

**POTABLE WATER: HOW TO  
FORM A JUDGMENT ON THE  
SUITABLENESS OF WATER  
FOR DRINKING PURPOSES**

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Potable Water: How to Form a Judgment on the Suitableness of Water for Drinking Purposes  
by Charles Ekin

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**CHARLES EKIN**

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# POTABLE WATER.

HOW TO FORM A JUDGMENT

ON THE

SUITABLENESS OF WATER FOR DRINKING PURPOSES.



*Ampt Davidson ✓*  
1881.  
POTABLE WATER.

HOW TO FORM A JUDGMENT  
ON THE  
SUITABLENESS OF WATER FOR DRINKING PURPOSES.

ADDRESSED TO MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH, AND  
SANITARY AUTHORITIES, ETC.

BY  
CHARLES EKIN,  
FELLOW OF THE CHEMICAL SOCIETY.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:  
J. & A. CHURCHILL, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.  
1880.

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1880

PREFACE  
TO THE  
SECOND EDITION.

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SINCE the publication of the first edition, the views I have ventured to put forward, as to the fallacy of judging chiefly of the wholesomeness of drinking water by the amount of organic matter it may contain, have received unexpected confirmation from no less an authority than Prof. Huxley, who, at a discussion at a recent meeting of the Chemical Society, gave it as his opinion, speaking as a biologist, "that a water may be as pure as can be as regards chemical analysis, and yet as regards the human body be as deadly as prussic acid; and, on the other hand, may be chemically gross and yet do no harm to anyone." "I am aware," continued he, "that chemists may consider this as a terrible conclusion, but it is true, and if the public are guided by percentages alone they may often be led astray. The real value of a determination of the quantity of organic impurity in a water is, that by it a very shrewd notion can be obtained as to what has had access to that water."

This opinion, so tersely and forcibly expressed, accords

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entirely with the results of my experience, and is in strict conformity with what may fairly be called the common sense view of the subject, as I have endeavoured to show in the following pages.

C. E.

SEPTEMBER, 1880.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES POTABLE WATER?

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THE difference of opinion that unfortunately exists amongst analysts of undoubted eminence with reference to what may or may not be pronounced a fit water for drinking purposes forms the *raison d'être* of this *brochure*. That this difference exists widely, and threatens to become still more marked, is assumed to be within the knowledge of those to whom these pages are addressed, as there are few people interested in the health of the community who have not experienced the inconveniences, resulting often in a dead-lock, that arise from it.

Now that the Public-Health Act has conferred powers on Sanitary Authorities to institute proceedings with a view to closing impure wells and other sources of supply, and has left the decision to the local magistrates, it becomes more than ever desirable that some standard should be set up as a guide in such matters. The bench of magistrates listening to the conflicting statements of experts is like a rudderless ship at sea, without any exact knowledge to guide their decisions, or data upon which to form an opinion. It is hoped and believed that a consideration of the question conceived in an unbiassed spirit may tend to reduce order out of chaos, and that here as in most other things common-sense will come largely to our aid.

A practical experience afforded by the analysis of nearly two