

A letter to the Right Hon. Robert Peel ... on the supply of water to the metropolis; containing a justification of the the complaints of the housekeepers, served ... from the works of the Grand-Junction Company; and a refutation of ... an anonymous writer, under the designation of 'an Old Housekeeper' / [Robert Masters Kerrison].

Contributors

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A
LETTER
ON THE
SUPPLY OF WATER
TO
THE METROPOLIS



1828

Supp. 59610/B

KERRISON, R.M.





To D. Hemmings
from the Author
—

A
LETTER
ON THE
SUPPLY OF WATER
TO
THE METROPOLIS.

LETTER

RIGHT HON. ROBERT FLEMING

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

TO THE

SUPPLY OF WATER

THE METROPOLIS

LETTER

TESTIFICATION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

MADE FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS FROM THE

WORKS OF THE GRAND-JUNCTION COMPANY;

SUPPLY OF WATER

PREPARATION OF THE NEW STATUTE OF AN ACT

WRITTEN UNDER THE REGISTRATION OF

THE METROPOLIS

ROBERT MASTERMAN KIRKMAN M.A.

LONDON

PRINTED FOR THOMAS BURNETT

10, NEWBURY STREET

1838

A
LETTER
TO THE
RIGHT HON. ROBERT PEEL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT,
ON THE
SUPPLY OF WATER
TO
THE METROPOLIS;

CONTAINING A
JUSTIFICATION OF THE COMPLAINTS OF THE HOUSE-KEEPERS,
SERVED FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS FROM THE
WORKS OF THE GRAND-JUNCTION COMPANY;
AND A
REFUTATION OF THE MIS-STATEMENTS OF AN ANONYMOUS
WRITER, UNDER THE DESIGNATION OF
“AN OLD HOUSEKEEPER.”

BY
ROBERT MASTERS KERRISON, M.D.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THOMAS BUTCHER,
108, REGENT-STREET.

1828.

LETTER
TO THE
RIGHT HON. ROBERT PERCE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT
ON THE
SUPPLY OF WATER
TO
THE METROPOLIS



CONTAINING A
NARRATION OF THE COMPLAINTS OF THE HOUSE-KEEPERS
SERVED FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS FROM THE
WORKS OF THE
METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS
BY
ROBERT MASTERMAN KERRISON, M.D.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. L. COX, GREAT QUEEN STREET
Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

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LETTER,

&c. &c.

SIR :

THE advantage of possessing a cheap and abundant Supply of wholesome Water for the inhabitants of a metropolis, seems to form so prominent a feature in the domestic policy of a well-governed state, that the means of obtaining such Supply must ever be an important object of care to a Minister of State for the Home Department.

I should not have called your attention to this subject, but have trusted to the Report of the Commissioners appointed by his Majesty, and to the slow progress of unassisted truth, had I not seen a printed Letter lately addressed to you by "An Old Housekeeper," assuming the character of a disinterested philanthropist, to spare you the trouble of investigation, but whom I can easily recognize to be an ex-Director of the Grand Junction Water Company in disguise, for the unworthy purpose of misleading your judgment.

As one of six, constituting the sub-committee proposed by Lord Wharncliffe on the 2d of this month, at a general meeting of housekeepers held at Willis's Great Room, to give attention to the Water Question, and report thereon, it is not irrelevant to notice mis-statements, lest they should be received as truths, and considered incapable of refutation. As a Physician, the subject,

namely, the wholesomeness of Water, for the use of a dense population, is not unworthy of my attention, seeing that one of the earliest medical writers employed himself in the investigation of the influence of winds, waters, and localities for residence.*

These inquiries, however, only concerned the agency of water upon the human body, arising from high or low situations, from marshy or rocky places, its softness or hardness (more or less abounding in saline particles), its impregnations from earths, minerals, and sulphur. The *possibility* of persons using water, for the preparation of food, loaded with the filth and drainage of a vast city, flowing up and down with every tide, was never contemplated by Hippocrates: this consideration has devolved upon his successors, after an elapse of more than two thousand years.

In the subsequent remarks, I disclaim all personalities; the faults of the system are what I shall endeavour to elucidate, and merely animadvert upon those means, appearing to me illiberal and unjust, by which it is attempted to be sustained. The subject is a public one, open to free and fair discussion.

The plan I propose to follow, Sir, is first to notice the important parts demanding further inquiry; next to give an outline of the formation and proceedings of the two new Water Companies—the West Middlesex and the Grand Junction—by which the assessments have been raised to an extraordinary degree; to refute the false statements by which the interests of the latter Company are advocated by the “Old Housekeeper;” and to offer a few hints as to the certain Remedy for a great public grievance.

Assuming, as preliminary positions, that there is a dis-

* Hippocrates, *περι Αερων, υδατων, τοπων*.

position on the part of Government to redress a real evil, and public spirit enough in its members to resist the influence of share-holders of Water Companies in Parliament, and the importunity of private friends out of it; for, without these assumptions every attempt, however judicious, would be unavailing, parliamentary inquiry nugatory, or worse than useless, and all hope of relief delusive.

Presuming, Sir, on the justice and humanity which you have successfully employed in the amendment of our civil and criminal laws, I venture to suggest the following points for further inquiry and deliberate consideration; others will offer themselves to your comprehensive mind.

1. Where is the best water procurable, in sufficient abundance, for the inhabitants of this metropolis? and not, What is the worst state of water, originally good, under which human existence can be supported?

2. What is the lowest price at which water of a suitable quality for the service of different districts can be obtained? and not, What is the highest which can be extorted from housekeepers under the present system?

3. Have the new Companies fulfilled the engagements they entered into with Parliament as the legitimate guardians of the "*salus populi*," and satisfied the expectations raised or excited by a fair construction of their own promises? or, Have they abandoned their first principles, and deviated from the terms of their compact with those housekeepers who confided in such promises?

4. Has the abandonment of their principles, and the deviation, if any, been beneficial or injurious to those who for the last ten years, have been unable to obtain water for domestic purposes, except from a single Company in each district of the metropolis?

5. What effect has a water-rate, higher than is necessary for the production of the commodity where it is re-

quired, upon housekeepers, as to their capability of fulfilling their obligations in the payment of assessed and parochial taxes? and how does an excessive water-rate influence the value of house property?

6. Is the public health affected by the quality of water used for domestic purposes? or does it make no difference in that particular, whether the supply be from a part of the Thames, where it is usually clear and only turbid for a short time after heavy rains, or from other parts of the same river, where it has received the contents of a hundred and forty common sewers, and the various impurities from the decomposing refuse of this great city?

A Select Committee of the House of Commons investigated the causes of dispute between housekeepers and the directors of Water Companies in the session of 1821, and printed their Report, together with the Minutes of Evidence. These are voluminous, but admit of being referred to. It will be found that two principal causes of dissatisfaction had arisen, excited by the new companies in the western and in the eastern part of the metropolis, where the assessments had been augmented in various degrees, bearing an undue proportion to the increased accommodation afforded by the respective companies.

The loudest complaints were from the tenants of the Grand Junction Water Company, who, in addition to higher rates, had just reason to complain, not only of a diminished supply, but of an increased impurity of the water. I have presented an outline of the origin of the two new companies whose proceedings were most objectionable, reference being at hand to the Minutes of Evidence in illustration of particular points.

It may be proper to remark, that the Select Committee expressed some very strong opinions upon the injurious tendency of the acts of the new Water Companies, and of the necessity of watching their proceedings; for which

purpose they advised a bill to be introduced into parliament for four years, and a supervision was proposed to be had over the accounts of the water companies, to keep in check the disposition, already manifested, of levying excessive rates. No such bill was ever introduced; no parliamentary supervision exercised; and the experience of the seven subsequent years has served to prove, that the apprehension of the members of the parliamentary committee in 1821 were not without foundation.

It is more than twenty years since some gentlemen applied to parliament for leave to construct works at Hammersmith for the service of water to certain villages between Brentford and London. The extension of the metropolis in a westerly and north-westerly direction, prior to and about that time, led to the formation of an opinion by the proprietors of this new undertaking, called 'The West Middlesex Water Company,' that it would pay them as a speculation to serve housekeepers in the western and north-western parts of London at the same reasonable rates as were then paid to the *two* old companies, the New River and the Chelsea, whose charges had been moderate, and they declared that they could even afford to take less money and give a greater abundance of water, from the improved construction of their machinery; their proposals, widely circulated, offered these terms and conditions, with confident assurances of their inclination and power to fulfil them.

At a time when the works of this new company were on the eve of completion for the London district, another new water-speculation for the supply of the same district was projected, and the proposed source having been already brought to Paddington, as a canal for commercial purposes, this *newer* undertaking was named the Grand Junction Water Company.

What proportion of the motives of those who sub-

scribed their money for the establishment of this *newer* speculation, may be fairly attributed to the "good of the public," and what for the good of themselves, in the hope of sharing the profits anticipated by those gentlemen, who set about the same kind of work four years earlier, I will not attempt to define; but I must make one remark, the truth of which will be readily admitted, namely, that it would have been early enough to have commenced this *second* water-speculation, as far as "public benefit" was concerned, when the *first* had been found inefficient.*

In fact, the proof that there was not any occasion for this *second* water scheme appears by the Commissioners' Report, where it will be seen at pages 4 and 5, that the houses supplied by one old and respectable Company (the New River) are between 66,000 and 67,000; and by another single Company, the East London, 42,000; whilst 7,700 is the number served by the Grand Junction, and 15,000 by the West Middlesex Companies; so that the united numbers of the *new* and the *newer* are only 22,700, being about one-third of the New River, and one-half the East-London service. It is true, indeed, that many of the houses in the western district are larger than those in the city and eastwards; but it must be remembered that a great proportion of the former are unoccupied, except by two or three servants, for seven or eight months every year, and I think in fairness this absence of more than half the year ought to be taken into account in the estimate of water-rate; for it is evident, that the full quantity can neither be consumed nor required during such absence.

* A glance at the district supplied by the Grand Junction Company will shew that the West Middlesex, which extends to the north and south, could have easily served every housekeeper who took water from the Paddington Canal.

Having been a housekeeper thirty years, a tenant of the New River for half that time, and of the Grand Junction the other half, I am able to form a comparison; and I declare that the water from the Paddington canal was, *at first*, not so good as that from the New River, being more turbid and less soft, and that it became every year less pure and occasionally scanty, until that source was abandoned.

The water served from Paddington by a suction pipe fixed in the canal, whatever might have been its quality at the spring-head, flowed through a stiff clay for many miles before it reached Paddington, the district between that place and Harrow being well known for the deficiency of good, drinkable, water. It could not fail to become *worse* every year, by the transit of numerous barges, some laden with stable manure and bones for agricultural purposes; the pollutions of the wharfs and the accumulation of filth of every description in the form of a deposit, almost constantly in agitation by the increase of commerce, and partially diffused for a considerable distance *up* the canal: for there was no outlet except through the suction pipe and into the cisterns of those who had the misfortune of being registered tenants of the Grand Junction Water Company, to whom it was served with all its increasing impurities as it came from the canal.

Amongst the causes which had led to a more rapid deterioration of water sent from Paddington, may be reckoned the extension of that navigation by a branch called "the Regent's Canal" leading to Limehouse; so that the increased agitation from extended use caused it to become a more dirty puddle. It was in this state, when the exorbitant assessments were made and enforced in 1819, and was progressively worse, up to September 1820.

No figurative language need be employed, Sir, to ex-

hibit the nauseous and unwholesome state of such water, particularly in hot weather. It might be, not unreasonably, expected, that the Directors would have made every possible endeavour to diminish the effects of those causes of foulness, by a frequent cleansing of their *only* reservoir, having the power of so doing; but they did no such thing. It is on record, from the evidence of their own engineer (page 26 of the Report), that it was not emptied for *fourteen* years; so that the aquatic insects and reptiles in it were left to “propagate and rot” therein, whilst the lighter parts of such matters, and of all other impurities, must have been kept in a state of daily agitation by the influx of water, and have floated through the machinery of this Company into our cisterns.

The engineer told the Commissioners (in reply to a question) that the dense stuff found at the bottom of this reservoir was twelve inches deep. Now, it appears by the computation of another engineer (see Mr. Mills’s evidence, page 63 of the Report), that it would require 237,461 hogsheads of water to cover 82 acres, one foot deep; it must be evident therefore (dividing that number by 82, and taking the reservoir at a square acre), that it contained at least 2,895 hogsheads of mud and filth, always accumulating, always partially suspended.* A dispassionate contemplation of these facts exhibits a fearful contrast with the promised purity of the streams from the vale of Ruislip and the Brent, and proves, I think, a fair and conclusive justification of the complaints of housekeepers in 1819, independently of their universal dissatisfaction at the great advance of rate made at that time: although the same denial of any reasonable cause of complaint, the same personal abuse, the

* Mud a foot thick, when the supernatant fluid has run off, must have been three or four feet deep, when loose and agitated by the daily influx of water from the suction pipe.

same accusation of vindictive feelings and persecution, were raised against those who remonstrated against bad quality and high charges, as Mr. Wright and the Commissioners have sustained, and, apparently, from the same venal pen.

To prevent the possibility of mistake about the validity of the complaints made of the Grand Junction water in 1819, as to quantity and quality, the following replies of their engineer, who had been employed from the commencement of the works in 1810 to the present time, will elucidate these points.*

Q. "You told us that you had ceased to supply from the Grand Junction Canal since 1820: was the change made from the canal to the river in consequence of insufficiency of supply, or badness of the water?"

A. "From badness of the water, and a limited supply of 9,616 tons daily."

Q. "You think these complaints were well-founded?"

A. "Yes, I do."

Q. "What was the cause of the badness of the water?"

A. "In consequence of the barges passing, they stirred up the puddling and the clay, thus giving a bad colour to the water, and such as would not settle in any reasonable time."

Q. "You consider, then, that the complaints were such as to oblige you to adopt other measures for supplying water?"

A. "Yes, I do."

Q. "Is the quality of the water of the river Colne such, that if an abundant supply could be obtained from that source it would be desirable, as a substitute for the Thames-water?"

A. "During a part of the year it appears clearer than the Thames water, but in winter months it is more foul, and will not clarify itself by deposition: the water is also reputed to be very hard."

* Commissioners' Report, p. 27.

Q. "Would the river Brent?"

A. "Certainly not; this is merely a flood-river, and so *very foul*, that it is unfit for any purpose."

Here, then, are three facts drawn by the Commissioners from the examination of a witness, whom your correspondent and apologist for the Grand Junction Water Company, "the Old Housekeeper," will never accuse of misrepresentation: first, that the original sources of supply were *bad*; second, rendered *worse* by the navigation; third, that the cupidity of the directors had induced them to take a larger number of houses than they were able to supply sufficiently.*

That the Grand Junction Water Company had the power to cleanse out their reservoir by a communication with the sewers, is also proved by the following questions to their engineer:

Q. "What means of cleansing the reservoirs?"

A. "There are channels in the middle with a drain into the common sewer, and a sluice to the drain lying on an inclination."

Q. "Can you let out all the water, and clean the reservoirs?"

A. "Yes, at an expense."

Here, then, is the broad fact, that we were drenched with the mud and foulness from the Paddington Canal, augmented by a mixture with the accumulating deposit of fourteen years, because the directors of this Water Company, receiving enormous rates for a part of that time, refused to spare a trifle to pay for the labour of cleansing the refuse matters from their reservoir, which, from its communication with the common sewer, did not require the expense of carting away.

The proprietors of the Regent's Canal required more

* The quantity used being 12,500 tons, and the canal being only capable of supplying 9,616, or about three-quarters of what was required.

water than could be spared from Paddington ; they proposed to obtain an additional quantity from the Thames ; an engineer of eminence was engaged, and the most eligible spot for that purpose, *viz.* for floating barges, from Paddington to Limehouse was found to be at the eastern extremity of Chelsea Hospital, where a suction pipe was fixed, inclosed in a frame-work of wood, called “ A DOLPHIN.”

Some time afterwards an agreement was entered into between the Grand Junction Water Company and the Regent's Canal Company, by which it was stipulated that the amount previously paid by this Water Company to the proprietors of the Grand Junction Canal Company for water, or some other satisfactory sum, should in future be paid by the proprietors of the Regent's Canal, and their source of supply *from the Thames* given up to the Water Company * which still retained its original name, although deprived of its Naïds, the *Colne* and the *Brent* ; nor would the very name have had any reference to the undertaking, had not the directors, in their anxiety for “ the public good,” formed a *Junction* with the Ranelagh Common Sewer, which is sixty feet wide and fifteen feet deep in the middle.

The scene was now changed ; it became necessary, absolutely indispensable, to abandon all the former asseverations about the purity of the reservoir of a hundred acres in the Vale of Ruislip, which was all at once discovered by the directors to be only a land-drainage, and the Brent a foul stream, which they had been already compelled to shut out on account of its impurity ; a recantation of all that had been said about the advantages of competition now appeared, and a laboured argument by the presumed author of the letter to you, signed an “ Old Housekeeper,” to shew, that it had been ruinous

* The particulars of the Arrangement could be easily ascertained from the Parliamentary Report of 1821.

to the parties and “distressful to the public;” that they (the companies) had come to “an amicable understanding,” and had undertaken “to serve such districts only as from vicinity could be best, and even cheapest supplied from their respective works.* Such tergiversation has been finely touched by Butler, and a confession under the terrors of conscience is here offered for the contemplation of those whom it may concern :

“What made Brent-water good and clear?†

“About two hundred pounds‡ a year.

“And that, which was proved true before,

“Prove false again? Two hundred more.

At the several public meetings in the autumn of 1819, the directors and such proprietors as spoke, were loud in their praise of the advantages of the change to the Thames, then in contemplation, and the most unlimited promises of purity, abundance and cheapness, with moderation in charges, were given, unequivocally. I am competent to speak on these points, having been one of a committee of housekeepers appointed, at a public meeting at Willis's Rooms, in October 1819, and having given some attention to all that was then passing in the district supplied by the Grand Junction Water Company.

Public confidence was claimed by the Company upon the faith of these new professions, notwithstanding the previous failure in the fulfilment of former promises. By an extraordinary oversight on the part of the Legislature, no inquiry was made into the *quality* of the water intended to be supplied, nor an investigation of the source from which it was to be taken : in fact, the members of the House of Commons, who constituted the Se-

* Calm Address, page 19.

† “What makes all doctrines plain and clear?”—the rest, *verbatim*.—*Hudibras*, Part iii. canto 1.

‡ To be viewed in apposition with the emoluments of a Director.

lect Committee, seem to have been under an erroneous impression; for they say, "as there can be no great difference in the quality of what the respective companies sell," &c., an error which any physician, whose opinion they might have asked, would have removed; and the Grand Junction Company, equally regardless, then as it is proved to have been previously, pumped up the water direct from the Thames into our cisterns, at all seasons of the year, at all periods of the tide, from a point of conflux with a large sewer. The reservoir at Paddington was not even employed to allow the heavier and glutinous parts of impurity to subside, for the steam-engine at that place had not been worked for *five years*,* nor until *after* Mr. Wright called the attention of the public to the foul and disgusting state of the water, in March 1827.

At the first appearance of Mr. Wright's pamphlet, the directors of this Company attempted to deny that the water was bad; they declared the complaints to be groundless, and resorted to the former accusation of vindictive feelings of persecution, of an attempt to excite a clamour against them without any cause, lavished much personal abuse, and threatened immediate prosecution. They have still the temerity to assert, in a printed paper, dated May 29th, 1828, distributed by the servants of the Company, that the directors do not believe the quality of the water is affected by the situation of their suction pipe, in defiance of the Commissioners' Report, which declares that there is a difference in the quality of the water at various stations, and that those specimens taken up near the Dolphin of the Grand Junction Company are amongst the worst, at all states of the tide.†

The same circular paper mentions the intention of the

* I was made acquainted with this fact by Mr. Mills, who received that information by a personal inquiry at the works.

† Report, p. 82. Dr. Bostock's Analysis.

directors to remove the Dolphin, "in deference to public opinion," and appeals to the *senses* for an acknowledgment of the improved state of the water, *lately*.

Now, Sir, if it was in the power of this Company to serve water in a better state, *before* the removal of the Dolphin, and during the suspension of these improvements they talk of carrying into effect, how culpable must have been their conduct in neglecting to employ such means of rendering the water more fit for the use of human beings, year after year, until they are forced to perform an act of justice: how like a repetition of the wanton negligence of leaving the filth to accumulate in their reservoir at Paddington for fourteen years!

Is it prudent, I would ask, to confide in the promises of persons by whom we have been *twice* deceived? Is it safe to deliver over any part of the community to the hazard of future mischief under the direction of those by whom confidence has been twice betrayed in the *quality* of the article supplied; independently of their present high charges, and prospective exorbitant scale of rates, solicited in Parliament at a time when the water was in a state of its *utmost impurity*?

But it appears, Sir, that there is a communication between the pipes of the Grand Junction and the West Middlesex Companies; and it is not *impossible* that the occasional improvement in colour of the water which has been lately sent into our cisterns, may have arisen from a little friendly accommodation from Hammersmith, where the water, though within reach of the tide, is unquestionably better than at Millbank. The Commissioners ascertained the fact of the communication, but their very limited powers did not, perhaps, warrant them in pushing the inquiry as to its application.

These observations upon former deficiency of quantity, and continued badness of quality, apply to the Grand

Junction Water Company ; such of them as refer to high charges in districts previously supplied by the old Companies, that is to say, the New River and Chelsea, are equally applicable to the West Middlesex, whose promises of abundance, cheapness, and facility of high service without extra charge, on account of the superiority of their machinery (constructed at the time of making such promises), were quite as flattering, and made with the same appearance of sincerity.*

A promise, Sir, is a moral obligation, upon which one of our best writers on this subject, Dr. Paley, remarks :—
“ Men act from expectation. Expectation is, in most cases, determined by the assurances and engagements which we receive from others. If no dependence could be placed on these assurances, it would be impossible to know what judgment to form of many future events, or how to regulate our conduct with respect to them.”†

Upon the faith of the promises already alluded to, a contract was made between the tenants of the *new* and the *newer* Water Companies and the Directors, acting in behalf of the other proprietors, under the sanction of Parliament. The obligations were reciprocal, and a contract was thus formed.

A contract, Sir, is a *mutual* promise, and it is laid down as a maxim by the same high authority, that “ The obligation of promises is to be measured by the expectation which the promiser any how *voluntarily* and *knowingly* excites.” A contract, therefore, is defined in these words :—“ Whatever is expected by one side, and known to be so expected by the other, is to be deemed a part or condition of the contract.”

* See Mr. Weale's pamphlet, “ The Case of the Water Companies stated and examined ;” in which copies of their prospectus and circular notices will be found, and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1821, page 70 *et seq.*

† See Moral Philosophy, vol. i. Promises.

That portion of the public, then, which consented to take water from the pipes of the *new* and the *newer* Companies, took it in the expectation that the terms and conditions would correspond with the printed representations and verbal assurances made by the agents of these establishments, whilst soliciting housekeepers to become their customers. Any considerable variation in the promised *purity* of the article, of which the published Analysis must be taken *as the sample on sale*, any departure from the *proposed* accommodation as to the mode of supply, any advance of price beyond what had been charged by their respectable predecessors, the old Companies, can only be recognized as a *breach of contract*, an abandonment of the principles on which such Companies were formed, and, as a consequence, a forfeiture of the right to claim parliamentary protection. Nor can this inference be denied so long as the Legislature shall act upon the acknowledged maxim of "*salus populi, suprema lex.*"

This conditional forfeiture and punishment are, indeed, admitted by the author of the "Calm Address," whilst pleading the cause of the Grand Junction Water Company. "There is no *legal* bar," he says, "either against the return of these (the old) Companies, or against the erection of new ones. In addition to these checks, is it likely that these Companies, though they should be *unprincipled* enough to give a *bad supply of water*,* or to aim at *extortion*, would be so far forgetful of their own interest, their reputation, and peace, as to *wrong* or *offend* the public? And *if they should*, could not the same power which created them, annihilate them, by retrenching their privileges, or even repealing their Acts? And would not the prospect of this be sufficiently appalling to any Company to insure their good conduct?"—P. 19, 20.

* Or a supply of bad water.

Now, Sir, this is precisely the point to which I would earnestly call your attention. The questions were put hypothetically in 1819—that is, if *this* should be done and *that* attempted—all which, and more than all, has come to pass, and by a *coup de justice* stands on record in a great measure by the testimony of their own engineer.

At the time of universal dissatisfaction in 1819, when housekeepers first learned the fact of a coalition of interests by certain water companies, and felt its effect by an advance of rate, a great deal of special pleading was employed by the same author, to persuade them that “two Companies in the same street *ought* to be more expensive than one; for it must cost the inhabitants *less* to afford a fair profit to one Company than to two, or more, each of which, supplying but half a street, or less, are obliged to maintain the same establishment as if they supplied the whole street.”

The only fair construction which these intimations and insinuations admit of is, that a considerable reduction was then about to be made in the assessments upon these housekeepers, served from the works of that Company. The time, however, has not yet arrived for the realization of such hopes; nor is it likely to arrive, whilst the assessors are the interested parties, and their own cupidity the only measure of assessment.

Competition, sir, from an open trade in other articles of life, as corn and cattle, or bread and meat, can be readily established and rapidly transferred from one place to another: but, a competition in the supply of water by fixed machinery does not possess equal facilities, and hence arises the injury to the public by a combination or confederacy between dealers in water, which can never occur from dealers in most other commodities. The exchange of pipes, and mutual agreement of such dealers to parcel out the town into districts, each supplied by one

set of works only, was the virtual establishment of a monopoly of this description.

Monopoly, Sir, is an evil of the greatest magnitude, and one which, as it regards the necessities of life, is guarded against by penal laws. The effects of an exclusive right of sale, or of the exclusive possession of a market for that which is vendible, is thus described by a writer on political economy: "The price of monopoly is, upon every occasion, the highest which can be got. The natural price, or the price of free competition, on the contrary, is the lowest which can be taken; not upon every occasion, indeed, but for any considerable time together. The one is, upon every occasion, the highest which can be squeezed out of the buyers, or which it is supposed they will consent to give; the other is the lowest which the sellers can commonly afford to take, and at the same time continue their business."*

That the situation of housekeepers supplied by the new Water Companies is exactly what Adam Smith has described, needs only a fair and dispassionate inquiry to ascertain by a reference to their former assessments under the old companies, and even by a comparison with the present rates paid to the old companies, particularly the New River, for houses of similar dimensions and service (high and low) of the same kind.†

* Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. i. c. 7.

† No. 10, Bury Street, St. James's (formerly No. 9) had been always served from the Chelsea Works; the charge £1. 1s. per annum. When the Grand Junction Company carried their pipes into the street, their agent called, asked what was paid, and then offered to serve the house for seventeen shillings. Their water was not taken; but when the collector of the Chelsea Company called, and was informed what had occurred, he observed, "Did he say so? then we will serve you for seventeen." From that time seventeen shillings was the sum paid. As soon as the Grand Junction got exclusive possession of the street (in 1819) an assessment was made of more than *five* times as much, including a charge for high service, as it was

The defenceless state which housekeepers of this district have endured, for the last fifteen years, demands your serious attention; and I beg respectfully to observe, that they seem to have as strong a claim upon you for protection, seeing what has occurred, as soldiers and sailors have through the commissioners of Victualling Boards for the supply of wholesome food to the army and navy; nor can I perceive the difference between the turpitude or moral delinquency of the flour-contractor, who sells by a good sample, and afterwards mixes plaster of Paris, or such other unwholesome ingredient, with the bulk of the flour delivered,* and the water-contractor, who covenants to sell a pure and wholesome article for domestic purposes (the printed statement of the *Analysis* being the sample), and afterwards sends that which is deteriorated by the means already noticed. In the former case the individual is disgraced, if not punished; in the latter, we have the example of a Board of Directors denying palpable facts,† and giving countenance to the

called; being a cistern between the parlour and drawing-room floor, actually *lower* than the pavement in Piccadilly. After some contest, this demand for high-service was relinquished. Dissatisfaction was expressed at the new rate for general service, and the pipe from the main to that house was cut off. The family, in that destitute situation, was obliged to comply; an assessment of three guineas per annum was made, and is paid up to this time, being 300 per cent. advance upon the rate of the Chelsea Company, for water taken up within 400 yards of the same spot. Wm. Holmes, Esq., M.P., of Grafton Street, knows the family, and is aware of these facts.

Sir Peter Lawrie, No. 7, Park Square, told me lately that he pays to the West Middlesex Company £9. 10s. per annum for a house which (judging from what is done at this time) the New River Company would charge from two to three guineas, and its contiguity to their reservoir at the top of Tottenham Court Road would have led them to serve that district, were it not for the *Arrangement*: his neighbours pay in the same proportions.

* Several hundred sacks were found to be thus adulterated last year.

† "The directors do not themselves believe that the quality of the Company's supply is affected by the situation of their suction pipe,"

circulation of anonymous pamphlets, abusing those whom they have injured.*

I shall next endeavour to correct the misrepresentations and fallacious inferences in the letter of the "Old House-keeper," by a plain exposition of his statements. He begins with the following curious assemblage of words: "Dr. Paris is made to appear to say, that though the water may appear pure to the eye, it may be far from being so." Now, Sir, Dr. Paris did positively assert, and so will every other physician of knowledge and probity, that many things may be held in solution in water, which do not destroy its transparency, but which will, nevertheless, render it unfit for domestic use; and Dr. Paris states the broad fact, that there were certain unwholesome impregnations from animal matters in the water sent from the works of the Grand Junction Water Company. The same thing is mentioned by the commissioners at page 10 and 11 of their Report, with this addition: "It is obvious, that water receiving so large a proportion of foreign matters as we know find their way into the Thames, and so far impure as to destroy fish, cannot, even when clarified by filtration, be pronounced entirely free from the suspicion of general insalubrity."

He then declares that the proportional impurities from the banks of the New River, must be greater than from the Thames: this may be true, as regards their comparative state above the reflux of the tide; but is absolutely false as regards the banks of the river within the London district, where it receives the contents of 140 common sewers, and it is particularly foul at the spot whence the

&c.—Circular from the Grand Junction Water Works Office, May 27, 1828.

* I am informed the printed letter to you, signed "An Old House-keeper," is to be had at the office, and that it has been distributed in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square.

Grand Junction water is taken, which water he declares to have been for years past better than that from the New River.

The "Old Housekeeper," "no partizan of either side except in so far as the cause of truth and justice is concerned," although he quotes passages from the Commissioners' Report, has not the candour to enter upon their remarks concerning the noxious matters from sewer-drainage and gas-works largely combined with, and diffused through, the water, and talks merely of the fractions of "chalk or marble, plaster of Paris and kitchen salt," not being hurtful in minute quantities, and does not even hint at urinous salts. He knows that water in rivers and wells, unless distilled, always contains a trace of such matters as he mentions, and that the objections never did turn upon those points. The next is a false representation, leading to a dangerous inference; namely, that Thames water is better in proportion to the quantity of refuse-matters contained. It is really sickening to witness such a perversion of the mind in an attempt to bewilder your understanding, and wilfully to mislead your judgment, in a case where the health of tens of thousands of human beings is concerned: he says, "and further, that even those ships which go on long voyages, should not only not object to it (Thames-water), but prefer it to all other water, though taken from the pool, that is, that part of the river which skirts the Tower and Wapping."*

Now, Sir, the position the "Old Housekeeper" takes is this. If navigators *prefer* such water, *we* ought not to object to that which comes from the mouth of the Ranelagh sewer.†

* It is not many months since the Lord Mayor, as conservator of the Thames, endeavoured to prevent the foul and noxious drainage in the Tower ditch from being let into the Thames, although it does, and ever will, find its way there by direct or indirect means.

† See Mr. Dowling, the Surveyor's evidence, page 72, in the Appendix of the Commissioners' Report.

The facts and just inferences, I believe to be these. Water from the Thames in the pool is equally, and often more, loaded with animal filth, and slightly mixed with marine water. When put into casks, it soon begins a process of decomposition, called "the putrid fermentation;" its principles (proximate principles) are separated, and enter into new combinations; the insoluble matters subside, and a very fetid, volatile gas is disengaged, which, on taking the bung out of the cask, is horribly stinking and noxious.*

The ultimate elements of all bodies in nature are few; the insoluble parts having subsided after decomposition, and the gaseous matters permitted to escape, the remainder of the water is more pure in consequence of a closer attraction of its ultimate elements (hydrogen and oxygen), and in this state it is fit for use, except only, as I am informed, sometimes occurs in long voyages, that it requires to be strained from the insects and maggots generated in the deposit or called into life from the spawn or larvæ of insects in the water, when it was put into the casks.

The difference, therefore, is obvious from this short explanation. The process of putrid fermentation, which tends to a depuration of this water *when long at rest*, can never be completed in our cisterns, where the daily agitation of a partial deposit, notwithstanding the greatest care, will keep the water impure, and in hot weather, when the mass of floating filth of the town bears a greater relative proportion from the partial deficiency of fresh water to dilute it, the *putrid* fermentation actually commences in our cisterns; a bad odour is exhaled, and gives rise to those signs, so perceptible to all except the "Old Housekeeper," which were declared to exist by men of

* The "Old Housekeeper" knows all this, having been, I believe, formerly attached to the navy.

high professional character (see the Appendix to the Commissioners' Report, pages 137-140), whose assertions you will probably consider worthy of confidence, without even this reference to natural causes.

The next delusive position is, that the water pumped direct from the mouth of the Ranelagh sewer *must be* good and wholesome, because Sir Henry Halford, Dr. Bree, and Dr. Turner, in replies to a general inquiry, do not relate specific facts, and adduce cases of actual illness from its use; and the "Old Housekeeper" appears extremely wrathful against Dr. Paris, for saying, that the general health is affected by the badness of water. Now, the fact of its being so was, and is, as well known to the learned president of the college, and the other gentlemen named; but Dr. Paris being one of the committee appointed last year at a General Meeting of Housekeepers, probably felt it his duty towards the public to state the fact in more precise terms: but, let us see what the Commissioners say on this point, at page 10 of their Report: "There must always be considerable difficulty in obtaining decisive evidence of an influence, which, although actually operating to a certain extent as a cause of constitutional derangement, may yet not be sufficiently powerful to produce *immediate* and *obvious* injury. It cannot be denied, that the continued use of a noxious ingredient in diet may create a tendency to disorders, which do not actually break out until fostered by the concurrence of other causes: for we unquestionably find an influence of the same kind exerted by other agents, which occasion merely a certain *predisposition* to disease, and of which the immediate operation must therefore be extremely insidious and difficult to trace." These sentiments are in perfect accordance with my own, briefly expressed to the Commissioners in February last, and noticed by them at page 101 of the Appendix to

their Report. Here, then, the opinions of the "Old Housekeeper" are rebutted by the assertions of Dr. Paris and the Commissioners.

The rambling digression* of the "Old Housekeeper" about the plague in London in 1665; that the bloody flux, ague, and *sea* scurvy began to disappear from this city about 150 years ago; that mortality is not so great, comparatively, as it was at that period, or even in 1750; has no reference to the present inquiry. The old story, to be found nearly in the same words in the "Succinct Statement," and "Calm Address," about fires at the Opera-House, Saint James's Palace, the Theatres, and thirty houses in four different streets, was refuted by Mr. Weale eight years ago, so far as the agency of the new Water Companies was concerned.† Why omit the fire at Ratcliffe, in 1794, where 600 houses were burned close to the water-side? This, perhaps, might have proved *too much*, by shewing that great ravages by fire might occur in whole streets built chiefly of wood, and before party-walls were indispensable, even when the supply of water was not deficient, as on this occasion, where it was served both from an engine on the river and others from plugs in the streets.

Your correspondent the "Old Housekeeper" is very angry with the Commissioners, who appear to have incurred his displeasure by publishing the whole of the evidence in an Appendix, and by endeavouring to collect facts from those who had carried their attention to the

* This digression proves that the writer is of the medical profession, from which he may have *now* retired and therefore call himself a private gentleman: but the quibble places him in a distressing dilemma respecting Thames water from the Tower and Wapping, by shewing that a man may grow old with a very confused notion of first principles, which it was his duty to have understood; or that, knowing them, he attempts to deceive a minister of state, and to perpetuate a public nuisance.

† Case of the Water Companies stated and examined, p. 7.

subject, instead of sending for persons more promisingly, who, however respectable and well-meaning, might have known little of the matter; he pursues this subject through several pages, and hints at the subornation of perjury. I will leave these points to those able and honourable men named in his Majesty's commission, who will probably treat such accusations with the contempt they deserve: for their reputation is too well established to be shaken by such insinuations.

The next mis-statement is of a personal nature, and exhibits a most disingenuous mind. It appears from Mr. Wright's Memoir to the Commissioners, at page 144-5 of the Appendix to their Report, that a gentleman in the name of Robson was for many years a director of the Grand Junction Water Company; that some time before he died he became conscious of the injury inflicted on the public in *that capacity*; that he endeavoured, as far as he was able, to atone for such injury, by discountenancing their proceedings, and tried to get rid of what he considered a public nuisance—the Dolphin. Your correspondent, Sir, who declares that he feels it his duty to do his utmost “to bring about a fair and upright consideration of the case,” attempts to associate Mr. Robson's name with this Dolphin, placed by the Regent's Canal Company, in the affairs of which Company *he* had no concern, and thus to fix a stigma upon the memory of a man who had the merit, at least, of repentance.

Having no knowledge of the late Mr. Robson, I am not aware how far the appellation of a “hard-mouthed wrangler” may be justly applicable; yet, presuming him to have been a positive man, of mistaken political opinions, what have politics to do with the Water-Question? Whigs and Tories are alike concerned in the possession of a *pure stream* of water for domestic purposes, and in

the acquisition of a suitable quantity, at a reasonable price.

There is something extremely revolting in the perusal of deliberate mis-statements, and of posthumous calumny : the motives of a writer for concealing his name whilst he condescends to employ them, are sufficiently obvious, particularly if it should appear that he had been for years a coadjutor with Mr. Robson, whilst the water came from the foul suction-pipe at Paddington, as well as since it has been drawn from the nasty Dolphin at Ranelagh ; and in taking leave of the *argumentation* of the "Old Housekeeper," I must be permitted to express a hope, that his general conduct, in the varied intercourse with society, has been regulated by notions of truth and justice, different from those exhibited in advocating the affairs of this Water Company.

The unprotected state of housekeepers and their families having now been pointed out,* and some of the oppressive effects of Water Companies, established since the commencement of the present century, practically illustrated, with a few remarks upon misrepresentations in the anonymous writings by which the interests of shareholders are sustained, it remains only for me to offer a few observations, pointing at the remedy.

In doing this, the first step, I think, is to withdraw the question from that false light which has been improperly and intentionally thrown around it, and to take a view of the subject upon principles of public utility, of mutual obligation between the suppliers and the supplied ; to endeavour to form a fair comparison between the indispensable cost of production and the sum to be paid

* The Parliamentary Committee of 1821 were aware of this fact, and its probable consequence, for they observed at page 8 of their Report :—"The public is at present without any protection, even against a further indefinite extension of demand."

by the consumers of the article produced; or, in other words, to ascertain the amount of the Rate which should be assessed upon housekeepers for water, to yield proper interest upon capital, *and no more*.

This, Sir, appears to have been the view taken by the Parliamentary Committee in 1821 (speaking of expenditure beyond the necessity of the occasion, p. 7):—
“The question for the Legislature being always this, and only this, could the public be served cheaper, at a fair rate of profit? for, without such a rate of profit, a competition would not be practicable.”

I am at a loss, Sir, to distinguish a difference in the situation of those gentlemen who have countenanced many of the ingenious, although unfortunate, undertakings (Bubble-schemes, founded in delusion and pursued in fraud, being omitted), lately projected, all promising something for “the public good;” and those who have risked their money in water-works, and in particular the Grand Junction water-works, uncalled for upon any principle of necessity or probable usefulness, for reasons already mentioned. The talk about persecution is ungrateful and unjust. Who ever interfered with public Companies, whilst their obligations were honestly fulfilled? When found useful they are encouraged, and become lucrative; their prosperity sometimes excites the cupidity of other speculators, and the market becomes overstocked, by which the profit of both is abridged. If, on the contrary, they have been improvidently formed, they are unprofitable from the beginning, and the projectors lose their money, and are excused from carrying their laudable intentions of public benefit into effect, without reproof.

It is an insult to common sense to talk of vested rights, or to complain of loss upon trading capitals voluntarily subscribed; but, when the managers, or directors, of Joint Stock Companies deviate from their engagements, for the

purpose of augmenting their profits, it is generally admitted, I believe, that they ought to be interfered with; and, if they persist in that injurious course, that they should be made to feel the effect of a breach of faith, by the loss of parliamentary sanction and of public patronage.

With respect to the new Water Companies, Sir, it is full time, both from a reference to the report of the special committee of 1821, and a retrospect of the occurrences of the last seven years, that effective measures be adopted without delay, to guard the health and property of the inhabitants of certain districts of London from further hazard and encroachment.

That there is something wrong, or at least, requiring the severest scrutiny, in the system pursued during the last nine or ten years by the new Companies at the west end of the town, will be evident, Sir, when you are informed, that in the metropolis of Ireland, housekeepers are supplied with abundance of good water at so cheap a rate, that Gresham's Hotel in Sackville-treet, Dublin, an establishment which makes up above a hundred beds and is fully as large as Hatchett's in Piccadilly, pays £3. 10s. a year for water, and that £1. 10s. of this sum was a *temporary* addition to defray the expense of iron pipes,* and has either ceased this year, or will terminate with the next, when the regular assessment will be only £2,† whilst the sum of *twenty-five pounds* is charged by the Grand Junction Water Company to Mr. Hatchett, and has been paid for several years, although the principal part of the water used in that hotel is derived from a well on the premises, dug at the expense of £1,000, as explained

* The particulars of the supply of water in Dublin, and this temporary addition on account of the "metal main," will be found in the second volume of Whitelaw and Walsh's History of the City of Dublin.

† This fact was given to me by Mr. Weale, who ascertained it last year, when at Dublin.

in the statement of Mr. Beare, at page 47 of the Appendix to the Commissioners' Report.

The supply of water to the metropolis of Scotland is taken from an elevated ridge, the Pentland hills, eight or nine miles south-west of Edinburgh. It is abundant and cheap, not exceeding the average of twenty shillings *annually* for each house.*

These facts, Sir, of the reasonableness of charge for the use of water in those two principal cities of the empire next to London, would alone be sufficient to awaken your attention to the condition of housekeepers within the district of the new Companies, and induce you to pause before giving assent to the adoption of any new measures of a Company or Companies, whose charges had been upon the extravagant scale already noticed.

I am desirous, Sir, of calling your attention to this point, *at this time*, because it appears to me very probable, that the managers of the Grand Junction Water Company, in the desperate situation of their affairs, by this second detection of the foulness of the source of their supply, will either coalesce with the West Middlesex Company, or go higher up the Thames, and then make an *additional* demand, as a compensation for the additional outlay of capital to *accommodate* their customers. If Parliament, therefore, should sanction such arrangements, the effect would be to confirm the present assessments and afford a reasonable plea for future exactions: on the other hand, if the Commissioners, lately appointed by his Majesty, were authorized to proceed in their investigations, and to make a report on the remedy, I think that it will appear practicable for the community of this great metropolis to enjoy an abundance of

* Mr. Mills, an engineer who was engaged in the work, being employed, I believe, under Mr. Telford, gave me this information about Edinburgh lately.

excellent water at charges closely approximating to those of Dublin and Edinburgh.

It might be considered premature to anticipate what the Commissioners would advise, because that would depend upon the information acquired when their powers should be extended to make the requisite inquiries, aided by the great experience of one of them in the accomplishment of similar undertakings; but it is quite clear that the advocate of the Grand Junction Company acknowledges the right of Parliament to control, and even to annihilate, the new establishments (see p. 16), under circumstances there stated.

It will not have escaped your observation, Sir, that the proofs of the reasonableness of our dissatisfaction with the past conduct of the Grand Junction Water Company have been chiefly taken from the evidence of their own engineer. The absurdity of their present professions is exhibited in their letter to the Commissioners of the 15th of April, in which they first declare that the charges brought against them were groundless or futile; then talk of removing the Dolphin, and improving the state of the supply, and launch into indefinite promises of extraordinary future exertions; and these conflicting statements are confirmed by their circular notice of May 27, 1828, which, after the experience of the past, no man in his senses would venture to confide in, upon such representations.

As to the annoyance which I and the other 7,000 housekeepers have sustained for the last period of fourteen or fifteen years by bad water from the works of this Company, I confess that I might have felt some diffidence in hinting at a measure so justly severe for its removal, had I not seen the expressions of that experienced writer, and one so devoted to the subject; yet all the contingencies having occurred, under which he declared *that* to be justifiable, I would respectfully submit, Sir, whether this be not the

proper time for acting upon his suggestion, and thus sparing the new directors of this Company* the mortification of incurring the odium of a *third* blundering attempt to become purveyors of water to such fastidious people as complained of the limpid streams of the Colne and the Brent, and the clean and wholesome beverage from the Thames close to the murmuring brook, the *seat* of the Graces, at Ranelagh.

With respect to the establishment of reservoirs, I am of opinion, that the mere subsidence of mud, &c. would be nugatory; for the deposit must be washed into the sewers and return to the Thames, or stagnating, contaminate the air by unwholesome exhalations. Filtering will not take away *all* objectionable matters; because *urinous* salts pass a filter unchanged, even through folds of blotting-paper. Charcoal and sand, or sand alone, arrest *mechanical* impurities; but, upon a large scale, these strainers would be soon rendered partially impervious by the glutinous stuff in the Thames, and would require frequent change. What would be done with the refuse? Would it be left to accumulate in the neighbourhood of a regal palace, and render its atmosphere less wholesome?†

I beg to offer a few words upon what seem to me the practicable sources of supply of water for the use of the inhabitants of this vast metropolis and its environs.

* It appears from the "Old Housekeeper's" pamphlet, that there has been almost a total change of directors within the last year and a half.

† The subject of insalubrity from exhalation cannot be discussed here; every well-informed medical practitioner understands it. As to the effect of evaporation from mud in which much vegetable matter was deposited, an example occurred a few years ago in St. James's Park. Mr. Annandale, a surgeon and apothecary in Queen-street, Westminster, told me, about a month ago, that he had *four* cases of fever at that period in patients who resided on the south side of the park near to where the mud was spread, which he could trace to that cause, and which he attributed to that cause at the time of their occurrence.

Water taken up at Isleworth, or a little higher, might be distributed to the western parts of London as far as Tottenham Court Road, or thereabouts, including the whole parish of St. Mary-le-bone, and extending to the southern parts of Westminster, altogether about 30,000 houses.

The New River might be safely continued in possession of its present district (66,000 houses), between Tottenham Court Road, Bishopsgate Street, and the Tower, its southern boundary being Thames Street and the Strand to Charing Cross.* If more water be required than can be spared from the Lea in aid of the Chadwell spring, it might be well to ascertain whether the water of the Roding could not be conducted into the Lea in case of deficiency for navigation purposes, seeing that it is only navigable from Barking Creek to Ilford.

The Lea might continue to serve the eastern district north of the Thames, as at present; but the water should be taken from a higher part of the river, and above the reflux of London filth, flowing up Bow Creek; for it appears in evidence, that the reservoir of this Company is, at present, filled *at high water*.

The southern district of the metropolis (between Lambeth and Rotherhithe or Deptford) appears to be served with water loaded with most gross impurities, and property exposed to unnecessary hazard from fire by the want of a reservoir of sufficient capacity and in an elevated situation.

The horse-shoe form of this district, shewn by the map from the Ordnance Survey, is favourable to the ready distribution of water from one or more sets of works, and

* The suction pipe at Broken Wharf, flanked on the east by the Walbrook sewer at Dowgate Hill, and on the west by Fleet-ditch, must be abandoned. A polluted stream from the left must be received when the tide is running up, and from the right when running down.

the best source of supply for them appears to be the neighbourhood of Kingston.

Putney Heath, or Wimbledon Common, are in a direct line between that point of the river and Kennington Common; they are elevated greatly above the level of every part of the southern district, and the ridge of hills between Brixton and New Cross seem to offer the same facilities for auxiliary reservoirs, as Kensington Gravel Pits, the rising ground near the Paddington Canal, *little* Primrose Hill, and Islington, possess for the service of water north of the Thames.

I must now conclude, Sir, by observing, it appears to me an extraordinary thing that the sum assessed upon housekeepers at the west end of the town for the supply of water should be, in numerous instances, more than half the amount of the poor's rate, and that these new companies, which have been the cause of the great increase within the last ten years, by the dereliction of principle herein elucidated, should be permitted to pursue their system, without an official inquiry being instituted, for the purpose of ascertaining *whether or not* such high rates be necessary for the attainment of the object, *viz.* an abundant supply of good water for domestic purposes. Nor is it the less surprising that this should be tolerated, at a time when the well-being of the state requires the continuation of assessed taxes, the ready payment of which, by the less opulent class of housekeepers, must be on many occasions impeded by the present demands of these Water-companies, and rendered prospectively more difficult by the bill, slipped through Parliament at the close of the session of 1826, by which the assessments for the Grand Junction water may be raised in many instances to double, in some to treble the amount paid at this time. As I have been a housekeeper full thirty years in this parish, during which time my King's taxes have been

paid without murmur, and parochial assessments without contention; I claim the privilege of commenting with freedom upon a species of local taxation, by which neither the State nor the parish are benefited.

In the hope that the subject may be immediately resumed under the sanction of Parliament, and brought to a satisfactory conclusion,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir,

With the greatest respect,

Your obedient servant,

ROBERT MASTERS KERRISON, M.D.

New Burlington Street,

June 30, 1828.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE manuscript of this Letter was in the printer's hands, when I had the satisfaction of finding that a Parliamentary Committee was appointed on Tuesday the 1st instant, to inquire into the particulars of the Water Question, and report thereon. Accept, Sir, my best thanks for this proof of your candour, in permitting an extended view of the subject to modify your earlier opinions: I have no doubt that the same good feeling, and an increased acquaintance with the subject, will induce you to act according to the dictates of an impartial mind, associated with a bold and vigorous judgment; and notwithstanding "*tot sustineas*," that you will be able to encounter the fatigue of looking into the dirty-water business of the "Old Housekeeper," and to bear the well-merited praise of honestly assisting to rescue 7,700 other housekeepers from the effects of that plausible sophistry, by which they have been so long deluded.

R. M. K.

July 3, 1828.

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R. M. K.

July 2. 1858.







