

**SEWER GAS AND ITS
INFLUENCE UPON
HEALTH: TREATISE**

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Sewer gas and its influence upon health: treatise by H. A. Roechling

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H. A. ROECHLING

**SEWER GAS AND ITS
INFLUENCE UPON
HEALTH: TREATISE**

SEWER GAS AND HEALTH.

DEDICATED

TO

SIR THOMAS WRIGHT,

TO WHOSE FORETHOUGHT, WISE COUNSEL, AND PERSEVERANCE
THE TOWN OF LICESTER IS INDEBTED FOR MANY SANITARY
AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS, AND WHO HAS FOR A GREAT
NUMBER OF YEARS GIVEN FREELY OF HIS VALUABLE TIME
FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS FELLOW-CITIZENS,

AS A MARK OF HIS VERY HIGH ESTEEM AND REGARD.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

Although a great deal has been written at one time or another about the influence sewer gas exerts upon health, yet, in the author's opinion, the published information has dealt invariably only with one or two aspects of this question, and not with the whole, and the student of sanitary science was left to grope his way in the dark, as it were, and without guide through this apparent chaos, emerging therefrom probably after having formed a very one-sided opinion.

This state of things the author has endeavoured to remedy in the treatise before the reader, and although he is fully aware that great gaps still exist in our knowledge concerning the subject, he hopes he has succeeded in shedding some light upon it, and upon the way that will lead to its ultimate elucidation.

Questions affecting Nature and the processes by which she works her marvellous changes should, in the author's opinion, not be looked upon from one standpoint only, but ought to be viewed in their entirety and with their surroundings, otherwise one is apt to exaggerate the importance of one or more symptoms and leave others—equally important, or perhaps more so—altogether unobserved. It is therefore to the harmonious working together of a number of specialists—such as the chemist, the medical man, the bacteriologist, botanist, and engineer—that the author looks for the true answer concerning a number of questions affecting the health of individuals and communities.

In the search for material wealth this age has at times apparently forgotten scientific research, which did not promise some immediate material return; but there are hopeful indications that such temporary neglect is passing away, and that in future the scientific side of many practical sanitary questions will receive due consideration. It is then to be hoped that full light will be thrown upon many subjects at the present still shrouded in mystery.

Since writing the treatise the author's attention has been drawn to two explosions which have occurred in the "septic tank" at Exeter. In the first, the City Surveyor of Belfast narrowly escaped; and in the second, the City Surveyor of York is said to have received severe burns, and such a shock to his nervous system, that he has been obliged to keep to his bed at an Exeter hotel for some days.

As the "septic tank" is, like its predecessor in title, "the old cess-pool," a place for the manufacture of rank sewer gas on a large scale, containing considerable quantities of hydrocarbons, such as marsh gas, one cannot be surprised to hear of explosions, but it is sincerely to be hoped that the practical demonstrations of the dangerous character of the gases forming in the septic tank will not be lost sight of, and that the lessons thereby learnt will be utilised in future to prevent loss of life.

To all those who have been kind enough to supply him with information and particulars, the author wishes to express at this place his best thanks. He hopes he may continue to receive information on the influence of sewer gas upon health from those interested in the subject, with a view to making a second edition more complete than the first.

If in the opinion of some he has not dealt fully enough with the subject in places, the author hopes this may be excused; but the leisure at his command for this work was limited, and only obtainable at intervals that were often very far between.

H. ALFRED ROEHLING.

Leicester,
January, 1898.

29477

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Dedication	iii.
Preface	vii.

PART I.

General Considerations.

Pages 1 to 29.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY REMARKS	1 to 3
Importance of Subject—Additions to our Knowledge during the last Five Years—No Comprehensive Treatises on the Influence of Sewer Gas on Health up to now in existence in any modern language.	
CHAPTER II.—HISTORY OF SEWER-GAS CONTROVERSY	4 to 13
History of Controversy in England—Murchison's Theory—Budd's Theory and Present Views—Diseases attributed to Sewer Gas—Phases through which Scientific Questions pass in Foreign Countries must be studied with a view to a complete understanding—History of Sewer-Gas Controversy in Germany—Views expressed there—Opinions held in America, France, and Italy.	
CHAPTER III.—DEFINITION OF TERMS USED	14 to 15
Explanation of the terms Putrid Gases, Sewer Air, Sewer Gas, Cesspit Air—Cesspit Gas—Privy Gas—Decomposition and Putrefaction.	
CHAPTER IV.—THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHANGES FÆCAL MATTERS UNDERGO AFTER EVACUATION... ..	16 to 19
Our Knowledge of these Changes still very limited—Aërobes, Anaërobes and Facultative Anaërobes—Decomposition—Putrefaction—Nitrification—Micro-Organisms found in Human Excreta—Aim of all True Sanitation.	
CHAPTER V.—THE CONSERVANCY AND THE WATER-CARRIAGE SYSTEM	20 to 25
Conservancy Methods and their Disadvantages—Pails and Typhoid Fever—Water-Carriage System and its Advantages when properly carried out.	
CHAPTER VI.—NOTES ON THE ETIOLOGY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF TYPHOID FEVER	26 to 29
Former Views as to the Causation of Typhoid Fever—Present Views—The Typhoid Bacillus (<i>bacillus typhi</i>) of Eberth and Gaffky—Microbes of Infectious Diseases appear to be Specific Germs which spring from their like, and only create their like—Behaviour of Typhoid Bacillus under Different Conditions.	

PART II.*Observed Cases of Injury to Health from Sewer Gas.*

	Pages 30 to 43.	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.—CASES IN WHICH OUTBREAKS OF TYPHOID FEVER HAVE BEEN TRACED TO SEWER GAS		30 to 31
Buchanan's Classical Investigations—Other Investigations in England and Germany.		
CHAPTER II.—NOTES ON THE COINCIDENCE BETWEEN TYPHOID FEVER AND FAULTY DRAINS AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE SMOKE AND OTHER TESTS.....		32 to 33
Experience at Leicester, Bristol, Hornsey, and Leeds.		
CHAPTER III.—BIRMINGHAM SEWER-GAS CASE		34
CHAPTER IV.—MEPHITIC POISONING THROUGH SEWER GAS		35 to 37
Mild Form of Poisoning—Severe Form—Various Cases Mentioned.		
CHAPTER V.—HEALTH OF SEWERMEN.....		38 to 39
Scanty Information—No Proper Records Kept—Munich Experience—Asphyxia—Sore Throats—Rheumatic Affections—Typhoid Fever.		
CHAPTER VI.—SEPTIC POISONING THROUGH SEWER GAS		40 to 42
Sutton Coldfield Case—Contamination of Soup by Sewage—Meat-Poisoning at Coventry.		
CHAPTER VII.—EXPLOSIONS IN SEWERS AND CESSPITS.....		43
Coal Gas—Presence of Hydro-Carbons such as Marsh Gas.		

PART III.*Contents of Sewer Air.*

Pages 44 to 58.

CHAPTER I.—POISONOUS GASES CONTAINED IN SEWER AIR	44 to 48
Carbonic Acid—Ammonia—Sulphuretted Hydrogen—Hydro-Carbons—Volatile Fatty Acids—Examinations of Air in Old and Modern Sewers—East Ham Sewer Fatality, 1st July, 1895.	
CHAPTER II.—MICRO-ORGANISMS IN SEWER AIR.....	49 to 58
Methods of Air Examination still imperfect—Examinations of Air in the Sewers of Paris, Berlin, Sydney, Dundee, Bristol, and London—Sewer Air under Ordinary Conditions—Bursting of Bubbles—Splashing—Slimy Skin of Sewers—Results obtained by Different Observers Practically Agree—It is possible but not very probable that Sewer Gas carries the Typhoid Germ—Difficulty of Detecting the Bacillus Typhi in Sewer Air and Sewage very great.	

PART IV.*Experiments on Animals with Sewer Air.*

Pages 59 to 69. PAGE.

CHAPTER I.—EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCHES INTO THE CAUSAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SEWER AIR AND TYPHOID FEVER 59 to 69

Typhoid Fever and the Lower Animals—Inoculating Animals with Large Doses of Bacillus Typhi—Protective Forces of the System—Dr. T. H. Barker's Experiments with Three Dogs and One Mouse—Dr. G. Alessi's Experiments with 408 Animals in Rome—Contentions against Dr. Alessi's Experiments and Conclusions.

PART V.*Conclusions as to the Influence of Sewer Gas upon Health.*

Pages 70 to 73.

CHAPTER I.—INFLUENCE OF SEWER GAS UPON HEALTH 70 to 73

Conclusions from the previous Observations—Action of Sewer Gas apparently two-fold—Direct or Mephitic Action—Indirect or Predisposing Action—Fætid Smells on Sewage Farms Harmless—Immunity of Sewermen.

PART VI.*Allied Subjects.*

Pages 74 to 86.

CHAPTER I.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WATERWORKS AND SEWERAGE WORKS IN THEIR INFLUENCE UPON THE PUBLIC HEALTH..... 74 to 79

Buchanan's Classical Investigations in 1866—Improvement in Death-rates consequent on and subsequent to a Systematic Water Supply and Sewerage is now a Sanitary Axiom—Sewerage Works contribute to this Improvement in a more marked degree than Waterworks.

CHAPTER II.—THE DILUTION OF SEWER GAS AND ITS ESCAPE IN THE CENTRE OF ROADS AND STREETS 80 to 83

It is better to allow Sewer Gas to escape in our Streets and Public Places than to force it into the Interior of our Houses—Leicester Experience.

CHAPTER III.—CONCLUDING REMARKS..... 84 to 86

Effect of Sewer-Gas Theory upon Advances in House and General Sanitation—Building-up and Maintenance of Protective Forces of the Human System.