocks of houses with which the inhabited part of Rotherhithe is covered, it would be difficult to find, on an equal space of ground, a fouler collection of cesspools than those visited by the Inspector and myself in Swan-lane, Norfolk-place, York-street, York-place, and the west side of Clarence-street, the numbers of the dwellings being given in the Agenda Paper. Almost every cesspool was full, and at Nos. 21 and 22, York-street, the yards were covered with overflowing filth. I tasted the water from the butt at No. 21; it was strongly impregnated with the flavour of drainage. Not a proper ashpit was to be seen at any of these places, the dust and refuse being either scattered over the yard, or thrown into a corner. The superficial drainage appeared to have been originally tolerably good, but at many houses it was choked up. There was water supply everywhere, but the receptacles for the water were generally too small, and often unclean; scarcely a butt had a cover, and the contents were, consequently, exposed to receive all sorts of impurities from the atmosphere. I felt during this examination, that notwithstanding all the past exertions of this Board and its Officers, the task of improving the habitations of the poor, of introducing therein order and cleanliness, and of humanizing their habits of life, is still in its infancy; but, as I have often said before, I consider this humanization of the habits of the people as necessary a part of education as the culture of the understanding.

The house, No. 352, Rotherhithe-wall, is tenanted by a green-grocer; it was formerly a warehouse or factory. In the upper and front part of the warehouse, sleeping-rooms have been built; the back part remains much the same as it was originally, and is used as a stable. The front part of the basement floor, under the sleeping-rooms, is a shop with a small, dark room partitioned off, so that the stable and the dwelling-house

are under one roof. Two horses are kept in the stable, in a corner of which the dung is thrown, and with it all the refuse matter from the greenshop. During the hot weather, this heap exhaled a smell most offensive to the inmates of the neighbouring houses. I entered one of them; the stench in the sitting room was worse than that of a privy. I suggested that the dungheap be immediately removed, and the place washed with chloride of lime, which was done. I must leave to the Vestry, to deal with this matter as they think fit; but, if the stable be allowed at all, the dung ought to be carted away, and the place purified daily with chloride of lime or zinc.

I feel it my duty to make one remark before leaving the subject. I asked the occupier about the health of his family; he told me at once that only those children that came to the place with him were still alive. Every child born in this locality (three in number) had died in early infancy; for the very simple reason that adults and large children could escape occasionally from such an atmosphere, while the poor infants, from the moment of their birth, inhaled the fatal exhalations of decomposing animal and vegetable matter. The mortality of young children may always be considered as one of the best indexes of the sanitary condition of any population.

At the request of the Vestry Clerk, I examined, on the 25th of July, the three tenements—Nos. 15, 16, and 17, Rotherhithe New-road, near the Railway arches. A large cesspool has been dug in the garden of the middle house, (No. 16), to receive the drainage of all three, and covered with boards and earth. Having become full and the contents fermenting, from the heat of the sun, the garden of No. 16 was covered with sewage, and offered to the eye a frightful mass of putrescence. The inhalation of the pestilential vapours arising from such a nuisance had, at the time of my visit, already begun its work. Three children at No. 16 had been affected with severe diarrhœa. A notice was immediately served.

The stench from two street gullies in Clarence-street, has been much complained of, I beg to submit the propriety of trapping them, to the favourable consideration of the Board.

The putrid smell of the Thames water has been noted in several of the public papers, and among others, in the weekly reports of the Registrar-general, and has undoubtedly, been remarked by many of the gentlemen here present. I must again mention that the large population of Hanover-street, *have no water supply except from a tidal well*, and unless they content themselves with stinking Thames water, must beg or steal all they consume. On the 27th July, I examined some of the water

from the well, it smelt as if it had been recently dipped from a sewer.

The whole water supply of Western Rotherhithe has, during the past month, been often scanty and deficient. The high cisterns frequently receiving no water for several days together.

It appears to me that more pressure is required at the central works, that the mains in this Parish are generally rather too small, and that much water is wasted by the carelessness of the inhabitants themselves.

Let me add, however, in justice to the Southwark and Vauxhall Company, that their water is of good quality. In the eastern or lower district which receives its mains from the Kent Water Works, the water is also of good quality, and no complaints are ever heard about the supply being defective.

Under the Railway arches, the nuisances seem somewhat abated. The only stench perceived by me on the 27th July, was a strong odour of sugar scum issuing from some of the arches.

Complaints have been often made of the smell of the mud of the mill-stream between Mill-pond Bridge and the Surrey Mills. Into this portion of the stream is discharged the drainage of about thirty-three houses; namely, of all the east side of West Lane, of West-place, of Iphigenia Cottages, of three houses in Paradise-street, and of all the west side of Gillam's-court, except one house. The mud is, in consequence, a mass of fermenting sewage. The house, No. 26, Gillam's-court, is the only one properly drained, the closet has a pan and water supply, and appended to it an excellent ashpit. It might be taken as a model of the manner in which small dwellings should be fitted up with regard to these matters.

The prevalent disease during July was, and still continues to be, diarrhœa, the Parish being perfectly free from all other epidemics. Nine persons have succumbed to that complaint, one being registered as dying from choleraic diarrhœa, and one from cholera infantum, so that above one-fourth of the whole mortality of the month has been occasioned by diarrhœa; the number of deaths registered being thirty-five, still under the average monthly death rate, and *ten* less than in the corresponding month of the year 1856. The month of July having in that year been in Rotherhithe one of the most unhealthy.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

August, 1857.

TWENTIETH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

If a person who had been absent from Rotherhithe for the last few years was at present to visit it, he could not fail to be struck with the improvements which have taken place in its general aspect by the filling up of some of the many ditches and open sewers which formerly intersected it in every direction. There is no doubt that to this and other measures of sanitary reform are mainly attributable, the amended health of the place, the almost entire absence of fever, and the diminished severity of epidemic disease, a statement which is proved by the concurrent testimony of the medical practitioners, and by the weekly returns of the Registrar-general. Rotherhithe, however, still contains three of the foulest ditches in the whole neighbourhood of London—namely, the Earle Sewer, the Surrey Mills, and the King's Mills tidal streams. Of the two former, I have spoken in my previous reports; my business on this occasion is with the King's Mills stream only. This watercourse, as marked on the maps, is about three miles in length, but as some of its numerous windings have been filled up or become dry, a mile and a half may be about its present extent. It has not been cleansed for these ten years, and the mud in all parts of it is several feet in thickness. The tide not being now let in from the river either so often or so abundantly as formerly, the water in the remote ramifications of the stream scarcely covers the mud, is hardly ever properly renewed, stagnates, and putrifies. The worst portion, however, is from the outlet into the Thames to the first division into two main branches, a distance of about six hundred feet. The western embankment at this spot, is formed by the premises of the Surrey Consumers' Gas Company, and their refuse water and tar find their way into the bed of the watercourse. The family of Mr. Latreille, whose house is situated near the outlet into the Thames, have much suffered in health from the stench generated when the pond is emptied. I consider the King's Mills Stream a nuisance of the worst kind, and as many complaints have been made to me about it, I thought it advisable to bring it at once under the notice of this Vestry.

In Wellington-street, Albion-street, there is, after rain, a pool of stagnant water, from which, during the hot weather, a disagreeable stench arises.

No. 23, Queen-street is an overcrowded house, its six rooms being occupied by five families, in all twenty-two people. For all these there was a small water-butt, holding about fifty gallons; and every other thing conducing to comfort or convenience, cleanliness or health, shamefully deficient.

The numerous houses mentioned in the Agenda Paper have been visited by the Inspector and myself, and notices served.

Two of them, however, deserve special remark, namely, Nos. 4 and 5, Queen-street. The drainage of these two dwellings runs from the back to the front, through an open wooden trough under the floor of the lower rooms, and discharges itself by a sort of pigeon-hole in the wall into the street; the neighbours and passengers complain of the stench generated by the drainage stagnating on the pavement and in the gutter.

I beg earnestly again to direct the attention of the Inspecting Committee of the Western District to a row of eight two-roomed tenements, called Adam's-place. These tenements are quite unventilated, there being no openings in any of them, except a window and a door on the groundfloor and a window on the first floor, all in front of each house. Before each house is a yard, about twelve or thirteen feet long and ten broad; and at its extremity, furthest removed from the dwelling, a privy. As almost every yard is inundated from the overflowing of the cesspool, and in one or two cases, the filth is literally penetrating into the ground floor of the houses, every breath inhaled by the inmates must be charged with the effluvia arising from the liquid pollution. *The houses have no water supply whatever.* This row is a disgrace to the owners whoever they may be; for, notwithstanding many warnings, they have heartlessly left a mass of putrefaction to bake for months in the sun of this tropical summer, at the risk of the health of the inhabitants, who are composed of the poorest class; and who, in their utter helplessness to better, by any effort of their own, the condition of their dwellings, are continually making appeals to your officers.

At the back of the houses, 380, 381, and 382, Rotherhithe-wall, there is a piece of ground measuring fifty feet north and south, by about thirty-nine east and west, with a large shed at its southern extremity. In the middle has been erected a temporary tent or awning. This ground is occupied by a sack and bag merchant. The bags repaired there have generally contained rapeseed, linseed, rice, or other grain. Great complaints have been made of this place, and consequently I have frequently visited it. The rape and linseed fall from the bags on to the ground, which is unpaved, lie there and rot; and after a shower of rain, the stench is most offensive.

I borrowed a small scoop from a neighbouring grocer, and with it took up a quantity of the earth; *there were almost as many maggots as there were seeds; it was a mass of living and crawling putrefaction.* Nor is this all; clouds of dust issue from the bags, to the great annoyance of the neighbouring

tradesmen, filling their dwellings and injuring their goods. From seventy to one hundred females, women and girls, principally Irish, are employed in this locality, and may be seen, at any hour of the day, squatting about the yard and mending the bags. The obscene language and dirty habits of these women are a source of disgust to the whole neighbourhood.

There is no convenience to the yard and, at the time of my visits in the early part of the month, *the ladies* were in the habit of using for such a purpose a piece of ground, exposed to view on every side, about fifteen feet square, and situated to the south of the yard above described. On this spot, public decency was violated fifty times a day; and the secondary nuisance arising therefrom was as bad or worse than the original one.

It seems ludicrous to serve a notice for a stopped drain or full cesspool, if such a *human piggery* as the one above delineated is to be tolerated in one of the most populous parts of the parish.

I have confined my observations to the nuisance, and have not touched upon the demoralizing effect that such indelicacies must produce, among the younger branches of those who work on the establishment.

The number of deaths registered during last month, was thirty-nine, rather above the average monthly mortality, but still ten under the corresponding month of last year. Nine deaths have occurred from diarrhœa, the parish being entirely free from all other epidemic disease. The number of cases of diarrhœa have, however, considerably diminished during the last week.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

September, 1857.

TWENTY-FIRST REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

As the time for licensing slaughter-houses is now approaching, at the request of the Vestry-clerk (Mr. Hawks), I have carefully examined all the places used in Rotherhithe for the slaughter of cattle.

Twelve licences were granted last year, and eleven of the persons who obtained them are again applicants. One slaughter-house of the number, namely, that in Elephant-lane, attached to the premises formerly occupied by Mr. Onion, being shut up. They are generally in good order, and what few deficiencies existed in some have been, or are being, corrected, under my

supervision; and, with due submission to this Board, I can see no objection to a renewal of the licenses.

Two other butchers, besides the eleven above-mentioned, have made application for licenses, viz., Mr. Adams, of Lower York-street, and Mr. Austin, of Rotherhithe-wall; the slaughter-house of the former being at the back of his dwelling, that of the latter in Seven-step-alley. Both these places are clean, stone-paved, with good water supply, ventilation, and apparatus, and the neighbourhood round them is not overcrowded. I beg, therefore, to recommend them to the favour of the Vestry.

There are no underground slaughter-houses in Rotherhithe.

The numerous houses, mentioned in the Agenda Paper, either have full cesspools connected with them, or their drainage is imperfect. The following, however, deserve particular mention.

At No. 8, Swan-lane, there is no privy accommodation whatever; the inmates of the house are obliged to use the closet of a neighbour. At the White Cottage in Adam's-gardens, the privy is in a miserably filthy and dilapidated state; and, as there is no drain on the premises, all the slops are thrown into the open road.

At Nos. 1, 2, and 3, Ivy-place, the cesspools are full, and the people complain of the scantiness of the water supply, a complaint which I am often obliged to hear in various parts of upper Rotherhithe. The Southwark and Vauxhall Company will, undoubtedly, have to make extensive alterations to meet the growing wants of an increasing population.

The water-closets of each of the tenements 4 and 5, Paradise-place, is a sort of cupboard, situated at the top of the house. A cistern is supposed to supply each closet, but as the cistern itself only receives the rain which runs from the roof, the water supply is desultory and irregular. The pipe also conveying the solid and liquid matter down to a drain under the flooring of the houses is leaky, and the lower part of the houses, more especially of No. 4, is often covered with liquid sewage, and smells abominably. The remedy for such a state of things would be either to put a trap and pan to the present closets and carry to the cisterns a proper and regular supply of water, or better still, to build new water-closets on some part of the premises.

At the back of the yards of the houses, from 4 to 11, West-lane, there is an alley or passage between the yards and the neighbouring mill-stream. This alley is a receptacle for all sorts of offal, and is often in a most disgusting state. The Inspector and myself have often visited the spot, and always found it in the same condition. The houses from 4 to 11, West-lane,

being tenanted by a very poor and improvident class of persons, I would suggest that some steps be taken to keep the passage clear and free from nuisance.

The houses on the east side of Berkeley-street have no drainage, all the refuse water, slops, soapsuds, &c., being thrown or run into a small ditch at the back of the yards, and located on the land of a market gardener. In the course of time the ditch has become full of stagnant sewage, and the stench arising therefrom during the summer caused annoyance to the dwellers in Berkeley-street and Chester-terrace. The houses ought to be drained into the neighbouring sewer, and I am credibly informed, that on service of a notice, steps were immediately taken by the landlord to that effect.

The sack merchant, spoken of in my last Report, on receiving a notice from this Vestry, struck his tent, and evacuated with all his troop, sacks, bags, and baggage the position which he had so long occupied on Rotherhithe-wall, to the great discomfort of his neighbours.

Forty deaths were registered in this parish during the month of September, eight of these were from diarrhœa and dysentery; of the eight, six were children, one an adult, and the other an elderly female aged 83. Two cases of typhoid fever have proved fatal; one of these, a single person aged 18, imported it with her from Havre-de-Grace (France), where she had been in service. In the other case, a married woman of 24, the malady seems to have been generated in this locality. She resided in Swan-lane, about fifty feet from that part of the King's-mills' stream, which was described in my last Report, as one of the greatest nuisances in Rotherhithe, or any other part of the metropolis.

The other epidemics, namely, measles, scarlatina, whooping-cough, and small-pox, have been absent from the neighbourhood during the whole of the summer, no death from any of them having been recorded since April last. I consider that at this present time (1st October, 1857), the number of cases of illness in Rotherhithe is under the average, and at the same time, I must state, that since April it has been freer from the four epidemics above-named, than I have ever before known it. Long may it continue so.

During the quarter ending October 1st, 1857, one hundred and fourteen persons died, fifty-nine males, and fifty-five females; and there were born one hundred and ninety-three children, ninety-eight males and ninety-five females, the excess of births over deaths, being seventy-nine.

October, 1857.

Yours respectfully,
W. MURDOCH.

TWENTY-SECOND REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR Officers have always considered it their first and most important duty, to penetrate into the dwellings of the humbler classes, and to introduce therein, as much as possible, cleanliness and order, without which all attempts at social improvement must necessarily fail. Hanover-street, inhabited by the poorest people in Rotherhithe, has often been to them an object of solicitude. This street, sloping southwards down from the bank of the river consists with its appendage, Hanover-court, of about thirty-eight houses, two of which at the north end, are of modern construction, the remaining thirty-six are exceedingly old and inconveniently built. As a correspondence relative to the state of this property has recently taken place between the Vestry Clerk and the freeholder, the Inspector and myself were induced to examine it, not cursorily and superficially, but by a visitation from house to house, noting down the merits and demerits of the place, and the result of our observations I have condensed in the following report.

The houses, though old and out of repair, are tenantable, and with few exceptions, wind and water-tight, and not in worse condition than dwellings in other parts of the metropolis occupied by a similar class of population. The main-drainage of the street is excellent, a new sewer having lately been constructed by order of this Vestry. The drainage of the houses has also been, in every case, connected with the sewer, some few of the drains are untrapped, but the greater part of them have siphon-traps of glazed pottery with a coverlid of wood, a mode of trapping which appears fragile and imperfect.

The privies are of wood, all in a dilapidated condition and without fastenings. A wooden button on the outside, and a piece of string on the inside of the doors, may be seen here and there. The leaseholder declares that he cannot employ metal as it speedily disappears from the premises. The privies are all fitted with pans and communicate with the sewer, but have no proper water supply; indeed there is not a cistern or water-butt in the whole street.

Heaps of ashes are strewn about the yards, which are in a filthy state, the heap in the yard being the receptacle for all the refuse of the house. Much complaint is made of the neglect of the scavengers, who, according to the statement of the leaseholder, have not regularly and properly removed the dust, and have not put a broom on the surface of the street since February last. The cleansing has been entirely done by himself and the tenants.

The water supply of Hanover-street is good, the water having been carried into every yard in Hanover-street, and in Hanover-court where the tenements have no yards, the tap is placed under the window of the ground-floor. As in the latter case, there is no suitable receiving vessel; I am afraid that in time, the houses will become damp and unwholesome. All the receptacles for water are of the most miserable kind imaginable, pails, washing-tubs, earthenware pans, and butter-firkins supplying the place of butts and cisterns.

Hanover-street has certainly improved under the management of the present proprietor, and the inhabitants get now, wholesome water to use and drink, which alone compensates for and palliates many evils. Even a short time ago, they had no water, but from a tidal pump, and the liquid after standing a few hours, smelt as I said in one of my former reports—as if it had been dipped from a sewer.

To resume, in a few words, the main points are good, the defects are in the details. At the back of the dwellings, on both sides of the street, there is a large open space, which allows free circulation of air, and accounts to a certain extent, for the statements I am about to make.

This street has been during the last two years, the healthiest in Rotherhithe, and it would be difficult to find a more healthful place in the whole metropolis. Medical orders are rarely given by the relieving Officer for the inhabitants; and in the year 1854, only one person died there of cholera; but, let numbers speak. The population of Hanover-street, taken in September, 1853, was seventy-nine males, ninety-three females, and one hundred and seventy-five children of both sexes, in all, three hundred and forty-seven. On the 30th October, of the present year, it amounted to sixty-four males, seventy-four females, and one hundred and forty-one children, in all, two hundred and seventy-nine; so that we may safely take the average population at about three hundred. During the last two years, only two have died, both children; giving a mortality of one per annum, or less than four in the thousand. Now, the average mortality in the metropolis, is about twenty-three in the thousand; in the healthiest country districts, about twelve; and in all England, nineteen. Hanover-street, then, deservedly merits the name given to it—the “Vale of Health.” The place is swarming with children, about half of whom were barefooted, and many, no doubt, on short allowance, yet they looked comely, healthy, and hardy, and might be taken as good specimens of the water-side population.

At 28, Princes Street, besides a full cesspool, and a choked drain, there is in the washhouse, a pool of stagnant sewage.

All the inmates of the place, complain of sickness and headache, and a woman employed to wash clothes on the premises, was from the effect of the stench, suddenly seized with vomiting and purging, and forced to leave her work. She was in perfect health on entering the locality. Two children died in this house during the summer from diarrhœa. This nuisance requires immediate remedy.

No. 2, Albert-place, Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 15, Bedford-place, and No. 15, Lower Neptune-street, are cases of imperfect drainage, and full cesspools. Although the mortality of the last month be considerably under the average, thirty-one deaths only having been registered, the Parish of Rotherhithe is hardly so healthy as it was in September. One death from whooping-cough and three from fever being recorded. Measles too, have re-appeared; a woman of Hanover-street, brought the disease with her from Kent, where she had been hopping; and from Hanover-street it has spread into the neighbouring districts of Swan-lane and Clarence-street. No fatal case has yet occurred. No death has been registered from scarlatina, smallpox, or diarrhœa. A lad, aged 18, died a few days ago from cholera in twelve hours, on board the Swedish Ship, "Sophia," lying in the Commercial Docks. She came from Gottenberg. The cholera has always been brought into Great Britain from the Baltic Ports, and seamen on shipboard in vessels from these Ports lying in the Thames or Docks, have mostly, hitherto, been among the first attacked.

Of the remote cause of cholera we know nothing, nor has science as yet unravelled the essential nature of it, or the reason why it always travels in one direction from east to west. But of the means of preventing cholera, much is known. There are certain circumstances favourable to its development, receptive influences, as they have been justly called, and where these are wanting, the disease either does not appear at all, or exercises more mildly its baneful influence. These may be called proximate causes, and are quite under human control; they relate either to the locality or to the individual.

In regard to locality, bad drainage, and bad water, are universally acknowledged to be the circumstances most propitious to the birth and propagation of cholera. In Rotherhithe, the drainage is better, and the water supply of purer quality than they have ever hitherto been, therefore, we are better prepared to receive the pestilence than heretofore. It were useless to repeat my previous reports by exhibiting to you how much these receptive influences gave, in this Parish, quite different characters to the epidemics of 1849 and of 1854.

With regard to the individual, I can only say that the best

preventatives of cholera are a cheerful mind and a temperate life ; and, were I to write a book, I could not say more. Fear, by depressing the powers of the mind and body, favours the reception of the disease. Systematic rules of diet have been laid down. I cannot approve of them ; surely that diet is the best which keeps a man in a healthy state, and which enables him to pass comfortably through the daily wear and tear of life, and must, necessarily, be as variable as the constitution of every individual ; and every one who observes himself, must certainly know what that diet, is or should be. All sudden changes of food in time of cholera, are imprudent and dangerous.

But there is a class of men particularly liable to the malady, and to whom I would give a word of advice (for this report will go before the public), I mean the habitual drinkers of ardent spirits. In the experience of three epidemics which I have witnessed, one in France, and two in England ; I have invariably found that they are the first, yes, the very first victims of cholera. Indeed, it stands to reason that it should be so. Whatever cholera may be, its first symptoms show themselves in the abdominal viscera, and what is the state of these viscera in the confirmed spirit-drinker ? His stomach is perpetually congested, his appetite gone ; his liver, like the worm of a whiskey-still, has alcohol always passing through it, and is generally functionally, and often organically diseased, and makes him a ready recipient for the complaint. Every dram of raw spirit is, in time of epidemic, a predisposing cause of cholera, and let those of our industrious classes who are fond of morning potations, take timely advice—*There is death in the cup.*

Yours respectfully,

November, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

TWENTY-THIRD REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

VARIOUS complaints having been made to me, by inhabitants of the part of Rotherhithe called Jamaica Level, and by owners of property in that district, of an intolerable nuisance occasioned by the casting of the mud of the mill-stream near the houses. I proceeded thither on the 12th November, and on several other occasions, and can state the following facts ; namely, that the mud of the main channel, from its southern extremity, opposite Cork's-garden to a spot near Moreton-cottages, had been recently cast up. Part of it had been thrown against the western bank, where there is a public footway, but not on the footway, and only in sufficient quantity to mend the gaps that time had made on the

edge of the bank, near the stream. On the eastern embankment, the mud had been piled up in heaps, in different places; indeed the greater part of what had been removed from the bed of the water-course had been thrown there. In Glebe-terrace, and thereabouts, it had been projected within a few feet of the dwellings; and in Moreton-terrace, so close to the walls and doors of the houses, that the pathway before them was literally covered with it, and the inmates forced to walk in and over the mud to get to and from their houses. Although the weather was cold at the time of my examinations, this accumulation of solid sewage, the settlements of a quarter of a century or more, exhaled a faint, sickening smell. No nuisance is more likely to generate disease than such a mass of decomposing organic filth. Ague and typhoid fever are likely to be engendered from such a cause, there being no fact in the whole range of medical science more clearly established, and more universally admitted, than *that the effluvia from the mud of ponds and ditches is a subtle poison, always injurious, and often fatal, to the human constitution.*

At the back of Clare-hall-cottages, there is a large dustbin, which stands away from the tenements, and receives the ashes and refuse of several of them. The inmates complain that the scavengers do not remove the dust sufficiently often. I think that the contents of the dustbin ought to be carted away regularly once a week; and I have, through Mr. Sanders, the inspector, called thereto the attention of the contractor.

At No. 12, Neptune-street, a house let out in lodgings and containing seventeen inmates; there is no privy and no drainage. I shall not attempt to describe the abominations of the back premises, in consequence of these defects; the case appears urgent, and wanting immediate remedy. This house has been for a long time in a deplorable condition, and has been frequently visited and reported on before.

At Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, Gardiner-row, and 15, 16, 17, Debenham-row, Rotherhithe New-road; cesspools have been dug in the gardens, to receive the drainage of the houses. The quantity of liquid thrown down and the storm-waters soon fill the cesspools, which overflow, and convert the yards into lakes and ponds of sewage. There being no sewer in the neighbourhood, the only remedy for such a state appears to be, a frequent cleansing of the cesspools, unless the landlords be allowed to drain into a neighbouring open ditch. However undesirable draining into open ditches may be, in the above-mentioned case, it would be infinitely preferable to what at present exists, by carrying the sewage further away from the dwellings, and into an open space, where the effluvia becoming diluted would, in all probability, be harmless.

An open ditch, beginning by a dead head at the southern extremity of Berkeley-street, after running a course of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred yards, discharges itself into the sewer in Swan-lane. The ditch itself is clean and without smell, and receives the drainage of ten small houses. It is a nuisance certainly, as all open ditches are; but a very small one, compared to the King's-mills stream, which is within a few yards of it, and on whose nearly stagnant water, green slime, mud, and putrefying vegetable matter, I have often commented in my former reports.

Forty-three deaths were registered in Rotherhithe during November; the monthly mortality having been increased by six inquests. The beginning of winter has had its usual effects upon the aged, the death of no less than ten persons above the age of 70 having been recorded; namely, six between the ages of 70 and 80; three, between eighty and ninety; and one of a nonagenarian, the widow of a mariner, residing in Paradise-street. The epidemics prevalent are whooping-cough and measles; four deaths have been caused by the former, and one by the latter.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

December, 1857.

TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

THE manufacture of patent manure in open vessels, is always a nuisance, but varying in degree according to the materials employed.

The worst kinds of effluvia are generated by the action of sulphuric acid upon raw bones, blood, pieces of skin, soot, sugar-scum, and such-like ingredients. A strong acid smell also always pervades the atmosphere in the neighbourhood of the factories, while the mixing is going on. The sulphuric acid itself, being but slightly volatile, I suspect that particles of it are carried up by the numerous gases evolved in the process. These gases are injurious to the health; many persons have complained of nausea and headache, from their effects; the acid fumes, too, are highly irritating to individuals with the least tendency to cough, or to any bronchial affection.

The manufacture of patent manure has, however, of late, become an important branch of industry in Rotherhithe, and gives employment to a considerable number of the poorest class of the labouring population. It never has been the intention of any person connected with this Vestry, either to

annoy the manufacturers or injure the labouring classes ; but, at the same time, it is the duty of the officers to listen to all reasonable complaints of the inhabitants.

Now, the comfort of the inhabitants, and the toleration of patent manure factories may be perfectly reconciled, by conducting the process of manufacture in closed vessels, instead of open troughs. The possibility of so doing was hinted at by me in one of my previous reports. The idea was, at the time, treated with derision by some gentlemen engaged in the trade, as being quite impracticable. That it is, however, practical and practised, may be witnessed by any one who chooses to visit the factory of Messrs. Brown and Co. at Globe-stairs.

A stout cylindric vessel, in shape resembling a tar-barrel has been constructed under the superintendence of the manager. On one side of it is a flap or door which can be hermetically closed and bolted ; this cylinder is destined to revolve, and one of the spindles on which it turns is hollow, and communicates with a tube. The tube discharges itself into the shaft, to the top of which is eighty feet above the level of the earth. The vessel holds five hundred weight, is easily charged, and discharged by opening the flap, and when charged is made to revolve by steam-power, eighteen or twenty times. By these revolutions the stuff is thoroughly mixed and the manure perfected. The gases given off during the operation escape through the spindle and tube into the shaft, and disperse themselves high up in the atmosphere. The compound is better mixed than when done in the usual way, time, labour and money are also saved.

In consequence of a letter addressed to me in the beginning of the month, complaining of the stench emanating from the premises of Messrs. Ashton and Proctor, near Lavender Dock, I visited them. The men were making manure in open vessels, and the smell in the street was so offensive, that remarks thereon were uttered by almost every passenger. A few days after my visit the nuisance was discontinued.

To conclude, I am of opinion that patent manure may be made in properly closed vessels without nuisance, and that all manufacturers of that article, whose premises are offensive to the neighbouring inhabitants, should be compelled to erect proper machinery for conducting the operation of mixing in such a manner that the fetid gases exhaled therefrom be carried into a high shaft, and if they are still found to be a nuisance, that they be burned by passing through a coke fire before escaping into the air.

A statement was made at the last meeting of this Board, that foul smells, injurious to the health of the neighbours, were given out from the premises 47 and 48, Lower Queen-street, and that

after rain, there existed in the back yards, pools of stagnant water. I visited this place six times in rainy and dry weather. The drains are untrapped, and there is a pan, but no water supply to the the closet. The yards in other respects are clean and orderly, I never could perceive any foul smell, or did I observe any pool of stagnant water, and in this statement I am borne out by the testimony of the Surveyor and other Officers of this Vestry.

At the Bell public-house in Church-street, the water finds its way occasionally into the cellar. It seems to have some connection with the high level sewer, which runs in front of the house.

At No. 3, Baltic-place, there is a full cesspool and no drainage.

My attention has again been directed to the piggery on Debnam's ground. During the winter months there is little or no smell, but I fear that with the return of spring the nuisance will reappear.

Some loads of fish manure had been shot on garden ground by the road-side near the Railway Arches, Rotherhithe New-road. On the service of a notice they were at once removed.

Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, Kenning's-buildings, were reported to me by the Inspector, as being in a filthy and dilapidated state. On the 7th of December we went to examine them. Nothing was as it ought to be, the rooms were all dirty, and two of the houses overcrowded, there being eleven inmates at No. 2 in a three-roomed house, and twelve at No. 3 in a two-roomed house, viz.:—two families, one of six persons in the room below, and one of six in the room above.

The back yards of the four houses all communicate, and there had been originally two privies, but one of them had become a mere framework, without door or seat, and the second had no door and only half a seat. There were *strong* proofs of the consequences of such a state of things. The floor of a neighbouring washhouse was covered with human filth, which was also indiscriminately scattered about the yards; add to this, every species of garbage, ashes, potato-parings, cabbage-leaves, a dead cat, and half a bushel of stinking sprats, and some idea may be formed of this nest of abominations. The sprats were evidently a part of the spoiled stock-in-trade of the itinerant fish-vender, residing at No. 3. I need not say, that such uncleanness must cause and foster moral degradation and impurity.

No time was lost in serving notices, and it is pleasing to be able to state, the premises at this moment are being cleansed and undergoing repair.

Fifty-four deaths were registered in December, the number being increased by several inquests. Twenty-eight deaths, above

half the number were from diseases of the lungs and air-passages. Hooping-cough and measles are very prevalent. One child aged 8, died of inflammation of the brain, in consequence of the accidental insertion of a pea into the ear.

During the quarter ending December 31st, 1857, there died in Rotherhithe one hundred and twenty-five persons, viz.:—sixty-three males, and sixty-two females; and there were born one hundred and ninety-three children, viz.:—one hundred and twelve males, and eighty-one females, the excess of births over deaths being sixty-eight.

January, 1858.

Yours respectfully,
W. MURDOCH.

TWENTY-FIFTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

IN my last Report it was stated, that no distinct kinds of noxious gases proceed from the patent manure factories, viz:—
1st. Sulphuretted and phosphuretted hydrogen, and other stinking effluvia, which can be tasted as well as smelt, and which give rise in those who are not accustomed to them, after breathing them for a short time, to loss of appetite, nausea, and headache.
2nd. The acid fumes, whose action upon the respiratory organs is immediate, causing a violent cough and feeling of suffocation. Any passenger in Rotherhithe-street might have witnessed the truth of this last statement on Monday, 18th January last, when the mixing was in full operation within the premises of Messrs. Miller and Johnson.

The acid vapour, escaping from every aperture of the factory, was drifted down the street by a north-westerly wind; and all persons coming up the street, on their arrival at the east end of the Surrey Canal-bridge, were at once seized with cough, which continued for some time after.

I entered the premises twice in an hour, and caused a notice to be served. A promise was obtained that the nuisance should not again occur; but if it does occur, I am only expressing the opinion of every individual who felt the effects of it on that day, when I say that *it ought to be put down at any cost.*

At a block of houses called Garden-row, near the Rotherhithe New-road, there is no drainage whatever. Some of the cess-pools are overflowing, and the inmates of the dwellings have cut grooves in the yards, to carry off their waste water, which has accumulated, and forms a stagnant ditch at the back of No. 6.

There is no sewer near the houses, and I must leave to the better judgment of the Surveyor how the difficulty is to be dealt with.

At Nos. 7 and 8, Adam's-gardens, the back yards form a square of which the side is about seven feet; one-third of this small space is occupied by the privy and water-butt. The yards are literally covered with liquid sewage, which filters through a wall into the garden of No. 86, Adam-street. According to the representations of the inmates of No. 7, the water in the butts always tastes of drainage, and the house No. 7, also, often smells from the leakage of a small pipe which passes under the flooring to carry off the refuse water and slops from the two houses into the drain in front.

At Nos. 2 and 3, George-street, there is every facility for drainage, but the closets and drains have not yet been connected with the new sewer. At Luck's-tenements, the privies are near the houses, and without proper drainage.

An analysis by Dr. R. D. Thompson of the waters which were furnished by the eight London Water Companies, during November and December, 1857, was published in the weekly return of the Registrar-general of January 9th, in the present year. The following remarks are made:—"Such analyses supply the best tests of the quality of the water with which the people of London are supplied. It will be observed that the waters are much less impure than they were formerly, but that there are still great differences and still room for further improvement."

I shall only speak here of the Southwark and Kent Water Companies, the former supplying the western, and the latter, the eastern division of this Parish.

	NOVEMBER.		DECEMBER.	
	PER GALLON.		PER GALLON.	
	Total Impurity.	Organic Impurity.	Total Impurity.	Organic Impurity.
SOUTHWARK.	gr. 21·56.	gr. 1·48.	gr. 20·80.	·56.
KENT.	gr. 30·16.	gr. 4·40.	gr. 26·36.	2·65.

Distilled water is taken as the standard of purity. But distilled water containing neither air, nor salts of any kind, is flat and insipid. Now, if by impurity is meant certain salts of lime and soda, which are found in very small quantity in all stream waters, I must say that it is questionable whether without them the water would be so potable as at present. Even the naturally distilled waters, which

contain no impurity, except what they dissolve in falling through the air, as rain and snow-waters, have never been largely used by mankind when others could be procured. The latter (snow-water) even has been said to have been found irritating to the lips, gums, and mouth of arctic travellers, who have been forced to drink it for any length of time. Men have in all ages always preferred for general use, where they could procure them, the waters of brooks, streams, and rivers (of course, they should be untainted by drainage). Exposed to the light of day and the atmosphere, and beaten about by the winds, they contain more air than other waters, which imparts to them briskness and freshness, as the *very small* proportion of salts of lime and soda imparts flavour.

The chemists would render a service, were they to tell us what quantity of these latter, good drinkable water ought to contain, that we might take such as a standard of comparison as well as distilled water.

As to the organic matter, a little of it also exists in all stream water, but when we find as in one of the tables, only about half a grain to a gallon of fluid, we must not be over fastidious, but congratulate ourselves on the immense improvement in this matter which has taken place of late. Only a few years ago, the water forced into our dwellings by the Southwark Company, abounded (particularly during the summer months,) with organic matter, dead and living, not with hard-named microscopic and infinitesimal animalculi, but with insects as big as fleas, with red worms half an inch long, with shrimps and occasionally, small eels, which were dexterous enough to wriggle themselves through the Company's filtering apparatus.

The public at large, and the medical profession more particularly, owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. R. D. Thompson, for his useful analysis.

Until of late, in Rotherhithe, many persons used, and even now, some use well-water. Superficial springs in large cities, are apt to be contaminated by sewage from dunghills, ditches, sewers and churchyards, and thereby become dangerously unwholesome. Facts proving this statement have recently occurred; it is even said, that a certain spring in London, renowned for its refreshing coolness in the summer-months, owes its properties to the nitrate of potass washed into the spring by the rains from the organic remains in a neighbouring churchyard. An example from our own neighbourhood will better illustrate this subject. Some years ago, a large mass of the refuse matter from the fabrication of oil gas, was buried in a hole on the Tunnel Company's premises in Rotherhithe-street. The oily and tarry matter of this refuse, soon found its way into a neighbouring spring, which supplied the houses from 316 to 327, Rotherhithe-street. The water acquired a horrible taste of tar, which it retained

for several months, notwithstanding that considerable efforts were made to remedy it. Many of the superficial springs in Rotherhithe, are strongly impregnated with salts of iron.

During the past month, no less than sixty-eight deaths were registered, the largest monthly mortality recorded for several years. The increase is entirely due to an epidemic of measles, complicated with inflammatory affections of the lungs, and air passages, and which has carried off no less than eighteen children. I noticed in a previous report, that Rotherhithe had been for six months, almost entirely free from epidemic disease, and that the measles were imported into Hanover-street, by an Irishwoman on her return from hopping in Kent. From Hanover-street, the malady has spread itself all over the parish, and carried grief into the bosom of many families. There have been also two deaths from fever ; one from hooping cough, and one from scarlatina.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

Februry, 1858.

TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,

Repeated complaints have been made to me of the stench arising from the Surrey Consumers' Gas Works in Rotherhithe-street, to which I must give the answer, given by me on a former occasion under similar circumstances, namely, that no method has yet been discovered of carrying on the fabrication of coal-gas without smell, that almost every operation in gas making, such as drawing the retorts, emptying the purifiers, slaking the coke, &c., &c., is accompanied by hydro-sulphurous exhalations ; that these exhalations circulate in the atmosphere round the factory, and are transported some distance by the winds, and that the hydro-sulphurous gas acts upon all metallic substances, covering them with a black coating, and is fatal to vegetable life, hence the disease and death of nearly all plants in the immediate neighbourhood of gas works. *Gas factories ought never to be allowed near houses*, but as they are there, and established by Act of Parliament, all that a sanitary officer can do, is to exercise vigilance, and prevent as much as possible, smells arising from neglect or not immediately connected with the legitimate process of gas making.

Gas companies, like other manufacturers, naturally seek to turn to account all their products, hence the making of the sulphate and the muriate of ammonia, described in my previous reports. Sulphate of ammonia is still made at the Surrey Consumers' Gas Works, and I have reason to believe, that some of the stench complained of,

have arisen from the processes employed in obtaining it. When the ammoniacal liquor is first saturated with the sulphuric acid in a closed tank, larger quantities of hydro-sulphurous gas, and hydro-sulphate of ammonia are given off; they ascend through a tube into the shaft, and being rather heavier than the atmosphere, fall in damp, still weather about the neighbourhood of the factory.

One of the tanks, too, about a month ago, had become leaky, and the liquid had run, unperceived, into a water-closet; a man entering the closet without suspicion of danger, fell senseless at the door, and was with difficulty rescued from death.

This leakage had been going on for some time, and had given rise to the filthy smell complained of about that period. The leakage has since been stopped, and at the time of my visit, on the 16th February, the works had no more smell than gas works generally have, and the evaporation of the mother liquor, containing the sulphate of ammonia could not be smelt outside of the building.

Several of the nuisances formerly complained of have entirely ceased. The muriate of ammonia is no longer made, not from any regard to the noses and health of the inhabitants of Rotherhithe, but for the simple reason that it did not pay. Wet lime is no longer used as a purifier, oxyde of iron having been substituted for it, and the open pit in the yard into which the wet lime saturated with the hydro-sulphurous gas (Blue Billy), used to be cast, has been entirely disappeared. Its contents having been used up for luting the retorts. The premises are altogether more clean and orderly than formerly. Four good water-closets, with pan and water supply, have been constructed. There is also, now, a washing-room for the men, and a dining-room, with tables and compartment-cupboards, where the workmen can take their food in comfort while employed on the works.

At No. 52, Lower Queen-street, the pipe of the water-closet is stopped and the pan full in consequence.

At Nos. 1 and 2, Upper Queen-street, there is a full cesspool, common to the two houses. The liquid contents of this cesspool ooze through a back wall into the cellar of the pork-butcher of No. 336, Rotherhithe-wall, and not only render his house exceedingly unhealthy, but deprive him of the power of using his cellar for storing his meat.

Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 11½, Silver-street: the privies are full and overflowing. The privy common to 7 and 8, has no door, and the two houses have no water supply. As all these cases were urgent, notices were at once served.

The Patent Manure Works at Hanover Stairs have again been visited by me. There is always a disagreeable smell at this part of Rotherhithe-street. It arises from the sugar-scum stored on the premises, and from the acid vapours emanating from the newly-made

manure. An improvement has, however, taken place even here, the ingredients are now mixed in a closed vessel (Nesbitt's Patent), not in open troughs as formerly. The premises are too cramped for a manufacture of this kind, and the shaft into which the gases are carried is not above thirty feet high. The nuisances would be considerably abated were the height of the shaft doubled.

The premises of Mr. Fisher, in Rotherhite-street, opposite Swan-lane, were pointed out to me on Saturday last, as emitting foul effluvia. The manufacture of Patent Manure has been carried on there of late. I have twice visited the factory since the complaint.

During the last month, fifty-two deaths were registered in Rotherhithe. The epidemic of measles, spoken of in my last report, is on the decline. Eight children, however, have succumbed to that malady.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

March, 1858.



John Charles Esq^r
Librarian
Royal College of
Surgeons
Lincoln Inn
Middle^x
W.C.

thirty-five, and deducting from that number nine deaths from other causes than disease, namely, two from suicide and seven from accident, there remains a mortality of twenty-six only, the smallest that I have yet reported, and, I believe, the smallest monthly mortality for some years past. For eight days, from the 20th to the 28th October, no death was registered in Rotherhithe, a fact unprecedented amongst us since the Registration Act has come into operation. Now, Gentlemen, the death rate on this occasion has been an exact representative of the state of the health of the parish; the cases of illness during the elapsed month having been few and not severe, and the only epidemic prevalent has been scarlatina, from which four deaths have occurred. To conclude, during the three autumnal months (August, September and October), at a time when we expect a little more disease than at other periods of the year, Rotherhithe has been healthy, and, during October, one of the healthiest districts of the metropolis.

Certain it is, from the concurrent testimony of all the medical practitioners that the illnesses of the inhabitants have become of late less violent and less numerous than formerly. To what are we to attribute this improved state of things? Undoubtedly there are fluctuations in disease; elevations and depressions, as in all other natural phenomena, increase and decrease from circumstances, such as meteorological, atmospheric and other influences, over which mankind have no control; but there are other things over which man has control, and which exercise a most beneficial or deleterious influence upon health. Fever, as I have once before stated, has disappeared from certain localities in Rotherhithe since the ditches have been covered over. Cholera left almost untouched in 1854 places that it had fiercely ravaged in 1849, when they had neither drainage, sewage, nor water supply; and may not, at the present time, the improved state of the healthiness of Rotherhithe be, in some small degree, attributable to the excellent sanitary measures which have of late been so extensively adopted and enforced?

November, 1856.

Yours respectfully,
W. MURDOCH.

ELEVENTH REPORT.

To the Vestry of the Parish of Saint Mary, Rotherhithe.

GENTLEMEN,

Several Members of this Vestry having brought under my notice a piece of land, situated opposite the China Hall, on the west side of the Deptford Lower Road and adjacent to it, I went there with the Inspector of Nuisances on the 15th November, 1856.

This land is open to the road, and much used by carmen, waggoners and others, who frequent the China Hall. There being

in the centre of it a horse-trough with water supply; they draw up their vehicles there to bait and water their horses. At the time of my visit, the day was cold and dry, and the public road clean, but the above named patch of ground was covered with soft mud ankle deep. Neither it, however, nor the row of wooden buildings used as stables and placed at its southern extremity exhaled any offensive smell, but they present, in one of the best parts of the parish, an unseemly and filthy appearance. I would suggest that the owner be invited to place a rail or fence at the line of demarcation between the land and the road, that he either pave or macadamize the former, and if he continue to use the ground for the same purpose as heretofore, that gates be placed at the points of entrance and exit of the carts and waggons.

On the east side of the Deptford Road, between the China Hall ditch and Mr. Gawdery's premises, is placed a small block of houses called Cottage Place. The Inspector having mentioned to me that the inmates made more applications for medical orders, than the same number of persons in any other locality, I was led to examine them. In front of them lies an open ditch, which was then in a foul state, but has been cleansed since my visit. The row consists of five four-roomed tenements, one of brick and four of wood, all in bad repair, and tenanted principally by Irish families. Each dwelling has water supply, but the privies are all in a dilapidated state and without water to the pans. The drain consists of an open gutter running across the middle of the yards, so that every pailful of refuse liquid thrown away at No. 5, must traverse all the yards before it arrives at its final destination. There are also no ashpits; all the ashes and rubbish from the houses is thrown on to an open space between the brick house and the road. At the time of my examination, there were twelve inmates at No. 5, (four families) eight at No. 4, seven at No. 3, nine at No. 2, and three at No. 1. The latter dwelling is of brick, and tenanted by a better class of persons than the other four. I do not give the above numbers as exact, but as an approximation to the truth, there being evidently in one or two cases a tendency in the parties who gave the information to hide the real number of inmates. I must submit to the consideration of the Vestry whether in such tenements as those just described, it would not be better for the prevention of disease to limit the number of inmates in each house, as no social or moral improvement of the poor can possibly take place in such crowded habitations, where all the rules of decency and propriety must necessarily be set at nought. I must also urge that the privies be properly repaired and fitted up with water supply, that a covered drain be constructed with a trapped opening in each yard, and finally, that an ashpit be made for each house to avoid the unsightly nuisance of having the dust and offal thrown over an open space near a public thoroughfare.

On the opposite (south) side of Cottage place, and nearer the

Deptford Lower Road, are two habitations, consisting each of three rooms built one above the other. These houses have neither yards, ashpits, drains, water supply, proper privies, nor ventilation; in a word, none of the appliances conducive to the health, comfort, or convenience of the inhabitants. There is no back yard, and the houses being built against a dead wall without any opening in the rear, no ventilation can take place. The two dwellings have one privy and no drain, so that all waste fluid must either be poured down the privy or scattered over the public way. When the inmates want water they are obliged to cross the Deptford Road in all weather and fetch it from the butts supplying the horse-trough of which I have before spoken. I should suggest that water be laid on to each house; that another privy be built, and drains and ashpits made.

I next passed on to Providence Place, a turning further down the Deptford Road, and on the south side of the China Hall. Here stand two wooden cottages, consisting, each respectively, of two rooms on the ground floor, the boards of which were six inches or more below the level of the pathway. The same defects exist as in the other dwellings on the same estate, except that at the back of these hovels there is a window to admit light and air. All water must be fetched from the horse-trough, and the single water-closet for the two houses must receive the liquid that is not thrown over the pathway, or carried to the neighbouring ditch. The remedy would be the same as in the previous case.

A urinal stands at the entrance of Providence Place on the right; it is often in a foul state, and considerable improvement might be effected by carrying water into it.

On the same day I paid a visit to a "huge piggery," tenanted by forty or more hogs, and located on a cross road leading to the Commercial Dock Station of the Greenwich Railway, and close to the latter, on Debenham's ground. It was at the time of my examination, without exception, one of the filthiest places I was ever in. The whole piggery, which is very extensive, being strewn with garbage solid and liquid, and sending forth pungent and ammoniacal effluvia, which I smelt at a distance of sixty feet, and which persons living at a distance of sixty yards, complain of in hot weather. There is no drainage, and the fluid pollution runs freely on to the neighbouring land. I consider this a monster nuisance, and caused a notice to be at once served.

Sickness and Mortality of the Month.

The number of deaths registered in Rotherhithe during the month of November, 1856, was thirty-six, a mortality rather below the average. The only facts worthy of remark indicated by the death register, seem to be the increase of fatal acute diseases of the respiratory organs, from the lowering of the temperature, and also an augmented mortality among the aged from the same cause, a fact to which I

have often before called the attention of the Vestry. Seven deaths, or nearly a fifth of the whole have occurred in persons above the age of 70. The only prevalent epidemic is scarlatina, which has carried off six children, from 2 to 6 years of age.

Yours respectfully,

2nd December, 1856.

W. MURDOCH.

TWELFTH REPORT.

To the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Rotherhithe.

GENTLEMEN,

Among the various nuisances existing in the Parish of Rotherhithe, there is no one which requires more constant vigilance on the part of the Officers of this Vestry, than that occasioned by the overcrowded state of many of the houses. Large accumulations of human beings in small dwellings is radically antagonistic to the social and moral improvement of the humbler classes, which improvement is the end and aim of all sanitary legislation.

On 19th December, 1856, I went with the Inspector to the house, 12, Lower Neptune Street, which had been reported to me as harbouring a nuisance of the above description. The house is of brick, and built substantially, but its interior is in a dirty, miserable and dilapidated condition. It contains six rooms, three on the ground, and three on the first floor; each room is let to a separate tenant, five of the occupiers are married men with families, the sixth is a single man, there being in all *twenty-four* inmates. I passed through the house into the back yard. Here a scene of hideous filth and confusion presented itself. There is no drain, no ashpit, and but one dilapidated wooden privy with large holes in the sides, back, and roof. This privy stood formerly over the Cobourg ditch, but since that ditch has been filled up, the liquid and solid soil lies strewn on the ground under the seat, offensive to the nostrils, disgusting to the sight, and injurious to the health. Now, let me ask whether any out-door education, or school-training can ever correct or overcome the indecent habits, want of self-respect, and other vices engendered among the younger branches of the inmates by the very fact of living in such a den. I trust that stringent measures will be employed for the prompt suppression of this nest of impurities.

On the same day I visited 7, Medway Terrace. A large brick drain receiving the smaller drains of several houses, runs under the floor, and when any quantity of water is flowing through it, the stench is so great from the drain being out of repair, as to render the lower part of the house uninhabitable.

On the 10th December, I examined four houses in Gillam's Court, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4. They have all foul cesspools, no water supply, and no drainage. One of these houses (No. 2), now un-

tenanted, acquired in 1849 an unenviable celebrity, it having been the first place in Rotherhithe in which the cholera made its appearance, five out of six of the inmates having died from that disease. Everything is in the same state as it was then, no improvement whatever has been since effected.

The house, 370, Rotherhithe Wall, is a shop occupied only during the day, it has neither drainage, ashpit, privy, nor water supply.

The houses 371, 372 and 373, have no back yard. The cesspools are in the cellar, so that each house is literally built over a cesspool, and the cellar being unventilated a considerable portion of the gases evolved must necessarily ascend into the upper part of the dwelling. At No. 372, the only water supply is from a pump connected with a tidal well. The kitchens of all these dwellings are on the first floor; in each kitchen there is a sink connected with an iron pipe outside of the house, consequently all the refuse liquid is discharged into the open street (Cross Alley), to the great annoyance of the inhabitants of the place, who complain bitterly of stench arising therefrom.

At 3, Baltic Place, there is an overflowing cesspool.

Notices have been served in all these cases respectively.

Mortality of the Month.

The absolute number of deaths registered in Rotherhithe during the just elapsed month, was thirty-two; a number considerably below the average monthly mortality. The only remarkable fact is the almost entire absence of fatal cases of epidemic disease. There having been no death from scarlatina, none from typhus, none from small-pox, and *only one* from measles, complicated with an inflammatory affection of the respiratory organs. At this moment (31st December, 1856) I consider the parish healthy.

During the quarter ending 31st December, 1856, there died in Rotherhithe one hundred and three persons, viz., fifty-eight males, and forty-five females, and there were born one hundred and eighty-five children, viz., one hundred and five males and eighty females.

Yours respectfully,

January, 1857.

W. MURDOCH.

THIRTEENTH REPORT.

To the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Rotherhithe.

GENTLEMEN,

In rendering an account of the minor nuisances examined by me during the past month, I shall be brief, to avoid the repetition of details given in similar cases in former reports.

At No. 36, Paradise Street, there were a full cesspool and imperfect drain.

At Devonshire Villas, Deptford Lower Road, the main drain had become choked up.

At 26 and 27, Lower Queen Street, full cesspools. No drainage, and a pool of stagnant fluid in the yard of No. 26.

At Nos. 1 and 2, Chester Terrace, Albion Street, houses recently erected, the cesspools were full up to the seat, the back yards filthy. No drainage. No ashpits.

On the 28th January, I visited, with the Inspector, the west side of King Street, from No. 25 to No. 17, both included, the other houses at the north-west end of the street, having been previously looked to. Every house was entered and carefully inspected, and all particulars relating to each, respectively noted. No. 25, tenanted by Long, carver, was in order except that it had no dust bin. The others were deficient in almost every appliance required by the Act of Parliament.

The house No. 22, had been originally fitted up in three flats, according to the Scotch system, each flat to be tenanted by one family.

This plan, however, has not been adhered to, and every room has been let to a different occupier. There are three rooms on each flat, and at the time of my visit seven of the rooms were occupied. There being in all twenty-one inmates. The back room on the ground floor is inhabited by an Irishwoman and child. I am credibly informed that five or six more persons above fourteen years of age, and of different sexes often pass the night there. I entered the room, it smelt worse than any cesspool. I have therefore thought it necessary to bring the place under the notice of the Vestry, as fever is likely to be generated under such circumstances.

On the 19th January, and on other occasions, I went to a miserable court at the south-west corner of Hanover Street, and known as Hanover Court. It is composed of seven houses; three of brick on the south, and four of wood and plaster on the north side. All are dilapidated, wretched hovels. Two of the brick dwellings appear to be in a dangerous condition, and I should invite the attention of the surveyor thereto. The court is paved with pebbles, the ashes and refuse of the houses being all thrown into a vast heap in a corner. There is no water supply; and one privy is for the accommodation of the whole population of the place, consisting, at the time of my inspection, of forty-one persons; it had no fastening whatever, not even a bit of string. I would venture to suggest that the court be repaved, that a large dust-bin be constructed, a drain made, and two more privies built.

I must do the owner the justice to say, that he entered at once into my views; and at the time of my second visit, had actually begun building two more privies. Indeed, all Hanover Street has considerably improved of late years under his management.

Hanover Street is supplied with water from four stand pipes, one of which is useless from being out of repair. The supply is too scanty for the numerous population, and the water ought to be carried into each house.

The street drains into an open tidal ditch; it appears that the drainage of it might be advantageously carried into the Dodd's Place sewer, and in this opinion I am happy to say that I meet the ideas of the Surveyor of this Vestry.

To connect the drainage of Hanover Street with the Dodd's Place sewer it will be necessary to traverse a piece of freehold land belonging to myself. I shall offer no objection to this proceeding, nor seek for any compensation, as I believe it to be the duty of every man to put up with some inconvenience for a public benefit; such sacrifices of individual interests for the advantage of the many, being one of the fundamental principles, and the connecting bond of society.

During the past month the reigning diseases in Rotherhithe have been bronchitis, pneumonia, and other inflammatory affections of the lungs and air passages, usually prevalent at this time of the year. The parish still continues free from all epidemic diseases, except scarlatina, from which cause three deaths have been registered. I know of no case of small-pox; and typhus fever, once a constant inhabitant of the place, seems to be fast disappearing from among us, only six deaths from that malady having been registered during the year 1856, forming a striking contrast with the facts mentioned in Dr. Sutherland's report upon Rotherhithe. Thirty-seven deaths from all causes were registered in January; deducting therefrom three from accident, there remains thirty-four, the average monthly mortality. The oldest person registered was 89 years of age, a female inmate of Rotherhithe Workhouse.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

February 1857.

FOURTEENTH REPORT.

To the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Rotherhithe.

GENTLEMEN,

"I do not exaggerate the sanitary importance of water" says a writer on the subject, "when I affirm that its unrestricted supply is the first essential of decency, of comfort, and of health, that no civilization of the poorer classes can exist without it, and that any limitation to its use in the metropolis is a barrier which must maintain thousands in a state of the most unwholesome filth and degradation." In Rotherhithe, the supply is not what it should be. Whole streets, courts, and alleys, depend for that necessary article either upon a single pump, or upon the still scantier flow from a stand pipe, liable to be frozen during severe weather, and generally running about half-an-hour each day, for a large population, who are obliged to fetch the water in pailfuls for their household use.

I have already brought this matter under your notice, as in the case of the cottages near China Hall, whose inmates have to

cross a public road, in all weathers, to obtain water from the butt near the horse-trough; also in the case of Hanover Street, supplied by three stand pipes. In Paxton's Alley there is one of the latter, and the people complain that on the coldest day in winter, when the pavement is slippery with frost, they have to drag the water from the stand pipe up the steps of their dwellings, through the dwellings, and again down a flight of stairs into the kitchen. The water ought to be carried into every house, and as long as the present system of intermittent supply continues, proper receptacles provided; I feel satisfied, that until this is done, all labour for the improvement of the social condition of the poor will be vain.

Several houses have been examined by myself and the Inspector during the past month, namely, Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, at the north-east end of Neptune Street; No. 11, Lower Neptune Street, and Nos. 4 and 5, George Street. At all these places the cesspools were full, the drainage bad, and almost everything wanting that this Vestry require.

At Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, Mariner's Buildings there are but two privies for four houses. The cesspools being full, the stench arising from them causes much annoyance to the neighbourhood. I would venture to suggest that two more privies be built, and that all be put into proper order, and also that ashpits be constructed. At No. 160, Rotherhithe Street there exists an intolerable nuisance; the whole yard is inundated with soil from the cesspool, forming a pool of sewage fifteen feet long and five or six feet wide. Passengers in the street complain of the smell, and it is, without exception, the worst case of the kind that has hitherto fallen under my observation.

Nos. 1, 2 and 3, Kenning's Buildings are occupied by about forty inhabitants. For this multitude there is one privy, *which is not even provided with a door*. This locality is the old seat of typhus, and it would not surprise me were that disease to reappear amidst such filth, during the summer months, unless the merciful hand of this Vestry, by some stringent measure forestall and prevent such a calamity.

There is a foul privy without doors at the Gas Works, frequented by about one hundred and eighty men, and divided into three compartments. A proper convenience, supplied with water and good drainage, ought to be constructed.

On the 11th February, I went to the patent manure factory of Mr. Batchelour, opposite Hanover Stairs. No mixing was going on at the time of my visit. A faint smell pervaded the factory, but it was not perceptible in the street. The works were clean and orderly. The manufacturer always uses calcined bone, and thereby avoids many of the disagreeable stench arising from the action of the sulphuric acid on putrefying animal matter.

Many complaints have been made of the effluvia from some of the street gullies, viz., at the west corner of Swan Lane, in Clarence

Street, and by the Bull Head Dock. I must leave to the Surveyor of this Vestry how to deal with these nuisances, but it appears to me that no drainage can be considered perfect if the subtile poison of sewer gas be allowed to mix itself with the atmosphere of our thoroughfares.

I have to invite the observation of the Committee of the upper district to the opening of a nine-inch drain pipe on the western side of King Stairs and close to them. This orifice is about six feet above the level of the mud, and discharges on the shore all the sewage of the Dover Castle public-house, and the liquid from the urinal placed in the passage leading to King Stairs. The soil is often poured out in large quantities over the mud, and the Inspector states that the foul smells have been much complained of.

The earth covering the upper part of the new sewer between Albion and Adam Streets, is below the level of the back yards of the houses, therefore a sort of groove or dry ditch exists where the open sewer was formerly. This ditch is in the most filthy state imaginable; many of the privies not having yet been connected with the new sewer, the soil lies in abundance on the surface, and garbage of all sorts is thrown into the hollow. The ditch is in a much worse state than it used to be before the alteration, when it had at least twice a day the benefit of being washed by the tide. I must recommend that severe measures be directly employed to force the landlords to connect the house drainage with the sewer, otherwise during the hot weather fever will certainly spring up in this locality. All these remarks are also applicable to the Cobourg Ditch, where every species of impurity has accumulated from the same causes. These two nuisances prove that the most judicious system of drainage may be entirely thwarted by the indifference of landlords and the culpable carelessness of the multitude.

The most remarkable feature in the mortality of last month is the freedom of the parish from epidemic disease. No death having been registered from measles, small pox, typhus or diarrhoea. The only prevalent complaint having been scarlatina, three cases of which proved fatal in young children.

The whole mortality of the month was thirty-six, rather less than the average. Four inquests were held on bodies found in the Thames.

Yours respectfully,

W. MURDOCH.

March, 1857.

and by the Ball Field Dock. I must leave to the Surveyor of this Vestry how to deal with these nuisances, but it appears to me that no drainage can be considered perfect if the subtle poison of sewer gas be allowed to mix itself with the atmosphere of our thoroughfares.

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The most remarkable feature in the mortality of last month is the freedom of the parish from epidemic disease. No deaths having been registered from measles, small pox, typhus or cholera. The only prevalent complaint having been scarlatina, three cases of which proved fatal in young children.

The whole mortality of the month was thirty-six, rather less than the average. Four infants were held on bodies found in the Thames.

Yours respectfully,
W. ALFORD.

