

5. To cause from time to time an inspection of the lodging-houses at which paupers, vagrants, and mendicants are reported by their officers to lodge.

6. To direct the whitewashing of the rooms of such houses at least twice every year, and if, after notice to that effect from the clerk of the Board, dated ten days previously, the inspector shall find the occupier has neglected to comply with such directions, to authorize the Board to cause the house to be whitewashed by such persons as they may appoint for that purpose, and to recover the cost of such whitewashing and cleansing by application to the occupier or owner of such property, or by a summary mode upon refusal of either of them.

7. When the inspector shall report that three or more families live under the same roof, to authorize the Board to cause such house to be whitewashed and cleansed in a similar manner at least twice annually, at the expense of the owner.

8. Empowering the Board to direct two public surveyors to examine the state of any house which shall be reported to be so dilapidated or insecure as to threaten the safety of the inhabitants or the public, and upon receiving such report, to remove the inhabitants from such house, and to direct the owner of such property, under penalties to be summarily recovered, to cause such habitation to be rendered safe, or to be removed, as may seem most expedient to the Board on the report of the surveyors.

9. To prevent the habitation of houses which have for such causes been deserted, and from which no rent is on that account obtained by the landlord.

We cannot close the Report without remarking that the extirpation of the evils arising from these defects in the sanitary police of large cities cannot be effected unless powers are confided to some authority selected by the legislature for the prevention of those grievous defects to which our attention has been drawn. The imperfect drainage, or the absence of all drainage whatever, the want of a proper pavement in the street, &c., are frequently found in districts which have been recently covered with masses of new habitations huddled together in confused groups, with streets so narrow, and courts so completely enclosed, as to prevent the dilution of the malaria arising from various sources within their precincts by the ventilation of free currents of air.

Many of the most recently erected suburbs of our great cities exhibit so complete a neglect of the most common and obvious precautions, that it can be attributed only to the fact of the increase of the population being so rapid that the owners of such property can command tenants, notwithstanding the absolute neglect of sewerage, and the absence of many precautionary arrangements absolutely necessary to ensure health. We do not suppose that the means of preventing the recurrence of such evils can be immediately applied; and the circumstances under which this Report is prepared do not enable us to do more than briefly to allude to the nature of the powers which it appears to us to be desirable that the legislature should confide to some competent authority, whenever this subject can obtain the attention which its great importance justly demands.

We do not attempt to determine to what body these powers should be confided, nor do we consider it necessary to describe the exact mode of

their operation, but it seems most expedient that to some authority should be confided power to cause the survey of land (in the vicinity of towns) likely to be built upon, and to enforce certain conditions on the owners and lessees of such property.

Thus no building should be commenced until plans of the intended streets were prepared, describing the situation of every block of houses for such an extent of area as should be required by the Board entrusted with the regulation of the precautionary measures; duplicates of such plans should be deposited with the Board, and no building should afterwards be erected on the site otherwise than had been delineated in the plans.

The Board should have authority to prevent the formation of streets of less than a certain number of feet in width, and to prevent the formation of courts having communication only by means of covered entries, or alleys of less than a definitive width, with thoroughfares and streets.

It should also have power to prevent the habitation of cellars in any houses erected after the period of the enactment.

Authority should be given to require that, before any buildings are erected on any plot of ground now unoccupied or only partially occupied with houses, such plot of ground shall be drained by such sewers as the Board shall deem sufficient; and, provided any owner or occupier of such land should proceed to build without having provided such sewers as the Board should direct, the Board should have authority to cause such sewers to be made at the cost of such owner, and should be empowered to recover the cost from him.

That the Board should have authority to require that every habitation should be provided with a drain communicating with the main sewer, with a proper receptacle for every kind of refuse.

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### No. 17.

#### SANITARY REPORT ON THE TOWN OF INVERNESS, NORTH BRITAIN.

By GEORGE ANDERSON, Esq., *Solicitor in Inverness.*

BEFORE answering in detail the printed queries to which returns have been required, the following general observations on the situation and climate of Inverness may probably render the after-details more pointed and intelligible.

This town stands on a nearly level plain, within a mile of the mouth of the river Ness, which falls by a short and rapid course (of only seven miles) into the Moray Frith, from the great inland reservoir of Loch Ness. Traversed by the river in a direction from south-west to north-east, this plain, which consists entirely of *sand* and *gravel*, (covered with a slight coating of

vegetable mould, seldom exceeding two feet in thickness,) is skirted on the south and east by a gravel terraced bank, which rises from 80 to 90 feet above the river, and on a detached portion of which formerly stood the ancient castle of Inverness. Underneath and close to the walls of this castle the oldest buildings of the town were clustered in the uncouth and irregular manner characteristic of most towns similarly circumstanced; and those houses were usually crowded together in courts or closes, with their gable-ends and a general gateway towards the public road or street. As the population increased and times became more peaceable, the dwellings of the old burghers, many of whom were Flemish and Danish merchants,—monopolists of the trade here and at other points along the north-east coast of Scotland,—began to branch off from the protecting nucleus of the castle, along the open plain towards the east and north; and in the year 1685 the river, close under the castle wall, was crossed by a handsome stone bridge, built by means of public subscriptions collected from all parts of the kingdom, which thus gave access to the western side of the plain. A wooden bridge still farther down the stream, built in the year 1808, has increased the means of communication, and all along the western bank are the newest parts of the town, chiefly occupied however by the poorer classes of inhabitants, the houses being in general only *one story* high and covered with *straw thatch*. The outskirts of the place also, in all other directions, consist of dwellings of a similar description, the suburbs on the limits of the ancient royalty of the burgh exhibiting much the appearance of detached villages, passing under the local names of the villages of Haugh, Lochgorm, Merkuich, Green of Muirtown, and Tomnahurich-street.

From the very open or porous character of the subsoil the grounds in and around Inverness are seldom retentive of surface water, and as there is also a considerable inclination of the plain towards the river, a good *drainage* could be easily procured from almost every part of the town. With the exception however of the principal streets or thoroughfares in which the best houses and shops are situated, there are but few covered common sewers, and in the suburbs generally and from all the side alleys and closes rain-water and other accumulations pass away only by means of surface or open drains. Hence among the dwellings of the poorer classes *stagnant pools* very frequently occur, and the drainage in these places, naturally bad enough, is often purposely obstructed by the people for the purpose of adding to their *dung-hill* heaps or *middens*, which, as manure for their potatoe-grounds, form the chief treasures of the poorer cottagers and labourers. A gas and water company established some years ago has afforded a great increase of comfort and cleanliness to the buildings along the main thoroughfares; but to the back closes and suburbs such *luxuries* have not as yet been extended; and hence

the want of order, decency, and comfort, are painfully observable among them. *Water-closets* and public *privies* are both rare, the consequences of which, morally as well as physically, may be easily imagined, and no doubt much infectious disease, if not occasioned, is harboured and perpetuated by the want of them. The disgusting state of all the bye-lanes and roads about Inverness proves what the people must suffer on this account.

As already stated, the dwellings of the humbler classes are in general only *one story* high; that is, they consist of a ground-floor divided into two or three small apartments, with two or three garret-rooms in the roof above, which is covered externally with turf or straw thatch. Such buildings are often intermixed with houses of a better description, and from being but seldom painted or whitewashed, they have not a cheerful or cleanly aspect. Most of them are provided with small back courts or gardens, in which a few common vegetables are grown; but their principal value is as stances for *pig-houses* and dunghills, which, in many instances, are improperly allowed to rest upon or touch the dwelling-houses; while it is not to be disguised that cases exist where the *pig*, the *horse*, and *cow*, all live under the same roof with their owners, and the manure allowed to accumulate there also. It is very common for a labourer's *family* to have only a single apartment or a room and a closet, while one room is the usual accommodation rented by single persons, and that frequently without a particle of ground attached.

Amidst such a combination of unwholesome circumstances it is rather wonderful that malignant fever does not very greatly prevail in this town. It is scarcely ever entirely free of it, and occasionally it breaks out in some of its most contagious and dangerous forms, such as measles, scarlet and typhus fever, and sometimes even small-pox, spreading upwards among all classes of the community. The writer is strongly inclined to believe that the comparative healthiness of Inverness, notwithstanding its low and undrained position, is owing chiefly to the salubrity of its climate, as influenced by its situation and the natural porousness of the soil.

Lying near the inland termination of the Moray Frith, and well protected by surrounding hills, the cold north-east winds which (especially in spring) blow from off the German Ocean, are felt much less severely here than more to the east and south; while placed, as the town is, at the end of the Great Glen or Caledonian Valley, which, with its lateral mountains, acts as a mighty tunnel to carry along and conduct across the island the softness of the west-coast breezes without their usual excess of rain, and situated between the Moray Frith and Loch Ness, the whole district partakes of a free and mild atmosphere. Hence snow seldom lies above a few days on the plain around Inverness, and the severity of the frost is less than is frequent about Edin-

burgh, or even London. The constant flow of a broad rapid river, which was never known to be frozen through the centre of the town, must also contribute very essentially to keep up a due circulation of air and to promote the health of the inhabitants, and the regular sea-breezes, which daily affect the lower parts at least of the town, must add to its salubrity.

During the prevalence of cholera in 1832 and 1834, a Board of Health was organized which applied very stringent means for removing filth, and cleaning, ventilating, and whitewashing the dwellings of the poor, by which they were much benefited; but under ordinary circumstances, such an exercise of authority would be resisted by the people, and the magistrates in fact dare not attempt it.

The artisans and labourers of the place are generally frugal and sober, and their diet is of the most temperate description, consisting of oatmeal pottage and potatoes, qualified by fish, with which Inverness is abundantly and cheaply supplied from the haddock and herring banks in the adjoining frith. The indigent poor, however, are much worse off, and but for the known liberality and charity of their poor neighbours a little easier in circumstances than themselves, their situation would often be most deplorable. As it is, they can only be said to *exist*, certainly not to *enjoy* any of the comforts of life; while, from the want of cleanliness in their persons and dwellings, they are very seldom visited at their own abodes by their betters. In fact, the opinion is by no means rare, that it is improper and impolitic, and tends to increase pauperism and crime, for the more wealthy systematically to inquire after or take much *personal* trouble about their poorer neighbours, who are hence but seldom cheered in their wretched dwellings by the presence and advice, or the *alms* of their superiors.

The Kirk Session funds (consisting of collections at the established churches, and the produce of specific mortifications), being, with about 200*l.* annually, at the disposal of the magistrates of the burgh, the only sources of *public charity*, afford but mere pittance, and that but to a portion of the poor, generally not exceeding 2*l.*, the greater number getting only 1*l.* a year. The inadequacy of such pittance to support life, and pay room-rent, &c., especially in seasons of scarcity or sickness, has called forth, at different times, various benevolent schemes, such as a public soup kitchen, a dispensary for the sick poor, and a ladies' district visiting society; but none of these excellent institutions, dependent at they are on the voluntary contributions of the inhabitants, (amounting in the town and parish to about 16,000,) have, with the exception of the dispensary which still subsists, maintained a footing for more than a few years, or been able to supply the necessities of an increasing pauper population. The Ladies' District Visiting Society (instituted in the year 1835) gave relief for

about three years to from 800 to 1000 poor persons in the town of Inverness alone, exclusive altogether of the poor in the *landward* part of the parish; and occasionally they have had even 1200 individuals on their list who were considered by the society as *objects of charity*, but very many of whom, it has been maintained, would not be entitled to support under the *Scottish Poor Laws*. From the society's funds having gradually declined, and the church collections considerably fallen off, the Kirk Session, on whom the charge of the poor actually devolved in November, 1837, came to be "unanimously of opinion that some more permanent measure for the support of the poor than any hitherto resorted to in this place is imperatively called for." The Kirk Session were led to adopt this opinion from "considering the number of destitute persons to whom they are unable to give any assistance from the limited nature of their funds and the small amount which, for the same reason, they are able to give to those actually upon the list; and considering, besides, that the *voluntary associations*, which have been formed from time to time for the support of the poor, have uniformly failed of accomplishing the object they intended, from the want of public support of sufficient *extent* and *permanency*." They therefore instructed their agents to furnish the Session with a detailed report on the Scotch law for imposing and levying an assessment for the poor; the mode of management adopted in other parishes similarly situated, and also on the extent of pauperism in the town and parish of Inverness.

The Report which was in consequence furnished to the Kirk Session under this permit was afterwards published, so far as it related to the *pauper statistics* of the parish; and was the origin of a minute and careful scrutiny as to the numbers and condition of the poor by a paid officer, whose information was subsequently revised and corrected by district committees, appointed under authority of the landward heritors, the magistrates and town council of the borough of Inverness and the members of the Kirk Session; these three bodies composing the board of legal administrators or guardians of the poor.

The results of this investigation ultimately demonstrated that there existed in the town and parish a mass of pauperism which the existing charities were unable to relieve, and in consequence, after a struggle and much discussion, a legal assessment of 1600*l.* was imposed at a statutory meeting of the board, (held on the 4th February, 1840,) for supporting the poor for a year, and defraying all relative and previous claims and expenses. Officers were appointed to collect and distribute the fund, and a large committee named to revise the applications for relief, which were lodged in the form of printed schedules properly filled up; and that committee, after a most strict and careful investigation, reported at the annual statutory meeting this year, (3rd February,

1841,) to the effect that they could *not reduce* the list of poor entitled to *permanent relief*, on account of great age, infirmity, and sickness, such as permanently to prevent the parties from earning their livelihood *below 470*, almost the whole of these being in a state of the greatest destitution, and that exclusively altogether of those who required only *occasional relief*.

In the course of last year, however, the discussions which had taken place in the parish and generally throughout Scotland, in regard to a legal provision for the maintenance of the poor, aroused very strongly the feelings of the people, especially of the smaller house proprietors in Inverness; and those who conceived the imposition of a legal assessment to be attended with danger, and as introducing an evil system from which it would be impossible afterwards to retract, stirred up much hostility to the measure, and in consequence not a fourth part of the sum assessed for could be collected.

The poor, however, had been supported for about six months by the Assessment Fund, connected with that of the Kirk Session, and public begging suppressed, the paupers having agreed with the utmost readiness to discontinue their wandering habits on being assured of support at their own houses, and on seeing that, under the *legal* system, even the *bed-ridden* among them were not neglected.

Some of the principal proprietors in the parish are *non-resident*, and part of the property, both in town and country, is in the hands of trustees or creditors; and as neither of these classes can be reached under any *voluntary association*, the advocates for a legal provision for the poor have very strongly urged that, in the present advanced and complex state of society, the poor cannot be adequately provided for, and that no fair or equitable mode of contribution can be devised or permanently kept up without unequal pressure on some one class, and especially on the resident householders, or tenants and persons in business, except by means of a *legal compulsory assessment*. Their views, however, have been disregarded; and as the principal heritors in the parish appear disposed to allow the less wealthy classes to arrange the *mode* of supporting the poor among themselves, a return has been made to the old voluntary subscriptions and casual almsgiving; and, chiefly through the votes of the smaller house proprietors, called *feuars*, the measure of assessment has been stopped, at least for the present season.\*

The circumstance that none of the neighbouring parishes are assessed, and that in consequence a local assessment in Inverness would be offering a premium to the influx of strangers to acquire

\* The committee's report to the meeting of legal administrators, in February, 1841, demonstrated that an assessment of 1000*l.* would yield but a scanty and bare subsistence, even to the *legal poor* of the town and parish, apart altogether from other objects of charity.

a legal settlement here, has strongly influenced some in falling back on the old practice; while many others labour under the impression that a new and general legislative measure for Scotland is about to be passed, for which it is advisable for them to wait; or that, as the law at present stands, the list of paupers can be greatly reduced; and that, besides, they are under no obligation to provide for any of the poor, but such as are totally unable to earn *anything* for their own support!

It is proper here to remark, that there are no causes in the trade or commerce of Inverness strongly operating to produce an undue annual increase of poor in the town or parish. There are no manufactures or special trades carried on to any considerable extent, subjecting the population to sudden impulses or occasional distress from the want of employment. The lower orders mainly consist of artificers and *labourers*, dependent on the rural prosperity of the neighbourhood, and the moderate commercial traffic of the town; and it is believed that *pauperism* increases much slower among such a population than in manufacturing districts. The only considerable source of an unusual addition to the poor of this parish likely to occur is from the poor hamlets in the country. It is by many believed that numbers of the poor peasants or *cottars*, who, under the new system of management pursued in regard to Highland properties, are now in course of being removed from their old possessions, flock into towns, and by contriving to dwell "unbeggared" there for three years afterwards, become paupers, entitled to parochial support in their new residences. To a limited extent this is true, especially as in the tide of emigration now going on; the young and able among the rural population endeavour to get abroad, while the aged and infirm are left at home. But the evil thus complained of is much exaggerated; and the cases of the poor persons lately inquired into in Inverness show that the large majority of them are individuals who were either born or had a long industrial residence in the parish; and as *females* greatly preponderate over *males*, very many of them are old domestic servants, unable to work, and whose wages never were sufficient to let them save a fund for their latter days' support.

The foregoing general sketch, it is hoped, will render the answers to the following queries more explicit; and in preparing those answers the writer has to acknowledge his obligations to his medical friends and townsmen, Dr. John Inglis Nicol, present provost of Inverness; Dr. Hugh Fraser, medical officer to the Inverness Prison Board; and Dr. R. A. G. Manford, who acted as professional secretary to the Board of Health here during the visitations of cholera in the years 1832 and 1834. The first has not answered the queries in detail; but he has favoured the writer of these remarks with the following brief and graphic statement,

which he has no objections should be made public as on his authority.

“Inverness is a nice town, situated in a most beautiful country, and with every facility for cleanliness and comfort. The people are, generally speaking, a nice people, but their sufferance of nastiness is past endurance. Contagious fever is seldom or ever absent; but for many years it has seldom been rife in its pestiferous influence. The people owe this more to the kindness of Almighty God than to any means taken or observed for its prevention. There are very few houses in town which can boast of either water-closet or privy; and only two or three public privies in the better part of the place exist for the great bulk of the inhabitants. Hence there is not a street, lane, or approach to it that is not disgustingly defiled at all times, so much so as to render the whole place an absolute nuisance. The *midden* is the chief object of the humble; and though enough of water for purposes of cleanliness may be had by little trouble, still the ablutions are seldom—muck in doors and out of doors *must* be their portion. When cholera prevailed in Inverness, it was more fatal than in almost any other town of its population in Britain.

(Signed) “JOHN INGLIS NICOL, M.D.”

The information supplied by the other two medical gentlemen will be found, with their names attached, in the answers to the different queries.

It is only further necessary to add that the NORTHERN INFIRMARY at Inverness (as it is called) is an excellent and well-conducted establishment for the sick poor, but not exclusively for those of the town, as it is the only infirmary in the whole northern counties of Nairn, Inverness, Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness. Upwards of 300 patients pass through it annually, and formerly the managers relieved nearly as many *out-door* patients in the town of Inverness; but the number of such is now reduced to about 120 since the establishment, in 1832, of the Town's Dispensary for the sick poor, which affords a great deal of gratuitous professional attendance and medicines *at their own houses*, the number of patients under the charge of the dispensary for the year ending 31st December, 1840, being 418, the number of visits to them at their dwellings 980, and those treated at the dispensary being 226.

A sketch or ground-plan of the town accompanies this Report, with the view of showing the positions of the suburbs, and of the localities where the poor are most densely congregated, and which are coloured red.

Humbly reported by,  
G. ANDERSON.

Inverness, 2nd March, 1841.

To  
The Poor Law Commissioners.

## No. 18.

REPORT ON THE SANITARY CONDITION AND GENERAL ECONOMY  
OF THE TOWN OF TAIN AND THE DISTRICT OF EASTER ROSS,  
MADE TO THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS.

By JAMES CAMERON, Esq., *Surgeon*, Tain.

GENTLEMEN,—In compliance with your request, I propose in the following pages to give a Report, which I trust will be found faithful and correct, respecting the sanitary condition and the general economy of the labouring population of the town of Tain, and of the several parishes that compose the district of Easter Ross.

The county of Ross is situated within lat.  $57^{\circ} 8'$  and  $58^{\circ} 10'$  north, and between long.  $4^{\circ}$  and  $5^{\circ} 46'$  west. Its extreme length is 85 miles; it comprises 2434 square miles, exclusive of the island of Lewis; it is bounded on the south by Inverness-shire, on the north by Sutherland and the Dornoch Frith, on the east by the Moray Frith, on the west by the Western or Atlantic Ocean.

Its surface is much diversified: the lowest point is about the level of the sea; the loftiest point is Ben Wyvis, about the middle of the county, the height of which is 3720 feet above the level of the sea. In Easter Ross the highest point is the Hill of Strui, in the parish of Edderton, 1041 feet above the sea-level. The western division is mountainous and deeply indented with glens and lochs. The form of the eastern division is that of a plain promontory, terminating in a low rocky headland called Tarbat Ness, or Tarbat Point, and its surface on the west is hilly, and toward the east slightly undulating. This district, to which I now limit my observations, contains no navigable river or piece of fresh water of any considerable size. The streams are torrents, brooks, or artificial drains; with the exception of Lochslin, the lakelets are what are commonly called mill-dams; and, in consequence of recent drainage, there are few stagnant pools that deserve particular notice. The prevalent rocks along the southern coast, the outlines of which are singularly rough and bold, are red sandstone and limestone; the northern coast is bounded by stripes of white sand and sand-hills, covered here and there with bent, stunted heath, and the sea-daisy. The soil is various: in the low lands it generally consists of clay and loam; in the undulant parts of *detritus*, or a mixture of red and black sand; and, in the higher declivities, of a mixture of vegetable matter and small siliceous stones. The climate is very variable: about one-fifth less rain falls in Easter than in Wester Ross. The quantity of rain which fell at Tarbat Ness Lighthouse during 1840, as indicated by the weather-gauge, is 20.94 inches. The average