

**Abstract of the proceedings of the public meeting held at Exeter Hall, Dec. 11, 1844.**

**Contributors**

Health of Towns Association (London, England)

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# HEALTH OF TOWNS ASSOCIATION.

ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS,

OF

# THE PUBLIC MEETING

HELD AT EXETER HALL,

DEC. 11, 1844.

CONTAINING THE SPEECHES

OF THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUESS OF NORMANBY, CHAIRMAN ;  
 SIR R. H. INGLIS, BART., M.P. ; B. HAWES, JUN., ESQ. M.P. ;  
 R. L. SHEIL, ESQ. M.P. ; REV. W. W. CHAMPNEYS ; SIR W. CLAY, BART. M.P. ;  
 R. D. GRAINGER, ESQ. ; THE HON. W. COWPER, M.P. ;  
 R. A. SLANEY, ESQ. ; DR. SOUTHWOOD SMITH,  
 &c., &c. ;

TOGETHER WITH A FORM OF PETITION.

LONDON :  
 CHARLES KNIGHT AND CO., 22, LUDGATE STREET.

PRICE TWOPENCE.





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## HEALTH OF TOWNS ASSOCIATION.

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AT a public meeting held at Exeter Hall, on Wednesday the 11th of December, 1844, the most Noble the Marquess of Normanby in the Chair, an association was formed for the purpose of diffusing among the people the information obtained by recent inquiries, as to the physical and moral evils that result from the present defective sewerage, drainage, supply of water, air and light, and construction of dwelling-houses; and also for the purpose of assisting the legislature to carry into practical operation any effectual and general measures of relief, by preparing the public mind for the change. These objects, while they concern in a greater or less degree the health and life of the whole community, more immediately and deeply involve the well-being of the poorer classes; and they are objects which enlightened and benevolent men, of all political and religious opinions and feelings, and of all professions and pursuits, may cordially combine to promote. The expectation that such men would unite and labour on this common ground, without regard to sect or party, has not been disappointed; and both the objects themselves, and the spirit in which it is desired to pursue them, will more clearly appear by the following abstract of the proceedings of the meeting, at which this association was founded:—

After reading letters from several eminent persons, expressing their cordial sympathy with the objects of the meeting, and explaining the circumstances which prevented their personal attendance, among others from the Bishop of London, the Bishop of St. David's, the Bishop of Norwich, Lord John Manners, M.P., Mr. D'Israeli, M.P., the Venerable Archdeacon Wilberforce, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bart., Mr. Ridley Colborne, M.P., Mr. M'Kinnon, M.P., and Lord Ashley, M.P., the Noble CHAIRMAN said,—



Although the object which they had now assembled to promote was one which had met with the most remarkable concurrence of opinion from men of all parties, no attempt had hitherto been made to combine their efforts, so as to give a practical effect to those opinions; yet the health of the people was the one thing in the promotion of which all might co-operate, whatever in other respects their adverse theories, social and political. Even an autocrat, if wise, and an enlightened patriot, might here meet on common ground; for the despot who looks upon his fellow men as machines to extend his own power, and the philanthropist who regards the sorrows of others as his own, must both attach the first importance, for the realization of the virtuous wishes of the one, and the ambitious projects of the other, to the physical well-being, the health and strength of the people amongst whom they live.

How then did it happen that such a state of things as was exhibited in the reports recently laid before the legislature had been permitted to grow up? His own attention had been first fixed upon the subject in consequence of particular opportunities for observing the details which had occurred to him during the time he had had the honour to hold a high public office. But from that time he had never felt more strongly than at the present moment the conviction, not only that nothing had been done to remove these terrible evils, but that they were actually in a state of daily increasing virulence; and taken, as they must be, in connexion with other circumstances in the social condition of the poorer orders, they gave room for a well-grounded anxiety for the permanence of our national greatness. The most striking instances of the deterioration of physical strength were to be found in the districts where the greatest social changes had taken place within the last thirty years—where the investment of capital and the development of mechanical discoveries had collected a large population together, without an attempt being made to secure their physical well-being. But yet there is scarcely a district exempted from some share in the charge of such neglect. If they turned their glance upon the metropolis, it was not the busy east alone which was obnoxious to it, for in the neighbourhood of the well-ventilated squares of the west there were dense courts and alleys containing within themselves the seeds of disease germinating there, ready to spread their baleful influence around. All this was disgraceful and dangerous.

Since the last session of Parliament he had studied the



report presented by the Commission on the Health of Towns; and though he might have his own opinion that that commission was but a bad substitute for action, still he did not wish to obtrude that opinion now, and he was quite ready to admit that the report of the commission afforded ample food for reflection, and an additional stimulus for the adoption of every possible means to remove such fearful evils.

He had also searched the reports connected with the last census—taking a peculiar interest in this subject from the situation which he had held when the Act had to be passed and the commission appointed. It had been his object that statistical information, of a more varied and valuable character, should be collected. And for more reasons than one, it was gratifying to him to hear the general testimony to the zeal and ability with which the gentlemen appointed had executed their task.

At such a meeting as the present it was impossible not to express regret that legislation on this subject had been so long delayed; but he was desirous not so much to express regret for the past as to secure the zealous co-operation of all for the future; and in this spirit, in estimating the increase of evils, such as were referred to in large territorial tracts, regard must be had to the particular circumstances attending each.

The county of Lancaster stood foremost in bad pre-eminence amongst unhealthy counties; but it must be recollected that in making calculations derived from an extensive district, the comparison was much weakened by there being necessarily a large admixture of a population of a different and sometimes opposite description from that which gave it its peculiar character. In some respects, however, distinct from health, Lancaster had gained greatly; for he saw by the returns upon the last repeal of the income tax, there had been an increase of property in that county as compared with the present time, of 136 per cent. It would be imagined, then, that this was a district in which prosperity most generally prevailed. How was the fact? At the time of the census preceding that repeal of the income tax, the rate of mortality was one in fifty on the whole kingdom. Now the rate of mortality was one in forty-five. How did this happen? How would they account for this diminution of the physical strength of the nation in the face of increased wealth, of improved science in the art of healing diseases, and of improved moral and temperate habits



among the people? To solve the difficulty they must point to particular districts of the country, note the statistical facts, and draw their inferences. The mortality in Lancashire thirty years ago was one in forty-six, or less than the general average of England at the present moment. Now the mortality in that county was one in thirty-six. Still there was a difference in the mortality as regarded different districts in the same county. The value of life in Ulverstone, for instance, is stated by Dr. Playfair to be double what it is in Manchester—Manchester which, as he says, enjoys the unenviable notoriety of being the second unhealthy town in the kingdom, and where the mortality was, upon the most favourable estimate, 1 in 28.

There were eight counties in England in which the average value of life stood at present higher than it was 30 years ago, and they were counties in which the least social change of the kind alluded to had taken place: they were Devonshire, Cornwall, Dorsetshire, Herefordshire, Sussex, Lincolnshire, Hampshire, and the North Riding of Yorkshire.

He would briefly advert to one other point—namely, the amount of instruction possessed by the people; and he found by calculations drawn from the marriage certificates signed, that in this respect Lancaster stood one of the lowest. The mean of those who could not write their own names in Lancashire was 52 out of 100; and the women still lower, being 67 out of 100. But then this was upon the whole county of Lancaster, and part borders upon Westmoreland, where the instruction is amongst the highest. Take from the Report of the recent Commission for Inquiring into the state of Large Towns, testimony as to the state of that town in which the manufacturers which give it a peculiar character exist in the greatest proportion to the general population. Ashton-under-Lyne:—With respect to Ashton, Mr. Coulthart reports to the Commissioners that only 20 persons out of 100—12 men and 8 women—could now sign their marriage certificate; whereas, by looking back, he finds that 80 years ago, 70 out of 100 had then that species of instruction. This was not the result which, without gross neglect somewhere, one would have expected to have followed from enterprise waiting upon capital. Then turn to the eight counties already quoted as still retaining an average value of life above what the general average of England was 30 years ago. In all of these—Bæotian though some of



them are supposed to be—the amount of instruction is higher than in Lancashire. The North Riding of Yorkshire is the highest. He was intimately connected with the North Riding of Yorkshire himself, and knowing how much remained to be done in this respect there, he knew how low must be that scale where it holds the first place! Yorkshire is often treated as one county. Yorkshiremen like so to consider it. Between the West and the North there would seem no distinction, except the greater wealth of the West, from its thriving towns; but education is in the proportion of 5 to 3 in favour of the North over the West.

To turn from this to the next column in the Return, more directly but hardly more truly connected with the objects of the meeting—the proportion of houses to inhabitants—there are nearly twice as many houses to the same number of inhabitants in the North as in the West Riding. Lancashire is very low in the scale, too; and Hereford the only inland county in which the value of life is at the highest, has also the greatest number of houses to its inhabitants.

He had just stated that the value of property in the county of Lancashire had increased 136 per cent. since the last income tax: take the eight most healthy counties mentioned above, and take an average amongst them, and even including Sussex with its thriving watering-places, the value of property in the eight had only increased 38 per cent.: in property, 98 per cent., or 3 to 1 in favour of the one side; in health, 2 to 1 in favour of the other. If such is the case,—if wealth and death held divided empire over new districts which formerly were neither marked by their power nor their preference, does it not become every one interested in the future welfare of his country to inquire whence this arises; what are the causes of this not necessary alliance?

Much did he wish that persons of all parties, instead of reciprocating reproach and crimination, would turn their attention to the justice of the charge of neglect, to the relative longevity of different classes of the people, and to the proportions in which those who had been connected with each class were found in the workhouse, the gaol, the hospital, and the lunatic asylum. It was also important to bear in mind that the mere money amount of wages were often but a very imperfect criterion of the relative social position: above all, that which passed merely through the hands of the labourer in the shape of in-



creased rent for a worse home, on account of the local exigencies of the business in which he was employed, might be a reduction to that extent from the profits of that business; but, though called extra wages, was no advantage whatever to the working man.

If there were proved neglect on the part of those who, beyond a mere passing connexion, were bound to their dependants by local ties and hereditary associations, heavier blame would attach to them than to any other class. He felt that all honour was due to those who, during the course of the last thirty years, had, in the exercise of their practical industry brought into beneficial use those grand mechanical and scientific discoveries of the age which, more than any political change or event, would render that age for ever remarkable—that all honour was due to those who had made such varied articles of prime necessity cheap to our own population and objects of profitable barter to the world. If they had by such laudable means so far added to the capital of the country, they were its real benefactors; but if in the course of their proceedings there was something to blame, or perhaps more to regret, in their conduct towards those who were dependent upon them—if something in this respect, which might be amended, had grown up with a state of things, depending as it did so much upon confidence between the parties engaged, they must recollect that any rash interference, or undue prejudice, excited against any class in this country, would not only sap the foundation of national greatness, but produce the greatest evil to the very classes which were dependent upon the other. At the same time he was not the wisest friend to the manufacturers who should persuade them that there was nothing between them and their dependants that could be amended.

The question before the meeting was not one merely of bricks and mortar, of ventilators and drains: the best regulations in the world might be made regarding all these points, but much of the comfort of the dwelling must depend upon the character of the inhabitant. His valued friend, Dr. Southwood Smith, had proved in his evidence that filth and discomfort deteriorate the moral condition; that the worst places contain the greatest criminals; and on the other hand, although it might be true that moral habits could not endure without a decent home, it was true likewise that no decent home could be long sustained without moral habits.



It had been said that the great postulate of society at the present day was, that every man should have a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. He thought the point also to which they ought to address their energies was, that there should be a fair day's work as well as a fair day's wages; not such days of excessive work as were but too common in some occupations and districts. It must be remembered that the interval between the period of work and that repose which is necessary for the restoration of strength was, in point of fact, the whole existence of the working man—that is, all the existence which distinguishes one man from another as good or bad, whether as a citizen, a neighbour, or a Christian, must be condensed within that little space—all that is left for the exercise of the affections or the faculties, for the study and performance of the duties which belong to a responsible being. If, then, a certain interval of time was necessary for the cultivation and maintenance of moral habits, and for properly sustaining the comforts of a home, he contended that it was as necessary to have only a fair day's work as a fair day's wages. If they meant to give the poor man the comforts of a home, they could not do so unless some interval was likewise left to him for information, and for the maintenance of domestic habits. Every page of the Report bore upon these points, and he would refer the meeting, particularly, to the statements of Mr. Clay, as to Preston, and of Mr. Coulthart, as to Ashton-under-Lyne.

Infant mortality, a striking ingredient in the statistics of these towns, was traced by them both to the neglect of the overworked mother.

Mr. Chadwick, in his admirable report—and there was no man to whom those interested in these subjects were more deeply indebted—drew attention to several facts intimately connected with the physical condition of the masses of the people. He stated, for example, on the authority of the recruiting officers, that a regiment raised in a manufacturing district lasted only half as long as one taken from agricultural districts. There was also a curious calculation given by Mr. Coulthart, as to the average weight, height, and longevity, of the labouring classes in England, France, Russia, Belgium, Sweden, &c., regard being had particularly to the inhabitants of Ashton-under-Lyne; and although it was pleasing to see that the proportion in these respects was still larger in England generally than any other country, yet look to



Ashton, its inhabitants, both as to strength as estimated by weight, by height, and longevity, were below all. It is also stated by Mr. Chadwick, that the sons in Manchester and other places were inferior in all physical qualities to their fathers.

Still, in spite of all these startling facts, there were some, actuated certainly with the best intentions, who would say, leave all to the march of civilization, as if that march had not in these respects been, during the last quarter of a century, retrograde. Others proposed to deal with this question piecemeal. He contended that to proceed wholesale was the best and cheapest mode. For example, according to the testimony of Mr. Roe, in the Report on the Health of Towns, water and drainage of houses might be had at a less cost than the emptying of the cesspools.

Again, in Mr. Chadwick's Report, it would be seen that by a particular construction of drains, and the use of water, the expense of cartage might be saved. It was far from his intention to underrate the value of any separate measures of amelioration that might be taken, whether in the shape of public baths and washhouses, or of public walks and parks; but he should deprecate one and all if they were to be considered as affording the least reason for a pause in the proceeding with a more general, comprehensive, and effectual system. There was a calculation in one of the reports to which he had alluded, given by Mr. Clay and Mr. Coulthart, as to what would be the charges spread over a number of years, with means for the repayment of the same with interest, of supplying water in abundance to every house, of complete sewerage, with proper side drains; of a new method of ventilation by Mr. Toynebee, and of the cleansing the streets by an improved mode, and also of opening and widening streets to a certain extent; of the maintenance of public parks, and last and most important, including the salary of an officer of health at 300*l.* a-year. All these charges taken together, and the gross sum to be paid in twenty or thirty years, the annual expense for a population of one hundred thousand would be only 14,000*l.*, being only 15*s.* to each house, 3*s.* to each person, and 3½*d.* on the rent of each individual house. Surely in this there was nothing very formidable on the score of increased expense.

Dr. Playfair estimated that 989,000*l.* might be saved in Manchester and Salford annually by the introduction of these measures, removing thereby the causes of many diseases and all their consequences. £989,000 saved in these



towns by these means ! It was not their business or their desire in discussing this question to adopt any other theory, or on the other hand to depreciate any other exertions, but simply as a means of showing the money value of the saving they propose, they may recollect that there is in the town of Manchester, and originating there, another association, pursuing certain objects with great energy and perseverance. There are 300,000 persons in round numbers in the towns of Manchester and of Salford. It was stated in the last corn law debate, that 16,000,000 of quarters of corn was the average consumption of the kingdom, or about a quarter to each individual of the population, so that 989,000*l.* saved in the town of Manchester annually was equal to each person to a saving of 60*s.*, or the difference between the highest price of corn of late years and bread being to be had gratis. Could they say that 989,000*l.* is an over-estimate of the saving to be made in the town of Manchester by sanitary measures ? A person of Dr. Playfair's ability, accuracy, and means of information was likely to be nearly correct when he dealt in units in his calculation.

He would now mention to the meeting one appalling fact, as illustrating the moral state of a portion of the population, which he found stated in these reports. It was stated by Mr. Clay, with respect to Preston, and by Mr. Coulthart with respect to Ashton, that in both those towns were sold vast quantities of noxious compounds bearing the ominous name of "Infants' quietness ;" and all of them knew the height to which infant mortality had arisen in those two towns. It was also stated by Mr. Clay that it was the habit of a great part of the people in those districts to subscribe to more than one burial club. These clubs were very good institutions if properly managed ; they tended to prevent the feelings of the poor on the most solemn occasions being harrowed up by a disclosure of their poverty, and the denial to the mortal remains of those they loved of the last tribute of respect which affection would desire to award. But how did they operate here ? Mr. Clay stated that he had known the answer by some of these people to an application for payment of a debt, "I have not the money just now, but wait till—giving some name, generally a child—dies, and then I will pay you" ! In these clubs there was no restriction except as to the age of the child,—that it should be more than eight weeks old : no inquiries were made. Mr. Clay also related an anecdote of a lady of his acquaintance, who being told



by a woman who officiated for her as wet nurse, that her (the nurse's) child was ill, offered to send her own medical man immediately to its relief. What was the answer the benevolent lady received? "Never mind, thank ye, ma'am, it's in two burial clubs"! Was it not monstrous to see the appliances of extreme civilization thus perverted to purposes of brutal disregard of the natural affections at which even savage instinct would revolt?

It was hoped that by such meetings as the present, truths more concisely stated than in these voluminous Reports might become more popularly known. But it was a picture which required no vivid colouring; it could not be more forcibly stated than it was in Mr. Chadwick's business-like Report. Referring to the state of the prisons in the days of Howard, Mr. Chadwick says, that he and Dr. Arnott saw in the wynds of Glasgow and Edinburgh infinitely worse scenes than those horrible dens described by Howard: he adds, for himself, that in the cellars of Liverpool, Manchester, and of Leeds, he had seen amongst the operative inhabitants more vice, misery, and degradation than those which, when detailed by Howard, had caused the sympathy of the world. He had not had the same opportunity of observing these things in different parts of the country as Mr. Chadwick had, but it had happened to him to visit hundreds of negro huts in the days when slavery existed. He had also examined many Irish cabins in different parts of that unfortunate country, and he declared he would rather pass his life in any one of the first, or in most of the last, than he would inhabit one of those dens or cellars too often used as dwellings by the industrious poor of this country—those upon whom the prosperity and quietness of this country so greatly depended.

When last he visited some of the worst portions of this metropolis with the friend to whom he had before alluded, he felt that though there had been no substantial improvement, the painful impression was then mitigated by the extreme beauty of the weather. Short are the gleams of mitigation to real misery which the sunshine of our climate affords, and sad is the contrast which the present external gloom presents! Let those who have, in this bitter weather, thought it an effort to leave their own comfortable fire-sides, think of these crowded cellars where the half-starved, half-clothed inmates have no alternative between this cutting blast and pestilential closeness. And let not this be the fleeting and fruitless sympathy of an hour; but while undue and exaggerated expectations of



what might be accomplished ought not to be excited, he trusted they would separate this day with a firm determination to do all that in them lay to prevent the seasons again revolving still to find so dreadful a contrast existing between an increasing national prosperity and a deepening misery of the masses. That such a state of things should continue was neither safe to them as citizens nor creditable to them as Christians. As Christians they were taught that their duties were two-fold. Those which they owed to their Creator rested between him, themselves, and their consciences; but as regarded the other great Christian duty, where the object was worthy, and where the sympathy was true and sincere, it was by such meetings as these, and by encouraging others to go and do likewise, that they should best discharge their duty to their neighbour.

SIR ROBERT HARRY INGLIS, M.P., said, that if the forms of a public meeting permitted it, he would willingly have left the whole matter to rest upon the full and conclusive statement which they had just heard from the Noble Lord in the Chair; but, as it was necessary to found a resolution upon that statement, he was glad to have the honour of proposing it, and thus of expressing his cordial concurrence in the objects of the meeting, and of showing that it was no party purpose which they were assembled to promote. No one could look at the reports recently published without being struck with the urgent claims of the subjects in question to public attention, subjects of which, twenty years ago, the greatest statesmen in Europe were as profoundly ignorant as children at school. The country were indebted for their first knowledge of the real condition of the poorer classes—in reference to these subjects—to some persons whom he now saw in that room (Sir R. looked to Dr. Southwood Smith and to Mr. Slaney) and whose unwearied labours for the instruction of the legislature and the public on these subjects were unrewarded by emolument or fame, though the value of their services was beginning to be appreciated, and they would be more highly estimated by posterity than in their own day. The necessity of such an association as it was now proposed to form, for the purpose of diffusing knowledge on these subjects, might be shown by many striking examples of the prevailing ignorance and consequent prejudice; but he would mention one which displays both, and which does not happen to be included in the Commissioners' Report. In a certain great city, in which, twenty years



ago, there was not a single common sewer, though the ground was admirably disposed for drainage on all sides, a distinguished physician, on the alarm of cholera in Europe, but before it reached England, predicted that, if the malady visited that city, it would certainly be found in such a district, in such a court, and in such an alley; and in those very places it did appear, not indeed exclusively, but primarily, prominently, and most fatally. Availing himself of this period of excitement and alarm, the bishop of the diocese, for the purpose of effecting a general drainage, called a public meeting, which was attended by the most influential men of all parties, every one anxious to co-operate in promoting so important and indispensable a measure. They were met by a body of men, the representatives of the interests of the proprietors of the low and wretched dwellings of the poor, who told the meeting that the evil complained of existed only in the fancy of the gentlemen present, who "could not bear that the places inhabited by the people should come between the wind and their nobility," and whose only object was to tax the poor for the advantage of the rich. The result was that the object of the benevolent men who had called the meeting was scouted out of the hall.

He would take another case from another part of England, and would name the place, because it was named in the Commissioners' Report, Lancaster; excellently situated for drainage and sewerage, and yet most imperfectly provided with either; and where, in consequence, disease and mortality were very great; where, also, improvements were repelled by prejudice. The sewers were in a square channel, a form which, if a mathematician were to sit down and calculate what would be the most unsuitable, would be selected by him; bad as it is on principle, it is equally rejected by all experience. The great sewers of Rome, indeed, built two or three thousand years ago, remain—in their arched form and their solid construction—the model of all others. Yet this square shape is persisted in at Lancaster; the doctrine being laid down, he would not say by whom, when an improvement was pointed out—"No, we don't copy *nought* here."

He would take another case, in order to show the direct effect on human life which was observable in bad or in good drainage. He would take Nottingham; there, according to the evidence in the Commissioners' Report, in one place, the mean age at death of the inhabitants



was 30 years; that place was open, elevated, and well drained; in another division of the same ward, which was crowded, low, and indifferently drained, the mean age at death was only 17. Again, in Park ward, an open space, the mean age at death was 37; it was less than one-half in the bad district of that same ward. In Harewood-ward common, the mean age at death is 40; in Parliament-street court, without adequate ventilation or drainage, it is 20. Can any one hear these facts and remain at peace in his own comfortable well-aired and well-drained dwelling, without endeavouring to rescue from disease and premature mortality the thousands of his fellow-countrymen whom the want of such advantages thus sacrifices?

There is another circumstance attending the dwellings of the poor in crowded cities, specially affecting the female sex, to which circumstance, in a mixed assembly like the present, he could hardly even allude; yet it was of great importance, not merely to comfort and to delicacy, but even to health and life, since there was a specific disease arising, it is too much to be feared, from the present state of things, which an improved construction of the habitations of the poor, and the introduction of drainage and sewerage among them as contemplated by the proceedings of this day, would, he trusted, at no distant day, remove. He did not venture to say more on the subject at this time; but there was evidence in the Report of the Commissioners which spoke so strongly on this point that he could not but call the attention of gentlemen to it by this passing allusion.

He was satisfied that, to effect any real and extensive good, the measures adopted must be general and contemporaneous—not restricted to particular localities and towns, but embracing the whole country, and carried out on one uniform system. There were not less than 50 local Acts regulating the sewerage and the supply of water in the metropolis alone; and the cleansing, paving, and lighting, were all under separate and different Boards. Now, without destroying the existence of these Boards, he might say that no town could ever be placed in a sound sanitary condition until all these matters were under the influence of one general system, even if not under one superintending and responsible authority. It must be borne in mind, however, that in this country changes of this kind could not be made as rapidly as we might sometimes desire; they could be effected only by doing what it was one of the main objects of the present



association to accomplish, namely, by satisfying the public mind of the necessity of the change, and thus preparing and disposing it to submit to the requisite sacrifices. However unpopular the phrase, he must say, there were "vested interests," which, in such a case as this, must be respected, and which, if disregarded, are strong enough to defeat the best concerted and the most useful plans; but no interest or power could stop the progress of this question, if the dreadful facts, which had been proved, were so made known as to enter into the public mind. And it was to help to make them part and parcel of the public mind that this meeting was called, and this association formed; and the constitution of the meeting showed that there could be no political or party object in view. He would only add one word more. None could take a greater interest than he did in the improvement of the physical condition of the people; but he must be allowed to state, for the gratification of his own feelings, and the discharge of what he believed to be his duty, that this, after all, was but the lowest object that should be kept in view. He looked anxiously for a better supply of water for the people, but he looked still more anxiously for the pouring forth among them of the "living waters of life;" he looked anxiously for the diffusion of the light of the external sky, but still more anxiously for the diffusion of the light of Scripture. The Honourable Baronet concluded by moving the following resolution:—

"1. That the neglect of the precautions which are necessary to secure the health of towns, such as sewerage, drainage, a due supply of water to the interior of dwelling-houses, and an effectual system of cleansing, is the cause of sickness, suffering, and a high rate of mortality to all classes, and that it more especially increases the destitution, and leads to the physical and moral deterioration and the degradation of the people."

Mr. HAWES, M.P., had great pleasure in seconding the motion of the Honourable Baronet. It was his fate to be frequently his opponent. Here, however, he could cordially co-operate with the Honourable Baronet: and he considered it as no inauspicious circumstance that here, as upon neutral ground, men of all opinions could join earnestly and heartily to promote the formation of an association the object of which was not



only to collect information upon, but to bring about practically the application of that large mass already collected, by extensive and accurate inquiries into the ill-ventilated, ill-drained, ill-constructed dwellings of the great mass of the people. The Noble Lord who so ably opened the business of the meeting clearly showed this to be a subject which loudly called for the active assistance of public opinion. Nothing was so well calculated to obtain this end as the formation of an association to keep alive attention, to point out the evils of delay, to furnish information, and steadily direct its application.

It might well occasion surprise that no such association had been formed before, and indeed that the subject itself should but recently have attracted the attention, not only of philanthropic men but of statesmen. The health of the people is one great source of the strength of the state. A sickly and enfeebled population entails not only physical but moral evils. But these are evils which are widely diffused over the whole country. They do not strike the eye, or shock the feelings of ordinary observers. They are hidden, and require careful investigation,—laborious, patient, diligent inquiry, which few have the courage, the inclination, or the ability to begin;—and still fewer the means of bringing to that conclusion which is absolutely necessary, in order to rouse and convince the public that an immediate remedy is called for. That can only be accomplished by such an accumulation of facts, from all places, and from individuals of every condition, as to show that under all circumstances want of drainage, want of light, want of ventilation, are the causes of an amount of physical and moral evil materially affecting not only the productive power, but even the peace and security of the empire. Property unquestionably has its rights, but these rights will be best secured when the great mass of the people feel their material comforts and enjoyments increase in a reasonable and just proportion with property itself.

As he had said, the subject is fitted, peculiarly fitted, for the associated efforts of a body like that about to be formed. It is too vast for an individual. It is not by the building of an hospital, or an asylum, or even the mere diffusion of information, that this great question can be worked out to a successful issue. True it is that individuals have done much in this respect. Men like Mr. Chadwick, Dr. Southwood Smith, and Dr. Arnott, who amidst active duties have devoted their time and abilities, and



most benevolent exertions, to expose the mischiefs arising from the neglected dwellings and dwelling-places of the poor, deserve the gratitude and thanks of the country. They may not live to gather the rich fruit of their labours; but they will only share the lot of many great and good men who have gone before them, and leave their labours as an inheritance to their country, with but the hope of honourable and future fame as their reward.

Striking pictures have been displayed to this meeting, by the Noble Lord, and by the Honourable Baronet who preceded him, of the manifold evils arising from the miserable dwellings of the labouring classes. He could bear also his own testimony to their truth. He had visited, with that excellent man Dr. Alison, some of the worst quarters of the city of Edinburgh. In the wynds, narrow streets, and courts of that city are dwellings, if they deserve the name, rather fit for brutes than human beings. Anything so degrading, so humiliating as the sights he saw on that occasion no language could describe. Darkness, filth, disease—an atmosphere scarcely endurable—numbers huddled together in a space that even for brutes would be thought too small, characterized the numberless abodes of misery he had visited with Dr. Alison; and it was a privilege to do so, were it only to see how gratefully he (Dr. Alison) was recognized and received by all.

But in addressing this meeting, he need hardly insist upon this part of the subject. He spoke to those who had read and considered the vast mass of information already collected. The Poor Law Reports—English and Scotch; the Hand Loom Weavers' Commissioners' Reports; the Children's Employment Commissioners' Reports—all show how much is needed and, as he thought, how much may be done by an active appeal to public opinion upon this subject. Let no one who has any acquaintance with these reports under-estimate the evils we seek by this association to mitigate if not to cure. Remember, sickness to the poor man is short time; short time is diminished wages;—lessened wages, sorrow; destitution, and perhaps even crime, follows in its train. And remember, too, how much sickness is proved to arise from those physical causes with which, in the main, we propose now to deal. No doubt destitution is a fruitful cause enough. He did not, and ought not, now to touch on its causes or its remedies,—he should enter upon controversial matters which were excluded from consideration to-day. The Honourable Baronet, his honourable friend (if he would



permit him to call him so) and he might differ upon that subject; that however did not prevent them from uniting in their endeavours to mitigate other evils, to ward off miseries apparently within their power.

He agreed with the Honourable Baronet in all he had said of the needfulness, of the wisdom of combining, with all other efforts, to mitigate the ills that flesh is heir to, those higher influences derived from education and religion. But this he felt strongly, that the minister of religion will be no less welcome, or influential, or successful a visitant of the poor man's house, if it be clean, well ventilated, drained, lighted, and comparatively comfortable in these respects alone. His voice will be heard not the less persuasively because these benefits are realized. To create an opinion in their favour—an opinion of their necessity—an opinion that it is a duty to provide them—was their object.

Now to apply their association practically:—They all saw the vast improvements carrying on around them; they saw new streets forming—vast masses of houses building—and all the modern improvements of science and art applied to their construction. In their own houses, light, ventilation, and drainage are essential things. Well, those streets and those houses are carried through the crowded parts of the metropolis. People rejoice when what is called a low neighbourhood is visited by a new line of street. The houses of the poor are pulled down, and doubtless, even as things are, good, great good even, is now done. Nevertheless the people must find homes somewhere. New alleys and courts are built. Are they well lighted, or drained, or ventilated? Let any one go into the new districts and see the provision made for them. Are any of the modern improvements introduced, such as they find essential? He thought not, or at least in a very slight degree. There are plans now forming in the district in which he lived. Plans for new streets. He gave no opinion upon the merits of any particular plan. He spoke generally, and he found no provision for dwellings for the labouring classes; or if they are provided, the last thing thought of are these sanitary provisions, instead of their being the first. If public opinion were directed to this subject, this would not be the case. Warming, and ventilating, and lighting, might, in well contrived buildings for families of the labouring classes, be very cheaply provided. He thought it even would answer as a speculation. As to the economical warming and ventilating of large buildings,



he would only quote a remarkable instance, that of the New Prison at Pentonville. From 30 to 45 cubic feet of pure fresh air is made to pass into every cell in a minute. This ventilation, and a temperature ranging from 52° to 60°, is uniformly maintained during the coldest weather at an expense of less than *a farthing a cell for 24 hours*. Now the construction of this prison is far from favourable for either warming or ventilating it. He was confident that houses might be so constructed as to secure these advantages at as cheap a rate. But to do this, public attention must be drawn to the subject: information must be elicited;—the Legislature must be moved;—there must be a rallying point for friends and coadjutors in this good cause. These were the objects they had in view. He was most happy, then, to co-operate in the endeavour to attain them,—most happy to join in supporting the Noble Lord and the Honourable Baronet who moved the resolution which he had now the honour to second.

The resolution was then put and carried.

MR. SHEIL, M.P., said, that he had been intrusted with the performance of an office which he felt it to be an honour and a pleasure to discharge, that of proposing the second resolution; the first had been submitted to the meeting by Sir Robert Inglis, the member for the University of Oxford, who had just returned from Rome, where he informed them that there are the finest sewers in the world, and means the most efficacious are adopted to carry every species of impurity away. Might he venture to express a hope that it is not to the process of mere physical purification for which Rome is remarkable that the Honourable Baronet had confined his notice, and that still more favourable results from his visit to Rome may be, ere long, observed by his Oxonian friends? He did not often concur with the Honourable Baronet, with whom it had been frequently his misfortune to differ, but upon this occasion it was matter to him of great gratification that they were in entire coincidence. How fortunate it is that there are subjects, intimately connected with the public good, in which men of all parties, widely dissenting from each other in politics and in religion, can happily and virtuously agree, and that in the meeting of their minds—in the confluence of their emotions—none but objects which it is a moral pleasure to contemplate should be serenely reflected! The purpose for which they were assembled under the auspices of the Noble Marquess who presided upon that occasion, and who gave this practical



evidence of his solicitude for the welfare of his fellow-citizens, must be admitted on all hands to be deserving of the highest commendation. The humbler classes of this vast social community must always be subject to privations and hardships, which are inevitably incidental to the disparity which it is impossible to cure. But their sufferings can be materially alleviated by the kind and Christian solicitude of those who are placed in a higher position, and who are anxious that to their sufferings every mitigation should be afforded. The means of securing the health of the labouring population in our great cities have been hitherto deplorably neglected; to that most useful object the Noble Marquess has most honourably directed his attention. In promoting the health of the people, they were at the same time contributing to their moral wholesomeness—"Mens sana in corpore sano" is a familiar but a most just citation:—how often are those who are encompassed with the effluvia of ordure enveloped in a miasma of the mind, and how frequently had they occasion to observe that, with physical distemper moral contagion is allied! But to expatiate upon the advantages which would result from cleanliness and salubrity was superfluous; the means of attaining these most useful objects were perhaps a more appropriate matter of consideration.

By the resolution which he had been requested to propose, those means are suggested. The resolution was this:—

2. "That although private voluntary exertion may do much to lessen some of the evils arising from the want of sanatory precautions, yet there are others far more important which can be remedied only by legislative interference."

This is obviously true; but how is the interference of the Legislature to be obtained? The meeting would be disposed perhaps to think that he was not altogether incompetent to form an opinion with respect to the means by which Parliament is ordinarily induced to co-operate with the public desire. They might be assured that it is only by "pressure from without," that anything useful can be accomplished, and that petitions must be poured in in order to awaken the Legislature from the torpor to which it is habitually addicted: a little wholesome agitation is required,—not a strong, violent agitation, such as the Honourable Baronet, the member for Oxford, would naturally and legitimately deprecate, but such an agitation (if he might venture to say so) as that which imparted



salubrity to the waters of the sacred pool when the angel descended, and restored their healing quality with the movement of his celestial plumes.

The Rev. W. W. CHAMPNEYS seconded the resolution. He now appeared before the meeting to bear his witness as one of the clergy of London representing a parish containing 35,000 souls, chiefly of the poorest class. They had heard the testimony of a noble member of the higher house of legislature, and that of honourable members of the other house, and he was accustomed to ask himself—“Can I stand up in this cause as a minister of Christ as well as a man?” He felt that in such a cause as the present he *could* safely and becomingly appear in that high yet humble capacity. When he contemplated the appalling effects produced by the state of the dwellings of the poor as presented to him in his own district, where the average duration of human life was 25 years, while in a neighbouring parish, not two miles off, it was 40 years; and when he considered how many souls were thus hurried every year unprepared into eternity, he felt that in promoting the great object of the present meeting he was but performing a sacred duty, both as a philanthropist and as a minister of Christ. No measure of improvement hitherto adopted had reached the miserable courts and alleys in which the poorer classes were doomed to dwell. Metropolitan improvements had let in air and light to the streets and dwellings of the rich, and the neighbourhoods so improved owed much to those who had originated the improvements, but they had not touched the courts and rooms inhabited by the poor, which were dark, stifling, and filthy as ever. A few days ago he had pointed out to a friend of his, a clergyman from the country, a little space, consisting of not more than the half of half a quarter of a mile, which had contained (before the houses upon it had been pulled down) 1,162 inhabitants. It had consisted of one dark and narrow street, with many courts and alleys diverging from it, and forming in most instances *culs-de-sac*. A population equal to that of a considerable country town, or of two and in some cases to three agricultural parishes, had thus been crowded into a space less than the half of half a quarter of a mile. The poor who inhabited those houses were now gone; but *where* were they gone? Either into houses of the same wretched character in different neighbourhoods, or into similar houses in the immediate vicinity, thus accumulating additional numbers in spots already over-crowded, or even creating



new neighbourhoods of the same character. The result was most injurious both to the former inhabitants and to the new comers; and this was a case which clearly showed that alterations which benefit the rich may not only not benefit the poor, but may actually make their condition worse. In the present instance, the condition of these poor people was made much worse. One of these people, a parishioner of his, had told him that he had had the greatest difficulty in finding a place to shelter his head at *2s. 6d.* or *3s. 6d.* a week, on account of rents having risen in consequence of the pulling down of houses. The immediate neighbourhood was greatly improved, the appearance of the metropolis was improved; and the passing stranger, little aware of the mass of misery that would appal his sight if he were to step but a few paces behind some of these new and improved structures, might congratulate himself on the progress of metropolitan improvement. It was the fair look of consumption outside, while havoc and destruction were at work within. It was only a few days ago, during the height of the present inclement season, that a poor widow who inhabited a miserable kitchen underground, brought to him her child, wretchedly clad, and without shoe or stocking. The little creature, which was then recovering from its third attack of fever, was stunted in its growth, not half the size a child ought to be of its age: there it stood shivering with cold, miserable in its sensations, and diseased and stunted from the want of sufficient food and clothing, the privation of air and light in the wretched dwelling in which it was its lot to drag on its existence. He could not help thinking, while he gazed upon it, of the tadpoles described by Dr. Edwards, the celebrated physiologist, in the experiment in which he stopped the development of these creatures merely by excluding them from light. They lived, indeed, but they underwent no metamorphosis. They never changed from the tadpole into the higher being for which they had the requisite organization, but which organization was rendered wholly useless to them by the privation of a necessary physical agent. And just so it was with the human child; it never could grow into such a being as its Creator had given it the capacity to become; it never could develop into a MAN with the physical strength and the intellectual power fitting it for a religious and moral being, in the dark, dismal, and noisome dens, not worthy to be called houses, in which thousands and hundreds of thousands were compelled to pass their wretched existence.



It was his firm conviction that these and other evils of this class were entirely removable. It had been affirmed by good authority, and he believed that satisfactory proof had been given, that the very worst localities in London, places in which fever at present is never absent for a single day, might, by known remedial measures, by a proper system of cleansing, by an adequate supply of water, and by the free admission of air and light, be so purified that this terrible scourge of the poor man's home might be known in it no more. It was actually capable of demonstration, that such would be the result of proper remedial measures. He could name a court in his own parish, in which one of the valuable medical officers of the Union had been called to visit 41 new cases of sickness in the course of seven months. This court had been properly paved and flagged, regularly washed down twice a-week, and the newly constructed drains thoroughly swept by a stream of water which carried away what would otherwise have accumulated in the houses; and after this had been done, the same medical officer had given in a return of only two cases of sickness in that court in four or five months. What had been done in one instance might be done in any number of instances.

Private exertion might accomplish such improvements in a particular locality, in such a manner as to show the practicability of effecting it on a large scale; but that the measures indispensably necessary to bring about any general change in the districts and dwellings of the poor, could be carried out by any private efforts, was not for a moment to be imagined. This could be done only by exciting the attention of the intelligent people of this country—the upper and middle classes; by enlisting their benevolent feelings through the dissemination of such statements as had been heard to-day; by gradually informing the public mind as to the positive and indubitable facts of the case, and by quickening the public conscience to feel that a debt of duty was owed to those who had borne so much neglect and suffering with such exemplary meekness and forbearance. When this was done, when public opinion was thus informed, and the public conscience aroused, they would carry with a force, not to be resisted, those legislative measures which were necessary for the effectual amelioration of a condition so neglected and degraded. He entirely concurred in what had been said about a fair day's work for a fair day's wages; but in the district to which he belonged—in the neighbourhood of the docks—



there were labourers who could not earn a fair day's wages, not always simply because work was not to be had, nor because they were unwilling to labour, but because they were physically incapable of doing a fair day's work ; because their bodily frames were so enfeebled, and their powers so exhausted, by the close, stifling, and poisonous atmosphere in which they habitually resided, that they could not earn a fair day's wages. This was a terrible state of things. He would mention another source (as he believed) of disease among the poorer orders, he meant the long period of time which often passed between the death of a poor person and the interment. It was the custom of the poor to have, if possible, the interment on a Sunday. The reason for this was obvious. The relatives of the poor deceased were not less anxious to pay the last tribute of respect to their departed friend, nor paid it with less sincerity and honest affection than their richer neighbours ; but they could not do it on the week-day but at a sacrifice of a portion of their day's work, and with their day's work a part of their day's wages, and the consequent loss of food to their children. This cause commonly led them to defer the interment till the next Sunday, and sometimes even to the Sunday week following the death of the party. The effect produced by the keeping of the corpse in one of the two rooms occupied by the family—and in some, and not a few cases—their only room, might be easily conceived ; and the effluvia from a corpse, not sealed up in lead, but enclosed merely in a few badly-joined boards, could not but be highly injurious to those who came within its influence. He had himself applied the best chemical purifiers in such cases, as a means of actual safety to the surviving family. Though he was fully convinced that nothing short of legislative enactments could remedy the grand evil, yet if, in the mean while, by voluntary and private exertion, they could mitigate any portion of it, if they could take away but one grain from the vast sum of human misery, they would not have lived in vain. He would only, in conclusion, add, that in his capacity of a Christian clergyman, having the daily opportunity of witnessing with his own eyes the condition and sufferings of the poor, he could bear his testimony to the truth of the descriptions that had been given of the wretchedness and degradation of that condition, and the greatness of that suffering ; that from his own personal observation he could declare, that the actual amount and magnitude of those evils had been rather understated than overcharged ; and that it was



his most earnest hope and prayer that the objects which they had that day met to promote would receive the blessing of that Saviour who, while he was on earth, was especially "THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND."

Sir WILLIAM CLAY, M.P., rose to move the next resolution; and in so doing, said, that to no nobler objects could the exhortations of a Christian minister be addressed than to those they had met to advance, which might be justly ranked amongst the highest aims of benevolence and philanthropy, while they were liable to none of the objections, sometimes justly, urged against plans for the amelioration of the condition of the poorer classes, proposed with the best intentions. Were the desire of this meeting realized in practice, the most important benefits would result to the labourer without diminishing in the slightest degree his honest pride, lowering his self-respect, or lessening his stimulus to labour. They were precisely, too, the benefits which it was the least in his own power to secure for himself. A working man might by industry, skill in his trade or occupation, steadiness, and good conduct, acquire the good-will of his fellows, and the respect and confidence of his employers: he might by those qualities ensure constant employment, and enable himself apparently to provide securely for the subsistence and comfort of those dependent on him,—and yet those qualities in their highest degree would have little or no effect in warding off evils which might prostrate his health and strength, and neutralize his best exertions. A working-man, everywhere perhaps, but certainly in great towns, must live where others of his class reside; and must take his chance with them of ventilation, of drainage, and of supplies of water. That his dwelling should possess these requisites was indispensable to his health, and consequently to his prolonged powers of exertion; and yet it was perfectly obvious that, even as regarded his own dwelling, the cases must be rare in which such a man could provide them for himself, and he was of course absolutely without the power of securing them for the neighbourhood in which he was compelled to reside,—a matter almost as important to the welfare of himself and his family as that he should possess them in his own dwelling. These great—these vital objects—as regarded the dwellings of the poor, could only be secured by legislative interference. They were accustomed to admire the munificence which founded and the charity which supported their public hospitals and dispensaries, but the object contemplated by the meeting



was of a still nobler character, for its aim was the prevention of disease. The Rev. Gentleman who had just addressed the assembly was the conscientious and highly esteemed rector of a large parish in the borough, which he (Sir William Clay) had the honour to represent, and he could himself bear testimony to the perfect truth of the statements made by that gentleman. One fact, brought under the notice of the meeting by that gentleman, as well as by his Honourable Friend the member for Lambeth, could not be too constantly and earnestly impressed on the public mind, viz.,—that while the great metropolitan improvements now in progress, both adorned the metropolis and conferred inestimable advantages upon it generally, yet they by no means conferred equal benefits on the poorer classes, but sometimes were the cause even of adding to the wretchedness of their condition. One result unquestionably was, that as the small tenements had been razed to the ground, while no new and improved dwellings had been erected in their stead, the poor were driven to others equally bad, and for which they were sometimes obliged to pay a higher price. What he desired to see was, that hand in hand with metropolitan improvement should go sanitary regulation—such as would carry corresponding benefits down to the very poorest of the people, and proportionate improvement into the very lowest rate of dwelling-houses. That such regulations were necessary—that the precautions essential to health and comfort would not, of their own mere motion, be taken by those who provided the dwellings of the poor, they had recently had a striking proof in what had occurred since the passing in the last session of the New Building Act. That Act contained certain provisions—not very onerous as it appeared to him, with regard even to the very humblest class of dwellings, which tended to ensure ventilation, security, and comfort; but the Act was not to come into operation until the 1st of December: what was the result? Why, that in every part of the metropolis thousands of the smallest class of houses were built or commenced building in order to evade those provisions. He did not know that they could have a stronger illustration of the truth that, in the present condition of English society, it was not humane—it was not safe—to leave to those principles of supply and demand, by which the wants of the community were commonly supplied, the providing for the humbler classes, those great, those unspeakable benefits which it was the object of the pre-



sent meeting to endeavour to secure for them. He would only repeat, that the objects of the meeting had his most cordial concurrence, and whether as a private individual or as a member of the legislature, he should be happy to afford them every support in his power. He proposed the third resolution, which was as follows :—

3. "That every improvement in the sanatory condition of a locality is uniformly attended with a diminution of parochial expense, and that the adoption of effectual and general remedial measures will be less costly than the continuance of the destitution, sickness, premature death, widowhood, and orphanage occasioned by this neglect."

Mr. GRAINGER seconded the resolution, and said, that having had an opportunity, both as a medical man and as a member of a Commission of Inquiry into the condition of children engaged in Manufacturing Labour, of observing the great evils resulting from defective ventilation and ill-drained habitations, he had much pleasure in supporting the resolution just proposed. In the course of his inquiries he had witnessed an experiment, upon a great scale, of the principles which the present meeting was anxious to carry into operation. The towns of Birmingham and Liverpool offered a remarkable contrast ; in the former, typhoid fevers, which were the most certain test of the presence of noxious exhalations and malaria, were comparatively rare diseases, so that Birmingham had been exempted from the ravages which elsewhere periodically caused so much depopulation. In Liverpool, on the contrary, the mortality was very high ; indeed, as the returns showed, higher than in other large towns. Now what was the condition of those two places in respect to the material comforts of the labouring population ? In Birmingham it was stated by a committee of medical practitioners, in their public sanatory report, that not a single cellar was used in the whole town as a dwelling. And he might add, after a personal investigation, his belief that in no town in the kingdom were there so many comfortable residences in proportion to the population. The usual custom was, that each family had a separate house ; and although there were of course exceptions, there was little of that crowding of several families into one wretched dwelling so common elsewhere. But in Liverpool, there were thousands of persons living in cellars under circumstances most favourable to the production of diseases alike destructive of the health and



happiness of the population. It was impossible to disconnect these circumstances from the consideration of the relative prevalence of typhus fever in the two localities.

The necessity for some efficient interposition was most apparent. On visiting Nottingham three or four years ago, he found whole streets of wretched houses without drainage, without the means required by common decency, and without any the least supply of water, which latter article could only be obtained from distant pumps, and then by a species of theft. The natural results followed: in fact there was a constant sequence in the evidence of the surveyor and the medical man, and wherever the former stated that the houses were badly built, were undrained, and uncleansed, the latter pointed to those exact localities as the seat of sickness and fever, recurring again and again as regularly as the seasons returned.

Resolution put and carried.

The Hon. WILLIAM COWPER, M.P., said, that if it had been proposed a very few years ago to hold a public meeting to consider and to promote the public health, many might have objected to such a course as a foolish or unnecessary proceeding. They might have said, leave the health of the people to that profession whom it concerns—leave it to the physician and the surgeon, the apothecary and the druggist; attend, if you will, to the improvement of the political, financial, and social condition of the people; but what can a promiscuous assemblage at Exeter Hall do for their health? Such an objection might have been made by thoughtless persons some years ago, but since what had been lately said and published upon the subject, scarcely any one was to be found so ignorant as not to perceive how directly the health of the population was affected by the condition of their dwellings, and the nature of their employment, as well as by the amount of their food. The character of the present meeting, convened at so unfavourable a season, was a satisfactory proof of the extent to which this matter had already attracted public attention. There were many ways in which those who enjoy wealth or leisure might assist the working classes. But there was no boon to be conferred upon them more valuable than health, and there had been no time when exertions for that end were more called for or had a better prospect of success. It was a painful sight to witness an honest, hard-working man deprived of the power of earning his bread by disease, and cast as a burden upon society, merely because the owner of his house



chose to save himself the expense of constructing the drainage necessary to keep off epidemics. The poor man could not help himself; the competition for house-room was great, and he was compelled to give as much rent for apartments containing the seeds of pestilence as would properly repay the building of a house fit for a human being to inhabit. A remedy to this state of things was beyond the reach of individuals; there must be combination—there must be municipal and legislative action. With that view he was about to propose that which was the chief purpose of the meeting, the formation of an association. It might become a centre to unite scattered and varied efforts,—a channel of communication,—a means of enlightening public opinion, and bringing it to bear with effect upon legislation. The slowness of the Government in carrying out the Reports of Commissioners served to point to the necessity of pressure from without, or at least to an emphatic concentration of the voice of opinion. The warmest advocates of non-interference with individual concerns could not deny that this was a matter demanding the interference of the State. The owner of a court or alley could not claim the right of generating his own fever on his own property, because he could not pretend to confine it to his own tenants. It would be sure to trespass upon the surrounding property, and no defined limit could be put upon its ravages. An epidemic on every account concerned the community at large, and Government was not attaining the objects for which it was instituted if it did not intervene to prevent the avarice or carelessness of individuals from inflicting such evils. Allusion had been made to the fact that the destruction of the old unwholesome streets which was going on in the heart of London, which was so beneficial in rooting out dens of misery and disease, was yet a great hardship upon the poor, who were driven away to the suburbs out of reach of their work. The hardship was a heavy one, and ought to be looked to, particularly as there was a remedy. They had only to apply the principle of club-union to the dwellings of the poor, and build large mansions with distinct apartments for many families under one roof, and there the poorest would be able to live with the addition of many new comforts, in parts of a town where a small separate house would be too expensive. There were two societies attempting to apply this principle, and now beginning their operations, one in the nature of a joint-stock company, and the other intending to exhibit models, and make experiments for the imitation



of others ; and he thought them deserving of the support of all present, for their objects were not opposed, but were supplementary to those sought for by the present meeting. The honourable gentleman concluded by moving the following resolution :—

4. “ That with a view to support the Government in any large and effectual legislative measures of improvement they may propose, and to obtain the co-operation in this purpose of instructed and benevolent persons in every part of the United Kingdom, it is expedient to form an association for the accomplishment more especially of the following objects : First—To diffuse the valuable information on these subjects, elicited by recent investigation, and contained in official reports. Second—To correct misconception as to the expense of the requisite measures ; to remove groundless apprehension as to interference with existing pecuniary interests ; and to devise and to endeavour to obtain some better means than at present exist for the investigation of the causes of mortality in any locality, and for the more effectual protection of survivors, by the prompt removal of those noxious causes which are proved to be removable.”

Mr. SLANEY, in seconding the resolution, said, that having in conjunction with the honourable member for Hertford, drawn the attention of the public to the social condition of the poor, and having the honour to be one of the Commission appointed under the authority of the Crown to investigate the subject of the public health in large towns, he felt fully prepared to second this resolution. He contended that it was the bounden duty of the higher to come forward and assist the humbler classes, upon which the wealth, greatness, and prosperity of the community so materially depended, not only from the impulse of philanthropy—not only from a sense of duty—but from a consideration of self-interest ; for in relation to this entire subject, the prosperity of the higher was bound up with the well-being of the lower classes. Sound and efficient sanitary regulation would not only have the effect of arresting the progress of disease, but it would also lessen crime, elevate the moral and religious character, and improve the social condition of the people. He wished particularly to call the attention of the meeting to the evidence which had been adduced to show the demoralizing effect of the filth and dirt in which so large a portion of the lower classes at present dragged on a miserable existence in their wretched dwellings ; the physical malaria



that enfeebles the body producing a corresponding and proportionate debasement of the mind. No material improvement could be made in the present state of things without large and general measures of relief, requiring, to carry them into practice, the concurrence of the different influential classes of the community. Legislative enactments, however wise and necessary, could not be carried into effect without that concurrence, and that concurrence could not be expected without the diffusion of information on the subject. He believed that the Government was giving its anxious attention to these matters, and was earnestly desirous to bring forward measures which would go to the root of the evil. He knew that a Report would, in a few days, be laid before the Government, suggesting large and comprehensive remedies for proved evils; and that that Report would be laid before Parliament. He could not with propriety, on the present occasion, state what the proposed remedies were, but he would say that he believed they would give the greatest satisfaction to those who had paid the most attention to the subject. The inquiries of the Commission had been directed into the sanatory state of 50 of the largest towns of the realm, where the mortality was the greatest, including the great seats of manufactures, and the three greatest ports after London. These towns and districts comprised a population of upwards of 3,000,000 of persons. Commissioners had visited and examined these places closely. What was the result of these inquiries, as regards drainage, cleansing, and ventilation, as they bear on the *state of the poor and labouring classes*? It was, as stated in their Report, as follows:—

“ Drainage—scarcely good, 1; indifferent, 7; bad, 42.

“ Cleansing—nearly the same.

“ Supply of water—good, 4; indifferent, 7; bad, 39.”

Such a state of things required efficient and immediate remedies as a matter of future policy and true economy; and if powers and facilities were given by law, many benevolent and influential persons might do the utmost good by assisting, beginning, and conducting such improvements.

He had been that very day labouring with the Noble Duke (the Duke of Buccleugh) at the head of the Commission to perfect the work they had begun, and he could not sit down without paying his humble but sincere tribute of admiration to the Noble Duke for the devoted attention which he had given to the subject; nor could he refrain from paying the like tribute to the Noble Marquess



in the Chair, who, when in office, had laboured with the utmost earnestness to put an end to these dreadful evils, or at least to prepare the way for their gradual and progressive removal; and who now continued to devote his time, and the influence of his high character and authority, to the advancement of this most important cause. Besides Mr. Chadwick, of whom such honourable mention had been justly made, there was also another person of whom, were he not present, he might speak in warm terms of eulogy—he meant Dr. Southwood Smith—who, for the powerful manner in which he had first described the actual condition of the poor in their present dwellings—for the clearness with which he had shown that their most grievous sufferings were adventitious and removable, and for the untiring zeal with which he had continued to press these truths on the attention of the Legislature and the public—deserved the gratitude of his country.

Resolution carried.

The Noble CHAIRMAN then called on Dr. Southwood Smith to read the following petition:—

To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled—

The humble Petition of the undersigned  
Sheweth,

That from the neglect of sewerage, drainage, a due supply of water, air, and light to the interior of houses, and an efficient system of house and street cleansing, a poisonous atmosphere is engendered, particularly in the districts occupied by the poor, which endangers the health and life of the whole community, but which is peculiarly injurious to the industrious classes.

That it appears from indubitable evidence that the amount of deaths attributable to these causes is, in England alone, upwards of 40,000 annually.

That the great majority of the persons who thus prematurely perish are between the age of 20 and 40, the period when they ought to be the most capable of labour and are the heads of families; and that it appears from official returns that in some districts nearly one-third of the poor-rates are expended in the maintenance of destitute widows and orphans, rendered destitute by the premature death of adult males; that the number of widows receiving out-door relief was, in the year ending March, 1844,



86,000 ; that these widows had dependent upon them 111,000 orphan children ; and that there were, besides, receiving relief in the Union houses, 18,000 orphan children.

That the expense thus constantly incurred for the maintenance of the destitute would, in many cases, suffice to defray the cost of putting the district into a good sanitary condition, and thus to prevent the recurrence of these dreadful evils.

That this poisonous atmosphere, even when not sufficient to destroy life, undermines the strength, deteriorates the constitution, and renders the labourer in a great degree unable to work ; and that there is every reason to believe that his healthy life and working ability is abridged in many districts to the extent of 12 years.

That the moral and religious improvement of the industrious classes is incompatible with such a degree of physical degradation as is actually prevalent in numerous instances, and that until the dwellings of the poor are rendered capable of affording the comforts of a home, the earnest and best directed efforts of the schoolmaster and the clergyman must in a great degree be in vain.

That your petitioners gladly acknowledge the important services rendered by the inquiries recently made into these subjects, under the authority of Government, by which it appears not only that these grievous evils are remediable, but how they may be remedied ; that in the town of Nottingham constant supplies of pure and filtered water at the rate of 40 gallons per day are carried into the interior of dwelling-houses at a very moderate expense ; that the practicability of extending this blessing to the population generally is proved by the experience of Preston, Ashton, Oldham, and other towns, both in England and Scotland ; and that it is further shown, by a vast mass of incontrovertible evidence, that dwelling-houses may be drained and cleansed at one-half of the charge of the existing cesspool, which permeates the soil, corrupts the springs, and taints the atmosphere around the abodes of the poor ; and that with reference to street-cleansing, by improved methods in the construction of sewers, by the system of flushing, and by rendering unnecessary the mode of cleansing by hand-labour and cartage (at once unhealthy and expensive) 50 per cent. of the former expense has actually been saved.

That your petitioners beg humbly to express their conviction that whatever legislative regulations are adopted should be based on a comprehensive and scientific view



of the whole subject, and should be intrusted for execution to authorities possessed of appropriate skill and adequate power, and should not be confined to localities, but be at least as general as the spread of the evil, and that according as these fundamental principles are regarded will be the success of any remedial measures.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Right Honourable House will, at the earliest practicable opportunity, take into consideration the propriety of establishing general and efficient measures and authorities for the administering of judicious sanitary regulations.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Dr. SOUTHWOOD SMITH then said, before the meeting was asked to sign this petition, he wished to say one word. Suppose there was any particular employment, any branch of manufacture, carried on in England alone at the cost of 40,000 lives and upwards every year—who could come to the knowledge of that fact and ever rest until the peculiar circumstances in this employment which produced such a result were changed, or the employment itself suppressed? But suppose that this employment not only put to death 40,000 persons annually, a slaughter equal to that of the battle of Waterloo, but destroyed them by a death attended with the most intense suffering. These were not mere suppositions, they were realities; they were the ordinary results of daily experience: for it was proved beyond doubt that this number of persons did actually perish every year from causes entirely removable, while the vast majority of these victims perished by fever. Now of all the diseases to which the human frame is subject, fever is among the most painful. He had himself passed through it more than once, and knew the sufferings it inflicts. He had passed through it, surrounded by dear and affectionate friends, under every external alleviating condition and circumstance; yet he could not at that moment recollect without terror the anguish he endured, as if in every sentient fibre of the frame, and the still greater mental suffering arising from the frightful delirium which is so constant an attendant on this malady. But he constantly saw persons enduring the same suffering without any alleviating circumstance, under almost every conceivable external influence which could augment the misery; and it should never be forgotten that the combination of circumstances which so dreadfully



increases the mortality of this class of diseases equally increases the suffering they produce. Therefore it was that when an opportunity offered, he earnestly endeavoured to make the real condition of these poor people known; and at that time it was known only to the few whose professional duties oblige them to visit the dwellings of the poor—the minister of religion, the relieving officer, and the medical practitioner. He had felt that good must result from extending beyond this narrow circle the knowledge of the existence of such prevalent mortality and such dreadful suffering, and more especially from endeavouring to press the facts on the attention of those who have the power to stop the evil; little or no power to mitigate it when it once takes place, but so much power to *prevent* its occurrence, that by the general adoption and enforcement of known remedies, they might cause it in a great degree to cease to exist.

The Earl of SHELBURNE, M.P., briefly supported the petition, which was put and carried, together with a resolution that the Marquess of Normanby be requested to present the same to the House of Lords, and Lord Ashley to the House of Commons.

Captain W. J. COLE, R.N., proposed, and Mr. LITTLE seconded, the following resolution:—

5. “That a subscription list be opened in behalf of this association, and that the following gentlemen be appointed a committee for the purpose of carrying the above resolutions into effect, with power to add to their number.”

On the motion of the Earl of SHELBURNE, seconded by Mr. SLANEY, a vote of thanks was carried, amidst loud acclamations, to the Noble Marquess who filled the chair, after which the meeting separated, the petition lying at the door for signature.

\* \* \* SUBSCRIPTIONS in behalf of the ASSOCIATION received by the Treasurer, and Messrs. Williams, Deacon, and Co., Birchin-lane; Barclay, Tritton, and Co., Lombard-street; Drummonds and Co., Charing-cross; Strahan and Co., 217, Strand; and the Secretary, 10, Walbrook.

HENRY AUSTIN, Hon. Sec.







