

**FOUL BURN AGITATION!:
STATEMENT EXPLAINING THE
NATURE AND HISTORY OF THE
AGRICULTURAL IRRIGATION
NEAR EDINBURGH**

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Foul Burn Agitation!: Statement Explaining the Nature and History of the Agricultural
Irrigation near Edinburgh by Anonymous

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CONTENTS.

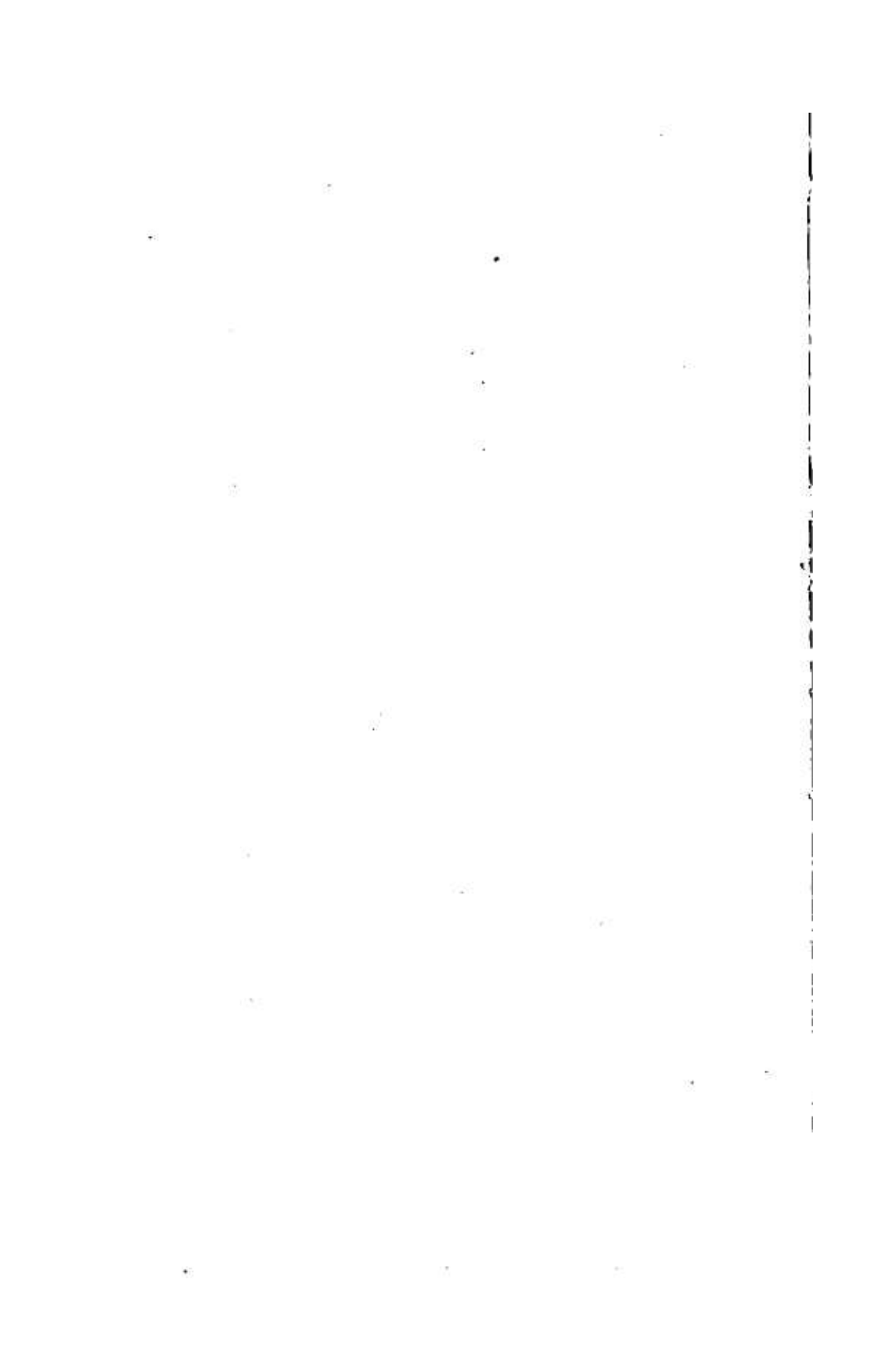
PRELIMINARY.—	Page
Agitation of 1839, &c.	1
Increase of Fevers in Edinburgh,	4
I. Complaint against Irrigation, viz. Smell,	6
Foul Burn, &c. described,	7
Formation of New London Road,	8
Edinburgh Gas-Works established,	8
Clause in statute prohibiting Gas-washings, &c. from being put into Drains, &c.	8
Nuisances in Edinburgh,	10
Irrigation on grounds of Heriot's Hospital,	10
II. Complaint against Irrigation, viz. Injury to health,	11
The Lands said to be <i>Marshes</i> , though producing great profit,	12-13
Preliminary Remarks :—	
1. Proposal to take powers in Police Bill of 1834 to make Tanks or Ponds, &c.	14
2. Former Pools or Ponds in irrigated lands now filled up,	14
Are the Irrigated Lands truly Marshes ?	15
Irrigation explained,	16
Extent of it near Edinburgh,	17
Authorities on Irrigation, viz. :	18
Survey on Wilts,	20
Surveys by Board of Agriculture,	21
Encyclopædia Britannica (7th Edition),	22-28
Professor Low's Elements,	29
Top-dressing Land in England,	31
History of Edinburgh Irrigated Meadows,	32
Of those on West of City,	32
Of those on East,	33
Account of Reetalrig and villas there,	34

Account of law-suit before the Sheriff at Mr Duncan's instance against Mr Baird and others,	35
Account of law-suit before the Court of Session between Mr Duncan and Lord Moray and others,	37
Proceedings posterior to Mr Duncan's Law-suit,	40
Calton Hill cut down, and Edinburgh Gas Company formed, and works erected,	40
Law-suit between Mr Miller and Mr Duncan in 1817,	41
Edinburgh and Dalkeith Railway, Statute for it in 1829,	41
Cholera, its approach, &c. in 1832,	41
Proceedings under different Edinburgh Police Bills, and General Police Bill for Scotland, Clauses in these protecting right of Proprietors,	42
Agitation of 1839,	45
Gas Company Acts of 1840, for new and old Company, having clauses prohibiting gas-water from entering the Foul Burn,	46
EVIDENCE on the Question whether use of Foul Burn hurtful to health,	49
Testimonies of Witnesses on Oath for both parties in Mr Duncan's case,	49-67
Lists of Old Persons taken from Record of Burials in Restalrig,	66-71
Locality of Meadows how inhabited,	72
Additional Proof to that in Duncan's case to be brought forward,	72
Proof that Grass is not, as alleged, unwholesome for Cattle, &c.,	74
PIERSHILL BARRACKS.—Untrue that these from Locality are unhealthy,	77
Preliminary Remarks,	78
Tables shewing Sickness, Mortality, &c. and Fever Cases among Troops from 1832 to 1840,	84
Inferences from these Tables,	118
Statement as to Butcher Meat not keeping is untrue,	120
Irrigation at Maybole, <i>See Appendix</i>	121-123
Abbey-Hill District not unhealthy; proof to contrary,	123
Palace at Holyrood said to be unhealthy, a bugbear,	126
District of St John's Hill,	127
Causes of Increase of Fever considered,	128
Solution of this by Mr Tait, surgeon,	128
Poverty a cause of this.—Description of,	129
Dr Alison on Management of Poor,	129-135
REMARKS on Special Statements of Police Pamphlet, viz. :—	
On Mr Drysdale, Chairman's notes,	135
On " Cyclopaedia," &c.	137
On Al Hakim's Letters,	137
On " MEDICAL EVIDENCE," viz. :—	
Of Dr Peebles,	138

CONTENTS.

v

Of Dr Traill,	139
Of Dr A. Combe,	139
Of Mr Skae,	140
Of Dr Fyfe,	140
Of Drs D. B. Reid and S. Alison,	141
Of Drs Mackenzie and Huie,	144
Of Sir G. Ballingall and Drs Abercrombie and Balfour,	145
Of Mr Balfour's (printer) Letter,	145
Of Poor Law Commissioners' Report for England, . .	147
Of Drs Christison and Hunter,	147
On MISCELLANEOUS EVIDENCE, viz. :—	
Of David Rankine, of Railway Company,	148
Of Jury Verdict,	148
Of Mr Miller of King's Park,	150
Of Rev. Dr Lee,	150
Of Messrs Mackenzie, Hamilton, and Gavin,	151
Of Mr Sime of House of Refuge,	154
Of Mr Johnstone on Draining Land,	155
Of Mr Geo. Stevens, Land-drainer,	155
Police Dughills on South and West of Edinburgh,	156
Fernicious consequences of demands of Agitators, even sup- posing they could be successful,	157
Projects of Agitators regarding Foul Burns,	159
Price or Compensation to Proprietors, if use of Foul Burns were to be affected,	161
NEW PAMPHLET,	163-166



STATEMENT, &c.

Since the month of March 1839, great exertions have been made to excite in Edinburgh a popular agitation against the practice which has existed for ages, of employing in agricultural irrigation the streams of water that descend from Edinburgh to the sea. Those streams are supplied by copious natural springs that rise in the City and its vicinity, or by the water introduced from the Pentland Hills, and the abundant rains of our climate, which, descending with a rapid current, carry off all impurities from our streets, lanes, and houses. Inflammatory harangues have been made at popular meetings against the irrigation of the lands below the City. These have been industriously reported in newspapers; and letters of the same character and tendency have filled every ordinary vehicle of intelligence. No effort has been spared to stir up popular clamour. The proceedings of those representative bodies, the Town-Council and Commissioners of Police, have been interrupted, that the members might listen to harangues hostile to the improvement of the grass lands in the vicinity, as formerly, by irrigation. Speeches made in the Town-Council, and at the Police Board, have been circulated in the daily newspapers, and at length, the person put forward as the leading agitator, by much urgency, prevailed with the Commissioners of Police to impose on their constituents the expense of printing and circulating, as the report of a Committee, a pamphlet of a most extraordinary description, amounting to a reprint of the most virulent anonymous letters, and of the orations previously published against the practice of irrigation. To these are added certificates industriously obtained, not from agriculturists

laries, but the rental of their Scottish estates, are no longer expended here. The alterations in the judicial system have produced a similar diminution of revenue expended in Edinburgh. On the other hand, the inhabitants are severely taxed to pay the debt created by the expenditure of nearly L.100,000 in alleged improvements, the chief of which, the costly road to the south of the Castle, is utterly worthless. By these, and other measures and events, Edinburgh has lost an expenditure calculated to amount to L.70,000 per annum; while, at the same time, it labours under severe taxation. The only valuable establishment that remains to bring an income to the Town is the University, but that establishment the Chairman of the Police Committee deliberately attempts utterly to ruin, by representing the City as an unhealthy residence. The University has otherwise grievously suffered from the augmentation of the Professors' fees payable by students, and by additions made to the classes to be attended to obtain the medical degree. If higher remuneration was necessary, in order to obtain the most eminent teachers, it ought to have been afforded from the public funds of the Town; or, if these had fallen into bankruptcy, the University ought to have been transferred to the general government of the Empire, that it might be liberally supported. The representative rulers of the City ought to have protected the inhabitants against a cumbersome course of education, held superfluous by our wiser forefathers, who knew that all that a professor can do is, not to make young men wise or learned physicians or philosophers, but to point out the path by which professional eminence and learning may be attained. In consequence of the erroneous conduct of the rulers of Edinburgh, young men are compelled to avoid this City, and to have recourse for education to Glasgow and other Universities, where more rational proceedings are adopted. The Town-Council and the Police Board would have been better employed in rectifying those errors, than in attending to foolish speeches and reports upon a question of agriculture, the speakers upon which only succeed in demonstrating their own miserable ignorance. They have

talked of fever produced by a valuable agricultural operation ; but above 400 persons are daily employed during the seasons of summer and autumn upon the meadows irrigated by waters proceeding from Edinburgh. No inquiry was made at these persons whether they laboured under fever or any other disease, in consequence of their employment ; or whether fever abounded most in Edinburgh at the season of the year in which irrigation is employed. Nor was any inquiry made, how far other Scottish towns did not suffer equally with Edinburgh from fever. The representation in the Police pamphlet is, that fever has decreased in almost every large town except Edinburgh ; whereas, according to a remark of a very learned and intelligent medical practitioner, Mr William Tait, himself a Commissioner of Police, and no way connected with the owners of the meadows, it would only have been necessary to look to Glasgow. He has justly said, "The following table will give an idea of the gradual increase of fever in Glasgow, in hospital, district, and private patients ; and shew to the inhabitants of Edinburgh good grounds for congratulating themselves on the salubrity of their City."

See Observations on foul-water irrigation.

" In 1835, there occurred,	6,180
In 1836,	10,092
In 1837,	21,800"

It is unnecessary to offer any comment on the above table relative to Glasgow, near which there is no irrigation. Compare it with Edinburgh.

The cases of fever reported to the authorities in Edinburgh, and brought to public establishments, in two years, that is, from October 1836 to October 1839, are 4850 ; being the number, in these years, admitted into the Infirmary and auxiliary Fever Hospital.*

Again, as to the season of the year in which fever prevails most in Edinburgh, the following table, brought forward by Mr Deuchar (as secretary of the Edinburgh Fever Board) before the Physical Society, explains the state of the fact. It states the total number of cases

* See Dr Pulteney Allison " On the Management of the Poor in Scotland," p. 15.