

**Remarks on the drainage of London, and the pollution of the Thames : respectfully addressed to the commissioners to be appointed to carry out these works.**

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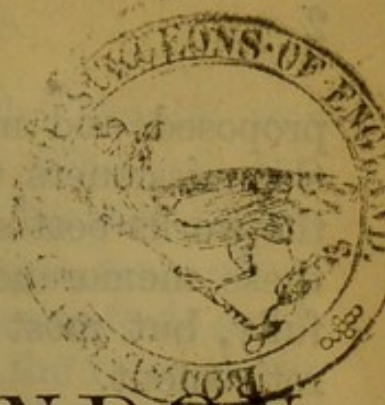
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c REMARKS  
ON THE  
DRAINAGE OF LONDON,  
AND  
POLLUTION OF THE THAMES.

RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED TO  
THE COMMISSIONERS TO BE APPOINTED TO CARRY OUT THESE  
WORKS.

*July 19th, 1858.*

GENTLEMEN,—Whilst you are entrusted with works which will enable you to confer benefits the most important to the present, and future generations, it may prove satisfactory to you to recollect, that you have with you the wisdom and experience of our ancestors from remote antiquity, and of our more recent predecessors, of *authority*, in support of operations likely to prove less *annoying*, more *easy* of accomplishment, and *less costly* by far, than the exaggerated apprehensions of the indolent and timid have lately excited in unreflecting minds. When the *wisdom* and *experience* of our ancestors are alluded to, it is not to *ingenious* and *highly scientific notions* so much, as to *worldly wisdom*, to *practical experience in operation*, that attention should be invited—as it has been in the late decision of Parliament.

In our workings we should never depart from what is *rational, natural*, in strict accordance with *practical truths*—with *good common sense*. Of late, ingenious sophistry—on secondary points, has been advanced, and eagerly seized, to cause delay, and in excuse for inactivity, for timidity, and irresponsibility, after many years' discussion. In the present importances, affecting *all*, let but a *simple system*, intelligible to *all*, be freely divulged, it will be warmly and generally supported by the public as soon as understood.

In firm belief that the following statements may facilitate operations by preparing the public to receive the plans



proposed, and may perhaps, in some degree, assist even the Commissioners themselves, in forming their decisions as to the works best suited for the accomplishment of their objects; these memoranda, *from the highest authorities*, are respectfully, but most earnestly submitted by an octogenarian, in retirement.

By the late decision in Parliament, the business is greatly simplified—the *works* to be carried out *at first*, are reduced to *two* at least, may be brought under *two heads* :—

1st. The stoppage or abstraction of all filth and drainage, as far as can be, *from the Thames*, instead of throwing all *into the Thames*.

2nd. The utilization and purposes to which the valuable drainage, both liquid and substantial can be destined.

To these two great points is attention now directed by Parliament itself. Let not attention be diverted by ingenious sophistry, or by fabulously exaggerated annoyances, or expenditure, from these two great objects; let us proceed steadily and rationally with what is now required, and all will be well, and end well.

The following plain statements, are *rational, natural*, in strict accordance with what nature herself does and suggests, consistent with truth, with the best of all senses—common sense; and moreover, with experience past and present. These plain statements have been considered likely to carry conviction, and are therefore offered. From time immemorial, our cities have had dustmen, for the removal of all dry rubbish; scavengers, to take away slops, mud, surface sludge from gutters and street drains; and a third set of men to empty cess-pools, night soils, and the heavier excreta. All these men worked by contract, all made profit, especially the third set. This system worked well, was continued, but interrupted many years ago, by the suppression of cess-pools, &c., in large cities. In zeal for the public welfare, the legislature conferred two great blessings, viz.: the suppression of cess-pools, and the introduction of larger supplies of water for water-closets, and for more effectually scouring our Babylon of all filth by washing it *into the river*. *Hinc Lacrymæ*.

Oh! the great mistake! Instead of being sent *away from the Thames*, all the filth was *poured into the Thames*, through the Fleet ditch, and scores of other horrible ditches, which



*must now* be suppressed. From a fine river, the Thames was converted into *cloaca* more terrible than the *Tiber* of old, quite unfit for navigation, for living near, because of the *effluvia*, the *miasmata*, the pestilential *evaporations*, more offensive and virulent than ever. In an anxious desire to do good, the legislature *formerly* sent all the filth into the river as the shortest and most effectual manner of clearing the metropolis. Having now discovered the egregious mistake, animated *now* with the same laudable spirit as heretofore, our present rulers are most anxious to correct the errors of their predecessors, they see and require the *first* and most important measure of all for purification, viz.: to take away *abstract*, and *not to feed the evil*. This is rational, is in accordance with nature, with truth, with common sense.

After the *first great step*—after the *stoppage* of the filth is accomplished, other improvements will follow, but remain for consideration hereafter. A strange coincidence, while our *Senators* have been sending all filth into the Thames, the Right Hon. the *Lord Mayor* and his court of conservancy, have been ordering all pollution to be kept out of it. For the future let us all become supporters of the Lord Mayor and of his conservancy.

*Second.*—The measure next in importance, to the stoppage, is *the disposal of the drainage*, when abstracted from the river; what is to be done with it? Of its *great value* as a manure there can no longer be doubt, as such it should be preserved. For *its removal*, many of the present large channels, the existing courses may be *left as they are*, especially on the lower and middle levels; their present debouches must be stopped; new direction through tubes, or new drains to *new dépôts* around London, but in convenient places near it, must be given to the drainage. *Monster dépôts* in one or two places for interception would be objectionable, but moderate sized stations in convenient spots around *our cities*, would answer two great desiderata, *efficiency and economy*. We are told this in an admirable article in the *Times* of the 13th of July from high authority and great experience, by Sir William Cubitt, “stating that this plan would at all times be “susceptible of gradual increase, to meet the wants of the gradual extension of population, and would serve as an example “for all towns.” Sir W. Cubitt further adds, “We ought to



“avail ourselves of advanced science, and of the success at *Leicester* and at *Tottenham*, and it may be added, elsewhere.”

Since the late discussions in Parliament concerning the *two great points of stoppage and removal*, as the *first indispensables* for *further improvement*, let attention and industry be devoted to those points *alone*; and not be diverted from them by ingenious circumlocutions and sophistry, for further obstacles and procrastination.

In confirmation of the above statement, and the proceedings in Parliament, most valuable articles have lately appeared in the papers. Other evidence may also be advanced strongly corroborative of the measures recommended. In the *Times* of Friday, July 2, is a letter, signed “M.P.,” beautifully written; short, comprehensive, clear, and comprehensible. “M.P.” is master of the subject, and renders others so, “M.P.” should be universally read. In the *Daily News* of July 20, an article signed “Common Sense,” is valuable as regards the manure. In the *Standard* of July 14, an article on the manure, signed “Clericus,” deserves all praise. To the Press much is due. These subjects have been treated with great ability since seriously noticed in Parliament.

Some years ago, Napoleon III. purchased bad land on the Loire, near Orleans, and made it productive. Encouraged by his first success, and by other experiments, he is now engaged in fertilizing *les landes*, south of the Garrone. In England, Mechi has been eminently successful in establishing a great fact. He purchased bad land, expressly to show that it could be made productive. Mechi succeeded beyond all expectation, without any support from Government, or associations, depending entirely upon his own resources. The experiment cost Mechi much; he never made it a question of expense, he wanted only *to establish the fact*. He has done so, at great expense—therefore deserves our best thanks. In England and Ireland vast tracts of waste land will soon be cultivated, when good manure can be obtained and distributed at an easy rate.

I remain Gentlemen,

Your humble servant,

M. L. ESTE, M.D., F.R.C.S., and of other Societies,

August, 1858.

abroad and at-home.



P.S.—In illustration of all these remarks, on the 23rd. of July, the *Times* asserts in a concluding, valuable sentence, “*Our difficulties in these matters of drainage and utilizing, arise from our perversion of nature’s best gifts !!!*” That we have hitherto been acting, not in accordance with nature, but in direct antagonism with her operations and suggestions, can be shown abundantly hereafter. Let the errors of our ways be corrected. After twelve years of sophisms and circumlocutions, it is now known that deodorizing can be more easily effected and less expensively than was anticipated; that the *best of manures* can be more easily obtained, the deodorizing should be effected at each particular depôt. The *Times* of the 23rd July suggests also that ships sent to the Antipodes for guano, might take in cargoes of superior manure, from depôts near Barking Creek or elsewhere in the river, at low cost and save all the time, trouble, expense, and risks of sending and buying in another hemisphere. Surely large leviathan floating depôts might be formed and filled from the lower land-drains in convenient out of the way places on the river or near Barking—off Canvey Island &c., &c., at no frightful trouble or expense as was done last summer, off Purfleet with the gunpowder. Several large vessels were stationed with “Gunpowder Floating Depôts,” largely written on their sides. Such depôts for drainage might be filled at low water. The supernatant fluid deodorized on board could be let off, removed into the river at high water, and during the outflowing tide, without any appreciable disadvantage, whilst the heavier material might be manufactured into most valuable manure. Such would be for sale and exportation, the best of all, for the improvement of *les landes* now contemplated in France; much would be required of it now and hereafter, for that good purpose. With a sufficiency even that great end may be attained, notwithstanding fabulously gloomy imaginations.

The *deodorizing process*, according to the experienced, should be effected at little expense at the several depôts. At each depôt the drainage, on entering would separate, the denser portion would subside, the supernatant fluid, by much the largest, would become clearer and less offensive by separation. *Chloride of lime*, a powerful *deodorizer* and *purifier*, is a cheap article; a very small quantity of it would clear, and disinfect the whole supernatant fluid of a depôt so as to allow of its return to the Thames, while the residuum would form the basis of most valuable manure. Chloride of lime of the best quality could be obtained wholesale—say at Apothecaries’ Hall—at a very moderate rate. A few pounds sterling annually, would pay for cleansing the several depôts around London; it could there be prepared expressly for the purpose, very readily, and very reasonably, by agreement as to quantity, and as to cost.



