

The Clerk of Accounts' remarks on the new system of book-keeping proposed by Mr Grey, the public accountant : printed by order of Finance Committee, 6th March, 1849.

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Metropolitan Sewers.

The Clerk of Accounts' Remarks on the New System of Book-keeping proposed by Mr GREY, the Public Accountant.

Having carefully and maturely considered Mr Grey's Plan for keeping the Cash Accounts of the Commission, I have arrived at the conclusion that, as a system, it would in all probability be found to work well; but at the same time it appears to me to be open to certain alterations and curtailments, which would have the effect of reducing the labour, and furnishing the required information in a more concise and intelligible shape. I cannot, however, help incidentally remarking, that it is a system, in my opinion, somewhat too elaborate to be generally understood, and not exactly adapted to the intellectual capabilities of the ratepayers and public at large, to whose inspection it is to be open.

Assuming that the Commissioners will approve and adopt Mr Grey's proposed system, I would beg to offer for consideration the following suggestions, with the view of simplifying his plan and abridging the amount of labour. The saving would not be in the number of books, but in the quantity of headings, and the mode of journalising, and posting into the Ledger.

I would have 1 General Cash Book, as proposed by him.

6 Abstract (not Detail) Books	}	2 for Receipts, Rates. Contributions, &c.
		4 for Payments, viz. : Works. Surveys. Management. Loans.
1 Journal.		
1 Ledger.		

The Cash Book might be kept exactly on the principle proposed by him, without any alteration.

But with regard to the Abstract or Detail Books, I would entirely alter their arrangement, having them ruled in columns for the various minor heads of expenditure under their respective classifications of Works, Surveys, Management, and Loans, and a certain number of leaves in the books allotted to each district, instead of

having columns for each district (the number required being so numerous as to render it almost an impossibility), and opening a separate account for each minor head. By this arrangement you would consolidate all the minor heads into their respective principal heads, and in this condensed shape carry the various amounts through the Journal into the Ledger.

The Journal could not, I think, be entirely dispensed with, but would be merely necessary as a Monthly Summary of the Abstract Books, to bring all the various amounts together for the purpose of carrying them in gross totals into the General Cash Account in the Ledger, and as a guide to the book-keeper in posting. For instance :

Sundries Drs. to Cash, for Payments during the Month :				£ . s. d.
		<i>Works</i>		3494 19 7
1784	5	11	Westminster.	
770	12	3	Holborn.	
940	1	5	Surrey and Kent.	
			<i>Surveys</i>	353 12 0
164	16	0	Westminster.	
69	9	0	Holborn.	
119	7	0	Surrey and Kent.	
			<i>Management</i>	854 2 6
374	18	0	Westminster.	
269	18	0	Holborn.	
209	6	6	Surrey.	
£4702 14 1				£4702 14 1

Thus the matter which occupies three pages in Mr. Grey's Journal, you will find in the above fourteen lines. In short, by the alteration which I propose, the number of entries in the Journal would be reduced in the ratio of 700 to 120, without affecting any requisite information.

With regard to the Ledger, instead of having it merely ruled in the old single-column form, I would have it in a tabular shape: the General Cash Account to be ruled on the Dr. side for Rates, Contributions, and Total; and the Cr. for Works, Surveys, Management, Loans, and Total; and the District Cash Accounts to be ruled in the same manner, only reversed as to Dr. and Cr. By this plan I should get the entire transactions of a month into one line throughout the whole Ledger, instead of occupying several lines as by Mr Grey's system, whilst the information furnished would be just the same, but in a much more concise and intelligible shape; added to which, the Abstract Books and Ledger would then form a very complete and ready check upon each other.

There is another important advantage in the alteration, which is, that the Abstract Books and Ledger might at any moment be taken to pieces and re-bound so as to form a complete and distinct set of Accounts for each District, which might be most useful in case of a separation or division of the Commission by any future Act of the Legislature.

With reference to the Accounts in the Ledger for Ratepayers in General, uncollected Rates, Contracts in General, Liabilities, Bondholders in General, Loans, &c., and the cross entries in the Journal consequent thereon, I would strike them out altogether, as every information connected therewith can be obtained from the subsidiary Books proposed to be kept, without bringing them into the Ledger, which is in my opinion merely a useless repetition, calculated to confuse the accounts and greatly increase the amount of labour, without being productive of any commensurate advantage: the number of openings in the Ledger would be thereby reduced from 64 to 20, or to the extent of above 68 per cent.

In conclusion, I would merely add, that in the attention which I have bestowed on the subject, I have been actuated by no other feeling than an anxious desire to assist in forming a system of Book-keeping for the Commission which may be carried out with as little difficulty as possible, and at the expense of as little time and labour as is compatible with the extensive particulars required and needed for the public information, upon a matter of such magnitude and importance as the Receipts and Expenditure of this Commission, and not with a view of setting my ideas in opposition to those of Mr Grey, or any other person.

G. S. HATTON,
Clerk of Accounts.

OFFICE, GREEK STREET,
6th March, 1849.

Metropolitan Sewers.

THE

CLERK OF ACCOUNTS' REMARKS

ON THE

New System of Book-keeping

PROPOSED

BY MR GREY,

THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT.

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