

XIII.—GATESHEAD AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACT OF 1848

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“Health and happiness, comfort and morality are more important than rates or profits.” This quotation from the *Gateshead Observer* of 1848 comes from an editorial written when the Public Health Act was not yet an Act, but merely a Bill going through all the laborious procedures in Lords and Commons and hence a topic of general concern amongst the upper and middle classes—discussed in detail far more by them than by the labouring masses the Act was chiefly intended to benefit.

The decade before and after 1848 probably marks the period in which the general effects of laissez-faire industrialism were at their very worst. All but a few profit-mad sadists agreed, vaguely but earnestly, that “something” must be done, but there was no clear consistent opinion in or out of Parliament as to what exactly were the remedial roles, if any, of Government departments and/or local authorities. These issues regularly cut across party lines. The 1848 Act was the work of Lord John Russell’s Whig Ministry (1846-52), but it was following up the work of Sir Robert Peel’s Tory Ministry (1841-46). Edwin Chadwick, by the Health of Towns Act of 1842, got extended to the rest of Britain a doctors’ survey of causes of death and destitution, originally intended to cover London only. Thus Dr. D. B. Reid inquired into and reported on Gateshead in 1843. What he found there, most of it nasty, was further described in the Rawlinson inquiry (1849) and report (1850), which are central to this study.

The political evil of the centralization seemed to many

to be even greater than continued if shamefaced toleration of the existing industrial Sodoms and Gomorrahs sprung up over so much of Britain in the century prior to 1848. The General Board of Health, created by the Public Health Act of that year, was such a suspect institution that in 1858 it was dissolved and its functions clumsily distributed amongst other, older Government departments. To some extent its fate may be compared to that of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834, the hated "Pashas of Somerset House". Both had the unpopular, coldly philanthropic Edwin Chadwick as Secretary.

The Whigs' Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 created the principle of ratepayers' electoral control of boroughs, but so many parallel and conflicting local bodies of other types exercised specialized local functions, that the post-1835 boroughs, which included Gateshead, had at first only a limited role to play. This is seen by comparing the various local taxes of Gateshead in 1849. The parish Overseers of the Poor collected the poor rate (2/9d in the £) and therewith the county rate (2½d in the £), the borough rate (5½d in the £) and the watch rate, for police (2d in the £). Separate collectors collected the "street cess" (9d in the £), levied on behalf of the so-called "Street Commissioners", Improvement Commissioners created under a local Act of 1814, but since 1836 taken over by the new-style Town Council. There was also the highway rate, levied by the Parish Surveyors of Highways (the civil parish boundaries almost coinciding with the borough boundaries). The total rates of 4/7 in the £ were not all levied on the same property—assessments and exemptions varied—and of the total rate poundage the biggest slice, 60 per cent, was the poor rate. Financially, the Board of Guardians of the Gateshead Poor Law Union, extending beyond the borough and up to Ryton, was more important to the economy-conscious ratepayer than was the Borough Council. As it happened Council members and Guardians were often the same persons, drawn from the limited number of the business and professional middle-

classes who had a direct interest in running local affairs. Out of a population rising rapidly from just over twenty thousand (census of 1841) to nearly 26 thousand (census of 1851)—including at the latter date over a thousand Scots and 1,500 Irish immigrants—there were only just over 1,500 “rated inhabitants”, i.e. those able to vote in the various local elections. In 1851 there were only 711 qualified parliamentary voters.

The *Gateshead Observer*, founded in 1837 by Alderman William Henry Brockett, was by 1849 edited by James Clephan and printed by Councillor William Douglas. Its circulation of two thousand, the largest of any purely local north-eastern newspaper of the time, was bought chiefly by the same limited number of bourgeois readers. There were only perhaps twenty per cent of the working classes in the town literate anyway. Unlike the present *Gateshead Post* (circulation 13 thousand), which for years has specifically shunned editorial comment, so that it could not be accused of taking sides in local affairs, the *Observer* of the early Victorian period constantly emphasised in its editorials the views of Brockett, whose radicalism often sounds old fashioned now, even patronizing in its style of “doing good”, but who was counted radical enough in his own time. James Clephan was of like views. He campaigned constantly against lack of sanitation and all the kindred evils of slumdom. His collection of writings entitled *The Cholera Epidemics of Gateshead*, testifies to his fanatical hostility to this and to all other diseases rooted in poverty and overcrowding. Clephan analyzed in remorseless detail the causes, courses and consequences of the three great national epidemics of Asiatic cholera as they affected Gateshead—claiming 234 victims in 1831-32 (all but 12 of whom lie beneath the Collinson obelisk in St. Edmund’s churchyard), 186 more in 1849, the very year of the inquiry, and no fewer than 433 still four years later. Clephan pointed out that the ratepayers, i.e. the wealthier minority, being better housed and though in great fear of the disease, suffered

little. In 1853 only ten of the 433 victims were ratepayers.

All the same, both before and after 1849 the terror inspired by the cholera helped, up to a point, to overcome the fears of many ratepayers who always tended to resist any big or sudden increase—indeed, any increase—in rates. The *Gateshead Observer*, while the Health Bill was going through Parliament, remarked that “*Nolens volens*, we may expect the Bill as surely as the cholera.” This was an accurate prophecy. Yet soon after, in commenting on local mortality statistics, the following bitterly ironical comment was made:

“The mortality in Gateshead in the past month has been below the average. In the time of the late Rector eight days elapsed without a funeral—a fact so remarkable that Mr. Collinson made a memo of it; but the present Rector (Dr. J. Davies) may record that for TEN days there was no funeral in the month of October, 1848.”

At this point the wave of Asiatic cholera had advanced from St. Petersburg to Hamburg, just across the North Sea. Only the previous month, in September, there appeared a remarkable feature article in the *Gateshead Observer*. It was in the form of a grimly witty letter, as from Hamburg, to be left in the *Dead Letter Office* and written by “Captain Cholera” to his “Cousin in Gateshead”, asking him to find him lodgings there. (It was in a filthy lodging house off Pipewellgate where the epidemic started the following January.) The whole style of Captain Cholera’s Letter, with the Captain’s cheerful delight in sin, death and disease, reminds one vividly of C. S. Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters* and the advice they purport to contain, sent by a more experienced to a less expert devil.

1849 witnessed three parallel developments—the progress of the cholera outbreak (January to December), the building of the first lengthy sewer in Gateshead and general preparations; some of them deliberate window-dressing, for the Rawlinson inquiry, which opened on November 28. It must not

be supposed that the desire to improve the physical environment of the poorer classes was solely linked with the fear of cholera, as well as of the form of typhus or "low fever" brought by half-starved Irish immigrants to the area, following the Great Potato Famine of 1845-49. Nor was this desire solely inspired by the nature of the Public Health Act of 1848. True, the Gateshead Borough Council and its energetic Town Clerk, William Kell, co-operated so keenly at the inquiry that the Superintending Inspector, Robert Rawlinson, was moved to give special praise to both Corporation and Town Clerk for their assistance and plentiful information. However he lists grim criticisms of the conditions of life for the poorer classes and the Corporation's zeal was at least in part a cover for past apathy. This is borne out by the fact that an inquiry was unavoidable. The Public Health Act of 1848 laid down two conditions for the creation of a Local Board of Health after a local inquiry. The scope of this inquiry is less than adequately defined on the title page of the Rawlinson Report, i.e. *Report to the General Board of Health on a preliminary inquiry into the sewage, drainage and supply of water and sanitary condition of the inhabitants of the Borough of Gateshead.*

The first condition for the creation of a Local Board of Health was that ten per cent of the inhabitants should petition for one. The second, significantly for Gateshead, was provision for the enforcement of a Local Board upon areas where over the past seven years the average annual death rate exceeded 23 per thousand. The ineffective Reid Report of 1843 revealed that though the average mortality rate was less for Gateshead than for Newcastle, there were districts in Gateshead far worse than the Newcastle average, e.g. Pipewellgate (one in 30.25). In these places, said Dr. Reid, the mortality rate approached that of Liverpool, which (due largely to the social consequences of Irish immigration) had the highest mortality rate in the United Kingdom. Gateshead's present mortality rate is about $12\frac{1}{2}$ per thousand.

When Gateshead Borough Council, due largely to

Brockett, resolved on November 9, 1848 to petition for an inquiry and to ask the General Board of Health to make this a top priority, the Council was really just anticipating the inevitable.

The sense of guilt underlying their show of zeal may in part be illustrated from a survey of relevant local trends during 1847-49, i.e. up to the opening of the inquiry. This survey also involves the Board of Guardians, bearing in mind that its elected members were frequently Gateshead aldermen, councillors and magistrates.

The chairman of the Guardians from 1838 to 1850, the elder Joseph Cowen, was a prime example of a Victorian big-business radical. Successively blacksmith, manufacturer of firebricks and gas retorts, coalowner and landowner, Cowen was knighted in 1871, on Gladstone's recommendation. He was so esteemed as Liberal MP for Newcastle (1865-73) that upon his death his son and namesake succeeded him in the seat. (It is the statue of the younger Joseph Cowen [1831-1900] which stands in Newcastle near the Old Assembly Rooms.) The elder Cowen was described by a political colleague, Major E. R. Jones, as "an amiable, gentle man of pleasant manners and handsome presence". Cowen's reputation is not however enhanced when the behaviour of the Gateshead Guardians in 1848-49 is considered. After they had established a temporary "fever hospital" at Wrekenton just outside their Union's boundary, they first protested (January 19, 1848) and then gave in (February 29) when the Poor Law Commissioners wrote from London (January 4) strongly suggesting the fever hospital's removal. In fact they gave way after the Commissioners had changed *their* minds and agreed to let the hospital stay open (February 4). Fears that the new General Board of Health would likewise prove to be, as Cowen described the Commissioners on January 18, "dictators", caused Coun. William Cook, also a Guardian, to make a solitary stand in the Town Council the following November 9 against the decision to petition for a public inquiry under the new Public Health Act.

In the meantime on October 17 the Guardians accepted the offer of the Borough Council to form a joint committee, which in anticipation of the Act took the title *Local Board of Health*—of whose activities more will be mentioned presently. On January 8, 1849 the dreaded cholera reappeared. The Joint Local Board resolved next day to set up a cholera hospital beside the workhouse in Union Lane (now Coatsworth Road). They also decided to distribute a handbill promising that they would pay, out of public funds, the medical expenses of suspected infected persons going to see a doctor. Roused to terror not by the cholera but by the “dread of some undefined expense”—a phrase used later by Rawlinson when presiding over the inquiry—the Guardians through their Clerk, William Rowntree (who died soon afterwards), sent a letter to all the local doctors repudiating the handbill. The Guardians averred that their own medical officer, Dr. Benjamin Barkus, was competent to attend *all* cases. The doctor reacted by resigning (February 10)—eight days after the Joint Board, which had been energetically led by Brockett, decided as a protest, by six votes to four, to dissolve themselves. When Barkus too resigned, Cowen expressed his sorrow at the Joint Board’s dissolution, saying with reference to the question of medical expenses, “Expense was never thought of, provided no unnecessary outlay took place.”—surely a piece of refined logic worthy of inclusion in *The Times Educational Supplement’s* “No Comment” box.

This was of course fiddling while Rome burned—or, to put metaphor aside, dithering while the cholera was spreading. However at that same meeting on February 10, 1849, the Guardians decided that to offset disease, the workhouse inmates should get more solid food and revised the daily dinner menus as follows:

Sundays—beef (no change).

Mondays—soup instead of broth.

Tuesdays—beef instead of soup.

Wednesdays—suet pudding instead of beef.

Thursdays—beef instead of broth.

Fridays—suet pudding (no change).

Saturdays—soup (no change).

This raised the weekly cost for each inmate's food from 1/11d to 2/1½d. For doing this the Guardians got into trouble once more with the Poor Law Commissioners in London.

The workhouse inmates certainly needed some increased resistance to disease, as was revealed by George Brewis' evidence at the Rawlinson inquiry. After mentioning the outbreak of cholera inside the workhouse, Brewis testified as to the sanitary arrangements there: "The sewage water was conveyed to a shaft in the garden . . . collected into pits and the inmates mixed it with earth to make a compost for the garden. The inmates of a workhouse were not robust and their constitutions could not resist the noxious effluvia of such collections of filth. The inhabitants of Claremont Place [nearby] complained of the smell." Brewis then blandly added that "He mentioned this matter not in any spirit hostile towards the Guardians, but simply for the information of the Commissioner [Rawlinson] and *with a view to remedy*." The Borough Council were as culpable as the Guardians, the Council's own midden at Oakwellgate being notoriously offensive.

Pressure groups of the more compassionate and enlightened among the bourgeoisie were ready to act and to influence national and local opinion. On March 16, 1847 the Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Reform Association was set up. On April 20 it adopted a petition in favour of the Health of Towns Bill. (This 1847 Bill was withdrawn for redrafting and re-emerged as the successful Bill of 1848.) It was common middle-class procedure to hold public meetings to back petitions, to be thence channelled through local MPs to the relevant "fountain head". The Association strongly supported the officially requisitioned "town's meet-

ing" of February 15, 1848 in Gateshead Town Hall, presided over by Alderman Thomas Reveley, a former Mayor. The meeting's resolutions were to be more precisely framed by the Town Clerk, William Kell, into a petition in favour of the Health Bill. The petition was to be presented to the House of Lords by Earl Grey, son of the "Reform Act" Grey, and to the House of Commons by Gateshead's respected and active MP, William Hutt—Gateshead being from its creation in 1832 up to 1918 a rock-safe Whig/radical/Liberal seat and the local Tories being a definite minority amongst all classes in the town. The meeting's basic resolution rings out like a curse on the vicious Victorian combination of original sin with ugliness and cruelty which accompanied the booming industrialism. The resolution read:

"That discomfort and demoralization, disease and death arising from preventible causes—from impure air and filth and perpetual darkness and kindred nuisances, afflict and destroy the people of this and other towns and districts and fall with especial severity on the poor and weakest portion of our population."

The meeting approved the Bill in principle but regretted the exclusion from it of the abolition of burials within towns. (The Borough Council's resolution favouring this, as regards St. Mary's, had been politely sidestepped by the Rector.) The meeting also regretted lack of reference to the abolition of the window tax, "a tax on light and air". Likewise it demanded the abolition of the illogical duty on bricks used in sewerage and urban drainage. There was no such duty on bricks used for land drainage and church building. Twelve days earlier, on February 3, Coun. Joseph Robson had informed the Borough Council that on this very matter of the brick duty he had heard from Lord Morpeth, parliamentary pilot of the Health Bill, as he was Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests. Lord Morpeth hid behind the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood, later Lord Halifax and forebear of the "Halifax of Munich". The Chancellor was "not in a condition to listen with favour to a proposal for reduction of taxes"—a statement with a familiar ring.

The Sanitary Association followed up its earlier agitation the more after the Public Health Bill had on August 31, 1848 received the royal assent. It was now concerned as much with the advance westwards through Europe of the cholera as with the preparations for the approaching public inquiry. At its meeting on September 11 it drew up a "memorial", presented by two doctors to the Borough Council three days later. Thus prodded—and indeed not reluctantly—the Council on that day set up a Health Committee for both purposes—prevention and preparation. This Health Committee worked with, but must be carefully distinguished from, the Joint Local Board of Health formed the next month (October 17) after the Council's offer to the Guardians to co-operate. This Joint Board disappeared, in circumstances already outlined, the following February, after the cholera had arrived. It was paralleled in every other civil parish of the Poor Law Union by the emergency creation of "district health committees".

Alderman John Potts, the Mayor and the chairman of the Council's Health Committee, was far less energetic and effective than Alderman Brockett as chairman of the Joint Board. Brockett got the whole town reported on in grim detail by 19 "district sub-committees", set up on October 24. What they reported on is exemplified by "sub-committee number 16", which inspected the area from Nun's Lane southward to Sisson's Gate.

"In dread of a second visitation from the cholera (we) have been recently inspecting the various holes and corners, tripe-factories and slaughter-houses, privies and pigsties which have so long rendered the borough notorious in the sanitary annals of the empire ... In

conclusion, your sub-committee consider that their most serious and most responsible duty is to condemn *not* the conduct of the inhabitants, but the apathy of the public authorities ..." and the sub-committee went on to denounce the lack of effective sewage and drainage.

A year later at the Rawlinson inquiry, John Blagburn gave a different emphasis and put the blame on the people's own habits. "... They had heard a great deal about the burial grounds, but the dead did not do so much harm as the living." Rawlinson from the chair interposed a "Quite right." and Blagburn went on, "The churchyard evil might be cured without much difficulty, but it would not be so easy to prevent the people that were not yet in the churchyard from poisoning themselves and their neighbours."

Brockett was himself, I think, guilty of a tactical inconsistency, for he was one of the four signatories of the "sub-committee number 16" report, yet next month, on November 9, 1848, as part of a long and extremely able speech of a type no longer permitted in Gateshead Council Chamber, with its "five minutes" rule, Brockett compared the inhabitants of Bottle Bank, descending steeply as it did to the Tyne, with those of Lisbon (where there were no sewers). He said,

"The inhabitants had a constitutional antipathy to anything being carried on, or off in the dark. Everything must be fair and above board ... Every householder had his midden before his door and when it came on to rain, he stirred it up with a stick ..." (Laughter).

"The inhabitants lay in wait for the rain and then ran out with their little hoards of refuse which they had been carefully collecting since the last shower, and consigned them to the aquatic scavenger to carry to the river the best way he could." (Laughter.)

To which Coun. John Angus added that many "had neglected to exercise the summary powers with which a

stick invested them, for there were large masses of filth which had never been stirred from one year's end to the other." (Laughter.)

Brockett here seems to blame the people themselves.

For two years, from 1846 to 1848, the Borough Council had periodically discussed the question of a main town sewer. The great majority of the borough's surface was, even then, rural, the population being one fifth of the ultimate maximum (1925) and a quarter of today's population. The old core of the town, climbing from the old Tyne Bridge and huddling around St. Mary's, was extending a little up and down the south side of the Tyne and more so south-westwards along the present Bensham Road and southwards up to Sunderland road end, where the roads to Sunderland and Durham diverged. Within this area—ten furlongs along the river and over a mile to south and south-westward—the great bulk of the population, industry and social problems were to be found. Within the Borough boundaries were the villages of Wrekenton, Sheriff Hill and Low Fell, also including slums, but fields and big houses in grounds still took up over three-quarters of the Borough's acreage. Bensham, no longer a village, was now a definitely suburban development. St. Cuthbert's church and churchyard were consecrated in 1848.

Bearing in mind this general description of the Borough, those Council members who saw the need for a main sewer wished to start no further south than Sunderland road end. Some especially economy-minded members thought that starting at Jackson's Chare (now Jackson Street) would do. On February 3, 1848 the Council at last agreed in principle to build the sewer, but on the recommendation of the Town Improvement Committee, chaired by Brockett, they also agreed that the method of raising the money for the project should await the outcome of the Health Bill then before Parliament. In this debate, Alderman Thomas Cummins argued that public baths and washhouses, which Gateshead

still lacked, were more urgent than a sewer. Coun. William Cook, already mentioned as a hater of central boards, protested that the ratepayers could not afford both these projects. Alderman Thomas Wilson "thought it desirable not to move until they could see their way a little better." (How many times, I wonder, has that particular speech been made in Council Chambers?) Despite Wilson and Cook, the Council instructed the Town Improvement Committee to seek a site for public baths and washhouses. (This building may still be seen, bearing the Corporation crest, at the foot of Oakwell-gate.) The need for them was excellently summed up in the debate by the same Ald. Reveley who 12 days later chaired the public meeting on the Public Health Bill. Reveley reminded the Council that:

"The majority of families had only a single room; and only think of the condition of a working man, returning home from an ironworks in the midst of a washing, with even the very bed on which he must lie all night saturated with moisture from the washtub. As for a bathe, where was he to get one? The Tyne for miles was not fit to wash in, it was so polluted; and if anyone were to think of bathing in it in front of the town, he could not do so without being liable to punishment for the exposure."

Reveley's reference to river pollution fits in with the fact that as from the following November, Newcastle and Gateshead ceased to be supplied with any piped water direct from the river just above Newcastle. The reference to the river jars against the evidence of the eminent architect and surveyor, John Dobson, at the subsequent Rawlinson inquiry. Dobson said that "Gateshead was an excellent town to drain . . . The whole of the drainage both of Newcastle and Gateshead went straight into the Tyne. The river," he added, "was not offensive in consequence." Of course, industrial pollution was also a big factor, but Reveley could not be at the inquiry to argue with Dobson, since the Alderman

had died, aged 65, on October 31, 1848, just a year before the inquiry. Modern opinion obviously concurs with the sentiments of Reveley as against the facile attitude of Dobson.

The Town Council meeting on May 4, 1848, gave strong backing to the Health Bill, refusing to co-operate with boroughs hostile to it and supporting four additional clauses which were also accepted by Lord Morpeth, Government spokesman for the Bill. These included one clause authorizing the appointment of an "Officer of Health" in each district—though with unbecoming inconsistency, when it came to adopting this optional measure, late in 1850, Gateshead Council chose to defer such an important appointment. The clauses emphasise the point that the principles of adoptive legislation, though later linked with Disraeli's social reforms, was in fact a feature of much earlier social legislation. This was further exemplified by the Council's decision to give backing to the local MP, William Hutt, whose proposed additional clause would enable borough councils to adopt "all or parts" of the Town Improvement Clauses Act of 1847 as "applicable or useful in each borough".

On 31 August, as the royal assent was given to the Bill and as the cholera was drawing nearer, there was a consequential quickening of zeal amongst local authorities. This has already been instanced in Gateshead by the successive creations of the Health Committee by the Council (September 14) and the ill-fated Joint Local Health Board by Council and Guardians (October 17). After the 19 devastating sub-committee reports on the town's sanitation, the *Gateshead Observer* editorial cried out:

"Well! Will anything now be done? Shall the cholera now be invited, pressed, persuaded, compelled to visit us? Shall we go on for ever preferring cash to cleanliness and permitting the dictates of pelf to supersede the calls of duty?"

Even when next January (1849) cholera reappeared, there was at first less alarm among the town's "establishment" than there had been in 1831-2, which first outbreak had led to the creation of the Gateshead Dispensary to give free or cheap medical aid to the poor. The seventeenth annual meeting took place on February 16 of the Dispensary Governors, whose secretary was the indefatigable Brockett and whose chairman was the ironmaster George Hawks, Gateshead's original Mayor and re-elected to the civic office on November 9 previously. Brockett's annual report complained of too many cases of aid being requested from those above the level of income, i.e. able to pay for treatment. The report also said, "Cholera has again appeared, but fortunately in a form less virulent and with consequences less fatal than before." This was to be a tragic misstatement. Nevertheless "after the meeting several friends of the Dispensary, according to annual custom, partook of an excellent dinner and spent a pleasant afternoon at the Half Moon Inn, under the presidency of the Treasurer Mr. (James) Pollock."

Just as the cholera was beginning, the Town Improvement Committee received a preliminary estimate of £1982/19/8d from John Dobson for the building of the main sewer from the foot of Bottle Bank, along Church Street and High Street to Sunderland Road end. On May 3, as the epidemic raged, Thomas Rochester of Heugh in Northumberland lent the Council £2,000 and the sewer contract went to a Gateshead firm, John Pearson, the lowest tender and connected with Councillor Charles Pearson, the builder of the town's main railway station. Only six days later the work actually started "on the site of the departed tollbooth", revealing the foundations of the former gaol. On August 1 a coal seam was hit on—but the prize sewer was ready for his critical inspection when Superintending Inspector Robert Rawlinson opened his long-awaited inquiry in the Town Hall on November 28, 1849.

Rawlinson, a qualified engineer, obviously regarded himself as no mere "official chairman", intended to preside

supinely over the public sessions of the inquiry and, in public at least, to keep to a negatively impartial attitude—an attitude frequently observable today in chairmen of public inquiries. Something of his very definite and on the whole likeable personality emerges. Full of the Victorian “gospel of improvement”, he was in the front line of the muddled onslaught on the giant evils of industrialism, an onslaught during which, in Parliament and Council Chambers alike, the trumpet usually sounded a much more uncertain note than the sounds emitted by Rawlinson. He interjected comments into witnesses’ oral evidence—sometimes briefly or wittily, at other times at considerable didactic length e.g. on sewers and water supply. In between the two sessions of evidence at the Town Hall, he energetically went and saw for himself the best and grimmest aspects of Gateshead life. He rejected so-called expert witnesses’ evidence if he felt it to be inaccurate, as when he insisted that the town-folk were having to pay excessive charges for water and gas. It is clear that he got on particularly well with William Kell, the Town Clerk, who no doubt saw that this was to their mutual advantage anyway.

There is something particularly Victorian about the fact that on the evening of the first day of the inquiry, Rawlinson attended the annual meeting in its new West Street hall of the Gateshead Mechanics’ Institute, an “improving” body with which were connected various Council members and magistrates (again, including Brockett). As guest of honour Rawlinson was well applauded by the members and on November 30, from the Queen’s Hotel, Newcastle he wrote a letter of thanks, with flowery quotations from Burns and Shakespeare, stating that “Mechanics’ Institutes are a peculiarity of this age ... And we may all hope that there is a good time coming. Things good come not by accident but by design and labour.” It is ironical that such a bland sermonizing belief in the god of progress should be expressed by one who wrote as he did about existing conditions in the town.

Three months earlier, the Mayor, George Hawks, had got the Council to write to the General Board of Health on August 1, 1849, complaining of the delay in starting the inquiry. It was almost exactly a year after this complaint that the report was published. On August 5, 1850, the Board's Secretary, Henry Austin, gave public notice that comments on and objections to the report had to be handed in by September 20 next. If much of the contents did not make Council members blush with shame for their town, they must have been shameless.

Putting aside the historical, geological and meteorological data, the "meat" of the report and inquiry may be cut up into seven slices, namely: (1) sanitary conditions; (2) sewers and drains; (3) water supply; (4) roads; (5) lighting; (6) burial grounds; (7) police.

1. SANITARY CONDITIONS

Consideration of these must be linked with the Inspector's remarks on "preventible deaths". These he defines as the number of deaths per thousand in excess of 15 per thousand, an acceptable level in "well-regulated" districts. Averaging 267 per year in Gateshead (1842 to 1848 inclusive) they therefore totalled 1,869 preventible deaths. "Suffering and misery" get mentioned, but his emphasis is on the "great pecuniary loss", especially as for each preventible death "it has been ascertained" (how he does not say) "there are at least thirty cases of preventible sickness", i.e. sickness due to the physical living conditions, "so that in each year 8,016 cases of preventible sickness have occurred. Thrown into the form of an estimate, the money loss will stand as under—

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| 267 funerals, average cost £5 each | — | £1,335 |
| 8,016 cases of sickness, average cost £1 each | — | £8,016 |
| | | <hr/> |
| Annual loss from these causes | — | £9,351 |

But to this large sum must be added the value of adult lives, heads of families prematurely cut off, causing many widows and orphans to be thrown upon the parish for relief or permanent support, and it will be seen that proper sanitary works, capable of reducing this excessive mortality and sickness, will be the best means of *economy*." (My italics.)

The cold hard emphasis on practical money-saving is akin to Benthamite "moral arithmetic". Its aim was to quieten ratepayers' fears that modern sanitation meant much heavier rates. It would be less politically effective to plead with starry-eyed compassion for the victims of slumdom. Further, Rawlinson's hard-headed rather than soft-hearted style accords with the then popular Utilitarian philosophy which (ironically) was the ally of Christian philanthropy against the evils created by industrialism. The same emphasis on economics rather than moral indignation can be seen in Rawlinson's suggestion that the best ultimate replacement for the notorious slum lodging houses would be houses built for rent by the Council—a suggestion which took another quarter-century to reach the Statute Book, as Disraeli's Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875. The lodging houses were low-rated but their inmates cost the town dear in poor relief.

Rawlinson insists with devastating simplicity that "the condition of the town has not been materially improved" during the six years since the Reid Report of 1843. Thus he was not taken in by the anxiety of Council and Town Clerk to co-operate at the inquiry. Likewise, he reproduces verbatim the stark report of six local doctors, a document worthy of extensive quotation, in which they say:

"The following are some of the causes which we consider most potential in raising the mortality . . . And first we would refer to the deterioration of the external atmosphere by the unconsumed smoke, constantly issuing from the numerous manufactories in the borough, which cannot but prove highly prejudicial to health; and,

next, to the extreme narrowness of many of the thoroughfares, such as Pipewellgate, Hillgate and the Bottle-bank, and their still more confined and precipitous lanes and alleys, by which the ventilation is obstructed, and light in a great measure excluded.

Pipewellgate, which contains a population of about 2,000 and is about 330 yards in length, averages scarcely 8 feet in breadth.

The structure and arrangement of many of the houses more *recently* (my italics) erected are faulty, being built back to back, with such a limited space behind for conveniences that the ventilation is very imperfect, the air in many of the houses being strongly contaminated by the effluvia arising from the privies and middens; and it is by no means infrequent to find part of the buildings situated immediately over the ash-pits, and particularly in houses recently erected. Besides these evils attendant upon such arrangements we may mention two others—the free admission of light, which is so conducive to the physical well-being of the inmates, is prevented; and, secondly, the rooms are rendered damp and offensive from the fluid parts of the contents of the ash-pits penetrating the walls. Cellar kitchens were not very common in Gateshead until lately, but are evidently on the increase, as most of the houses at present building, or recently built, are made with cellar kitchens as the substory. These underground dwellings are dark, damp and ill-ventilated, and contain inmates presenting in general a sickly appearance, who are more liable to diseases, and from which they more slowly recover than those who occupy the stories above. . . . Several of our streets, courts and entries are not only undrained, but remain unpaved and uncleansed, and without any side-channels to carry off the liquid matters, so that in wet weather they become almost impassable from ruts and filth. The inhabitants having no other method of disposing of their refuse water, excrement, &c, but throw them

upon the streets and lanes, where they spread, become decomposed, and evolve a most disgusting odour, more particularly when the weather is warm and close ...

In some portions of the town [no privies] are provided; in other portions, as in Hillgate, Oakwellgate &c., there is frequently only one privy common to 20 or 30 families, and these are in such an abominable dirty condition as to excite surprise that they should ever be used. There are no public necessaries. It is moreover very common to find that the same number of families have but one ash-pit amongst them, which is generally open and of very limited dimensions, so that it is soon filled up; and not being quickly emptied but fresh additions made, the ashes &c., are strewn about, the road encroached upon and the air thus polluted.

There are no public baths and wash-houses in Gateshead; the poorer class of the inhabitants invariably wash their clothes in their confined and crowded rooms and hang them out to dry in the thoroughfares.

Your Committee may now specify some of the conditions which appear to them most conducive in raising the mortality more particularly of Pipewellgate above that of other parts of the town; which are, the defective breadth of the thoroughfare itself; the narrowness, darkness and dampness of the numerous lanes and courts; the descent of the most disgusting refuse matters thrown out by persons living in the parts more elevated; the presence of numerous piggeries; the washings from tripe shops, which are allowed to flow along the pavement for a considerable distance, evolving the most disagreeable and sickening odour; the condition and overcrowded state of the tenements, more especially of lodging-houses, where scores of the poorest and filthiest of the human species congregate, and the want of public and private necessaries. The rooms in the town which are let as lodging-houses are crowded at nights, and during the day are never free of their filthy inmates, who endeavour

to stop all the openings by which fresh air may be admitted. These houses are not ventilated and are under no surveillance. It is in these places, where no attention is paid to personal or local cleanliness, where the air is rendered poisonous by overcrowding and want of ventilation, where there is great heat and moisture and the almost entire absence of light, we might conclude that there would be the greatest amount of disease; and such is the case, for the neglect of sanitary laws impairs the general health and lowers the physical capability of the people, generates fever, favours the development of scrofula and consumption, and the spread of and increased mortality from all infectious diseases."

The six doctors reported on the exact spot in the lodging house off Pipewellgate where the first case occurred the previous January of the dreaded Asiatic cholera. He was a tramp from Edinburgh. The six doctors stated:

"The room where the case occurred was only about 9 feet square and 7 feet high and was occupied by about 15 or 16 lodgers, who slept in the same room; these were mostly vagrants, very dirty in their habits and generally intemperate. On the day after the occurrence of this case two other lodgers were seized and also the lodging-house keeper, a strong Welchman. These cases proved rapidly fatal; the parties affected could not be removed as there was no such thing as a hospital, at the time, which was urgently called for. On the 11th. of January, three days after the occurrence of the first case, the disease broke out in an entry on the same side, a few yards further along the street, and gradually made progress towards the west end of Pipewellgate, overlooking the several entries. The houses in these entries are generally damp, as they are either built against the banks or are affected by the streams of water pouring down from them, and keeping the entries constantly in a damp state, the

drainage being very defective, the houses dark and ill-ventilated and the inhabitants generally are a very dirty class.

There are lodging houses in most of these entries, which are very crowded; in some instances, ordinary sized rooms occupied by 20 people or men, 30 in others, and the lodgers are principally Irish vagrants."

Rawlinson inspected these riverside areas and added :

"... neither plan nor written description can adequately convey to the mind the true state and condition of the room-tenements and of the inhabitants occupying them. The sub-soil on the sloping side of the hill is damp and most foul, the brickwork of the buildings is ruinous. the timber rotten; and an appearance of general decay pervades the whole district. The buildings fronting to Hillgate have originally been erected as residences of a superior description, the stairs have had carved balusters; the rooms have been fitted up with various forms of decoration, which only serve at present to heighten the grim misery which pervades them. Single rooms are let off as tenements, which are crowded with men, women and children; the walls are discoloured with age, damp and rot; the windows are broken, old rags, straw and boards occupying the place of glass, so that means of light and ventilation are alike absent. There are no sewers or drains, neither is there any proper privy accommodation; solid filth encumbers the surface, liquid refuse saturates the subsoil, and is drawn by capillary attraction through the porous bricks up into the walls; personal cleanliness, or a healthy atmosphere, is impossible. The manufactories and skinner's yard add to these deleterious influences. For much of this property, as it now stands, there is little chance of amendment—the remedy must consist in its removal."

Rural Wrekenton, straddling the borough boundary, also contained "foul nests" where cholera was hatched. Its local epidemic of September 1849, just before the inquiry, carried off 120 victims—one sixth of the population, of whom 21 were in or of the local private lunatic asylum, 30 were from "clean and respectable" houses and the rest were from the hovels where vagrants, largely Irish and tinkers, collected from miles around—30 families of these benighted transients being driven by the natives from the village after the epidemic was over. Doctor Francis Bennett stated:

"The principal dirty places and ill-constructed houses are the Ship-lane, the back Ship-lane and Hosegood-square, behind the Ship Inn. We saw one or two rooms in this locality with direct openings into ashpits ... These houses at the time formed a nest for tinkers and muggers, who were continually coming and going, and who located themselves rent free, or paid very little rent indeed, and lived huddled together (four or five families in a house) with horses, asses, dogs, and in one case pigs, the ashes and other accumulations being allowed to collect in a corner of the room; and not only did the inmates vegetate and behave much in the same way as Mr. Schorey mentions in his report on the lodging-houses of Gateshead, but females besides males and children, often came out into the lane to obey the calls of nature in a state of complete nudity ... The cholera at Wrekenton need no longer be a matter of surprise."

2. SEWERS AND DRAINS

Rawlinson had to report on a grim absence of any serious local public effort to come to terms with the basic needs of industrial living. There were "natural drains", like Bottle Bank after rain, but the only "built sewer" until just before the Reid Report (1843) was built in Hillgate in

1773. In 1842, just before Dr. Reid's visit, this was linked with a new sewer, for Bridge Street, a mere 99 yards. Even so, of the £265 this cost, £159 came not from the ratepayers but from a fund catering for unemployed workers. There was an open vennel along Oakwellgate to the Church Street / Cannon Street junction. This vennel the Council covered and deepened in 1844-45. Significantly, Kell's statement on this to the Rawlinson inquiry adds:

“... a public privy was erected over what appeared to be the most convenient part of it, but the owner of the adjacent property pulled the privy down, closed the opening into the sewer, and before or since that time no public privy has been formed in Gateshead.”

Such behaviour seems high-handed, but perhaps less reprehensible in view of Rawlinson's Chadwickian criticism of the sewers just mentioned, as well as of Gateshead's new sanitary showpiece, the 1,381 $\frac{2}{3}$ yards sewer for High Street, Church Street and Bottle Bank. All these sewers, even that of the great John Dobson, had far too great a circumference, so that there was never a constant water velocity in the pipe to get rid of all the filth, which simply lay inert and stinking in the bottom of the main sewer pipe, instead of being ceaselessly flushed down to the river. Again, Rawlinson aspired to the Benthamite ecstasy of combining reform with economy. Drains of much narrower girth were needed—not only would they be far more effective and hygienic, but (glory be) also much cheaper.

On his side, Dobson complained:

“But out of 165 owners of property in High Street, Church Street and Bottle Bank, only 22 had availed themselves of the facility of drainage. About 15 others had applied to have their branch drains made into the sewer. Every morning nightsoil was laid upon the grates. No great good would be accomplished by the sewer until

the authorities had power to enforce drainage.”

Rawlinson here replied, “And that power the Public Health Act will give you. I suppose the owners of property have a dread of some undefined expense.”

Brockett interjected, amidst laughter, “O yes. That is a phantom which has haunted Gateshead long.”

Rawlinson commented, “Yet the cost would be trifling—not more than £1 per house.” He also suggested a practical remedy for the excessive girth of Dobson’s sewer. “Lay a properly graduated tile drain along the bottom of it.”

The Inspector refrained from direct reference to the refusal of Gateshead Council six years earlier, in 1843, to pay £300 to the Board of Ordnance for a detailed survey of the borough, because such a survey would be undertaken at taxpayers’ expense. But he did say, “A correct plan of the district to some adequate scale is absolutely necessary.” Indeed, it must be added, no general improvement of the environment could take place without one, the more so as Rawlinson recommended that at least 4,167 yards of sewers were needed. His street-list for these includes Walker Terrace, Mulgrave Terrace, West Street, East Street, Half Moon Lane, Jackson Street, Ellison Street and Nelson Street. In 1849 none of these had any sewers at all.

3. WATER SUPPLY

The six doctors in their sanitary report had said that, “Gateshead has a liberal and constant supply of water at a moderate charge.” This (one of their few optimistic pronouncements) was a view rejected by Rawlinson, who reported that an excessive price was charged. This was denied by the officials of the Whittle Dean Water Company, which only a year earlier had stopped supplying some of its water from the river just above Newcastle (November 1848). In 1835 only 8 Gateshead streets were supplied with water

but by 1849 there were 51 streets supplied, reaching about half the population of the town—though still mostly not from individual taps, but from communal stand-pipes, mostly outdoors and denounced by Rawlinson for their leaky inefficiency. However, the water supply was improving all the time.

4. ROADS

The same could not be said of the road system or, rather, the total lack of one. There were four types of thoroughfare, but only three maintained by public bodies.

1. There were main roads owned by two toll-charging Turnpike Trusts originating in Acts of Parliament. These were the Durham and Tyne Bridge Turnpike Trust, which also owned Bensham Road (leading to Hexham), and the Wearmouth and Tyne Bridge Turnpike Trust. The two Trusts jointly maintained the High Street up to Sunderland Road end.
2. Other carriageways totalling $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles were maintained by the four Parish Surveyors of Highways, who also looked after those public footpaths not included in the 1814 Act. In 1841 the Surveyors spent £854 and charged a 6d rate, in 1849 only £474 and a 3d rate. No major road plans here!
3. Commissioners of Lighting, Paving and Watch had been set up by private and local Act of Parliament in 1814. They were concerned with a limited number of local footpaths and alleys. The Commission's duties had been taken over in 1836 by the new Corporation.
4. The Town Clerk stated that the Corporation had no control over the steadily increasing number of private streets and lanes. Five years after the Public Health Act James Clephan was complaining bitterly of Victoria Street, Barn Close, built on a tip, "a mass

of porous rubbish", so that its houses stood on "a sponge".

One effect of the 1848 Act was that the Borough Council took over all the roads and duties of the Parish Surveyors, just as they had previously absorbed those of the "Street Act Commissioners".

5. LIGHTING

Rawlinson's report sympathized with William Kell, the Town Clerk, who at the inquiry bluntly stated that Gateshead had to pay £100 a year more for public lighting than did Newcastle, because Newcastle Corporation could exercise an indirect blackmail. That is, it could threaten to use its parliamentary powers (not possessed by Gateshead) to buy up the company and to erect municipal gasworks. Thomas Hebron, Secretary of the Newcastle and Gateshead Union Gas Light Company, was not believed when he stated the position to be that the Newcastle price was too low, not that the Gateshead price was too high. After the inquiry Gateshead Council toyed with, but then permanently abandoned the idea of a municipal gasworks—being placated by the Company's subsequent tactful reduction in the price of its gas.

6. BURIAL GROUNDS

There was a belief amounting to mania that ceasing to bury people in old churchyards in town centres would be a potent means of reducing disease. There was a fear of St. Mary's churchyard, by then nearly full anyway, below which a huddle of slums and stairs tumbled down to the river. Kell told the inquiry that in the churchyard's brick vaults "the coffins swam about like boats". On February 3, 1848

the Borough Council had resolved in favour of ending burials there. Dr. J. Davies, the Rector of Gateshead, merely had graves dug deeper and charged more. He suggested that the Council should pay for the enclosing of the new suburban St. Cuthbert's churchyard, to encourage burials there, but the Council evaded the question of the expense by pleading that such expenditure would be "ultra vires". Ironically, it is only since the last war and long after St. Cuthbert's was no longer used for burials, that the churchyard's maintenance has been taken over by the Corporation.

Rawlinson suggested that "The question of an extra-mural cemetery will no doubt be taken up by the Council when they have the legal power to deal with it." Out of this notion there later came the East and Saltwell cemeteries.

7. POLICE AND LODGING HOUSES

As regards the observance of law and order by the inhabitants, Rawlinson complains chiefly of the amount of drunkenness. In 1849, when the population was about 25,000, there were 64 cases involving drunkenness—whereas in 1966 there were 250 such cases—about the same percentage in relation to a population of over 100,000. Then as now there were complaints of increasing crime. Yet one is staggered at the comparatively docile attitude of most slum-dwellers, who simply accepted their ugly fate. Since with vastly improved living conditions the proportion of "drunks" remains fairly constant in Gateshead, one cannot agree with Rawlinson in giving the chief reason for excessive drinking as, "Where men have no means of comfort at home, the beer-shop, or dram-shop is much resorted to and hence much misery and crime." In this connexion, the Town Clerk, Kell, pettishly grumbled at the inquiry that the Home Office had refused to approve the Council's proposed bye-law, banning Sunday morning "tippling in taverns"—yet had earlier approved an identical bye-law for Newcastle.

William Henry Schorey, Superintendent of Police and soon after made Chief Constable, scarified the more tender-hearted of his listeners at the inquiry by his hideous revelations as to the conditions inside Gateshead's notorious lodging houses, described by Rawlinson as "disgraceful to civilization". Kell's chief reaction to this report was merely that it was a warning to the charitable against the dangers of indiscriminate almsgiving. Curiously, he was not joking. Here is Schorey's report:

"This borough contains 26 houses of this class . . . Of the keepers, 17 are Irish, 7 English and one German; and they comprise . . . 74 rooms (if I do not misapply the term). Many of the dormitories are little better than hovels, whether as regards size, cleanliness, ventilation or drainage—and such as are calculated to engender disease in its most malignant form . . . I have had opportunities of witnessing, in rooms not measuring more than 14 feet square, from 15 to 20 men, women and children lodged—the men and children completely naked, with the exception of a small rug—and the women with nothing more than a shift—which, from length of time and the filthy habits of the wearer, had the appearance more of oilcloth than the under-garment of a female—and all breathing an atmosphere pestilential in the extreme. Added to this, unrestrained sexual intercourse taking place in the presence of the youth of both sexes, not a screen of any kind intervening. Indeed, in my experience I have witnessed, along with other officers, sights of this kind as would disgrace a savage life, but which, to the inmates of these dens, from familiarity and their low standard of morality, went unnoticed, except in the shape of vulgar jest or ribald remarks." The next part of the report reminds one of Fagin's educational establishment.

"Not only are such places the hotbeds of disease in its most loathsome forms, but sources from which crime in its deepest dye may be traced; some of the most daring

offences on criminal record having from time to time been concocted within their filthy atmosphere. Were corroboration of this statement necessary, I am certain that I should be borne out by the most experienced police-officers. It is here that the young vagrant comes into contact with the old and experienced thief, and here are discussed the plans and ramifications of the day. Reared up in idleness, and without those lessons of morality which might otherwise be imparted to him, the younger vagrant looks to the older and more daring as the superior of his race, and in time comes forward to outrival him in the dishonest levies that are in various shapes, made upon the public; and further, in connection with houses of this description, it not unfrequently happens that the keeper is a receiver of stolen property and acts in the capacity of a 'fence', a term applied to persons who stand between the thief and the officer, thereby thwarting the ends of justice. To place the common lodging houses under proper regulations, not only with regard to space, ventilation, drainage and cleanliness, but also a due regard to the parties by whom they should be kept, would not only tend to lessen disease in those densely populated neighbourhoods, but would be the means of checking crime in its earliest stage."

Rawlinson reproduced verbatim Schorey's report and in his own report briefly added, "I can add my own testimony to the truth of this fearfully vivid description." He did not say what this testimony was, but the *Gateshead Observer* account of the inquiry preserved it, namely—"... Many thousands of our people were without the means of living in common decency. While they herded together in crowded rooms, men and women, married and single, young and old, indiscriminately, to lift them out of their moral degradation was impossible. Every garment was stripped off before they betook themselves to bed. They lay so close to each other on the floor that everyone could touch his neighbour. He saw a

naked negro lying so near to a young girl that he could place his hand upon her. The servant-girl of the house had no bed that she could call her own, but must take any place that chanced to be vacant. And the keeper of such a miserable lodging house would realise by his customers a greater income than the annual value of the most luxurious room in the most magnificent mansion of the empire."

Here a revolution in official and popular attitudes is discernible. The Inspector emphasised the presence of the naked *negro* so as to heighten the horror of it all. If he were to make such public remarks today, he might be in danger of the Race Relations Act and would certainly be an object of violent criticism.

Rawlinson's summary of recommendations begins, "The borough of Gateshead is not so healthy as the best conditioned districts are known to be."—after all his revelations, surely an astonishing understatement. His seven conclusions read:

- "1. . . . removable causes of disease exist in excess.
2. That much inconvenience and loss is experienced from the totally neglected state of many streets and roads...
3. That common lodging-houses require to be modified and controlled; that slaughter-houses require to be removed from crowded districts, and that many public and private nuisances require to be removed.
4. That the ancient burial ground of St. Mary's is unduly crowded; and that power to regulate burials, as also to provide a suburban cemetery, is required.
5. That sewers and drains should be formed throughout the district.
6. That the water supply requires ... to be improved and extended.
7. That public lighting may ... be more generally extended and the present price for gas be reduced."

Words are not deeds, even if the words be in official reports. Much later, new slums were still being built in Gateshead as elsewhere. By the General Board of Health's Provisional Order (February 1, 1851), confirmed by the Public Health Supplemental Act Number Two (1851), Gateshead secured its Local Board of Health, run in practice as a committee of the Borough Council. But detailed improvements came very slowly. Four years after the inquiry, in 1853, came a third bout of the cholera—its 433 victims being more than those of the two previous visitations combined—and a further Report, that of the Cholera Commissioners (1854). Yet the Public Health Act of 1848 was truly a significant document as will be seen from the following public notice, dated October 1851.

“NOTICE is hereby given that ... the Public Health Act, 1848 ... is now in force within and throughout the entire borough and the Town Council are constituted the Local Board of Health ...

The Act requires that before laying out any new street, one month's notice in writing of the intended level and width thereof shall be given ... the Local Board are authorized to fix the level and width of every such street; ...

14 days' notice in writing must be given to the Local Board before beginning to dig or lay out the foundations of any new house or to rebuild any house from the ground floor; and such notice must state the intended level of the cellars or lower floors, and the situation and construction of the privies and cesspools to be built ...

No house shall be built or rebuilt ... without a covered drain or drains, to be approved by the Surveyor of the Board; nor without a sufficient water-closet or privy and an ashpit furnished with proper doors and coverings.

Every building used as a slaughter-house shall be registered....

All common lodging-houses are required to be registered at the office of the Local Board and the keeper of any such lodging house must allow any person, having the written authority of the Local Board, to inspect the same; and, by the Common Lodging Houses Act, 1851, the Local Boards are authorized to make regulations as to the number of lodgers to be received and as to the houses being thoroughly cleansed; and immediate notice is required to be given ... of any fever or contagious diseases ...”

But the sting of the notice was in the tail:

“Neglect or breach of the above-mentioned requirements ... relative to slaughter-houses and common-lodging-houses, will expose the parties to heavy penalties, which will be strictly enforced by the Local Board.

By order of the Local Board of Health, William Kell, Clerk.”

And the *Gateshead Observer* in its exhortation to duty, addressed to the new Board, fittingly concluded:

“... not only the health and lives of the public are, under Heaven, in their hands, but also, more especially in the poorer localities, the fair ENJOYMENT of life. Under any circumstances, the round of a poor man’s pleasures is sufficiently narrow; and to leave HIS street unsewered and unpaved—HIS house undrained and unsupplied with water—the precincts of HIS abode uncleaned—when the power of placing him in a more pleasant and wholesome condition is at the command of his local governors, is doubly an abandonment of their duty, and demands the severest discouragement and disapprobation.”

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