

**HANDBOOK OF RURAL
SANITARY SCIENCE:
ILLUSTRATING THE BEST MEANS
OF SECURING HEALTH AND OF
PREVENTING DISEASE**

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RURAL SANITARY SCIENCE

(Gardner)
SPF

Dr. John S. Billings,
HANDBOOKS. *Army.*
Dr. John S. Billings,
of
U. S. Army.

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HEALTH AND OF PREVENTING DISEASE

BY

C. F. GARDNER

WILLIAM BERRY

L.R.C.P. EDIN., M.R.C.S. ENG.

C. N. CRESSWELL

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

THOMAS HENNELL

ASSOC. INST. C.B.

EDITED BY

LORY MARSH, M.D.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, LONDON

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, ENGLAND

ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE great amount of preventable sickness and premature death resulting from neglect of the laws of health, together with the importance of a better appreciation of sanitary matters, especially in rural districts, is now pretty generally admitted. It is hoped that the present volume will in some measure supply a want long felt of a handbook on Rural Sanitary Science, containing an epitome of what has been done to improve the sanitary condition of the country, as well as what still requires to be done in the same direction.

Early in 1875 I offered a small prize for an essay upon 'Rural Sanitary Science and its further application, with a view to ensure the highest condition of health and to prevent disease.' Mr. Bailey Denton, C.E., and Mr. James Howard, of Bedford, kindly undertook the responsibility of adjudicating upon the

essays, and I desire to take the present opportunity of thanking them for the very valuable assistance they have rendered me in the matter, as well as for the great care and attention they gave to the subject.

The essayists were directed to address themselves:—To the powers possessed, but not exercised, by the Local Government Board, and to the effect of diversity of opinion existing amongst its advisers. Also as to any new powers they would suggest as desirable to invest the Board with. Further, as to the applicability of the standards of pollution of effluent waters recommended by the Rivers Pollution Commissioners, and the subject of the non-pollution of rivers.

In judging of the merits of the essays the following points were to be taken into consideration:—

1.—The practicability and facility of applying the treatment proposed by the authors for securing:—

- (a) Supply of pure water;
- (b) The discharge of refuse;
- (c) The disposal of refuse.

2.—The nature and simplicity of Rural Sanitary Organisation whereby to secure:—

- (a) Purity of air within and around dwellings;
 - (b) Cleanliness within and around dwellings;
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RURAL SANITARY SCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS—PRESENT ASPECT OF SANITARY MATTERS IN RURAL DISTRICTS—PREVENTABLE DISEASES.

WE LEARN from the Court Rolls of Stratford-on-Avon that Shakspeare's father was fined in the year 1552 for depositing filth in the public street, in violation of the bye-laws of the Manor; and again in 1558 for not keeping his gutter clean,—a proof that in the time of the Tudors nuisances were not tolerated. The statesmen of that period appear to have turned their attention very carefully to many matters of social economy. A sanitary law had indeed been passed as early as the year 1388, to prevent the pollution of rivers; but an appeal to the Common Law of the country afforded the only means by which people could, generally speaking, claim protection from injury to health and comfort. This being an expensive process, they, as a rule, submitted to the nuisance. It is not our intention to enter at any length upon the history of Sanitary legislation in this country. It will suffice to notice, that after

31 the reign of Queen Elizabeth the means of securing the public health gradually became neglected; and with the exception of special Acts, directed from time to time to meet the attacks of plagues and pestilences, no general measure, applicable to the whole kingdom, was passed until the ravages of Asiatic cholera in 1831 led to a move in Sanitary reform. Since that date numerous Royal Commissions and Parliamentary Committees have reported on almost every conceivable aspect of the question, and legislative measures have followed each other in quick succession, until at length the laws of public health have become so complicated and confused, that those whose duty it is to carry out their provisions are fairly bewildered. During the session of 1875 an Act of Parliament was passed chiefly for the purpose of consolidating these laws. It will therefore be needless for us to occupy a limited space by alluding to the Acts which it is intended to replace. At a future page,¹ we shall have occasion to discuss this Act more particularly.

Sanitary legislation, in order to be effective, should provide for the supply of wholesome water, sewerage, drainage, removal of refuse, control of streets and buildings, the prevention of over-crowding and sale of unwholesome food, as well as other means of promoting the public health. It should also guard against the introduction and spreading of contagious and infectious diseases and epidemics

¹ See p. 93.

affecting the health of man.¹ If measures with such objects be well carried out, the people will enjoy comfortable dwellings, pure air as far as Nature will permit, and a sufficient supply of good water and wholesome food.

But before proceeding to describe what appear to us the best and simplest means of securing these advantages in the highest degree in rural districts, it may be well to look around us, and see what is the actual state in which the rural population of England are living in the present day. Abundant means for obtaining information are to be found; but Parliamentary Blue-books, and papers read at the meetings of Social and Scientific Societies, are not within the easy reach of all. Moreover, little general interest is taken in such matters, and great and even culpable ignorance prevails extensively.

The Reports of the Royal Commission, appointed in 1867 to inquire into the employment of children, young persons, and women in agriculture, reveal some painful facts about the dwellings of the peasantry. Lord Napier and Ettrick, in his opening address at the congress of the Social Science Association held at Plymouth in 1872, says that 'nothing is disclosed in stronger colours in these reports than this, that the dwellings of the rural population urgently demand a very general reconstruction. It would be hazardous to assert in the face of those statements that more than two-thirds of the existing habitations are satis-

¹ Second Report of the Sanitary Commission, vol. i. p. 15.