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University, to the secret gratification and relief of his friends, did not return him to Parliament.

Chadwick outside Parliament was a source of constant terror to Government and Opposition alike. Chadwick inside Parliament would have been like a wild bird in a cage.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

**I**N making a summary of Chadwick's life, in estimating his place among the Roadmakers of the British Isles, we start by acknowledging him as a great worker. From the time of his first appointment he worked continuously, methodically and successfully at several subjects. But hard work alone does not constitute a roadmaker. The work must be of value to the country, must open up a new avenue for progress.

The conditions of the Poor Law before 1834 were such that it was necessary for a man of iron will and superlative energy to administer the new Act. The nadir of demoralization and inefficiency had been reached. Drastic enforcement of the new law was essential at once if the country was to be saved from revolution. Quickly grasping the central fact that demoralization had

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set in at the core, Chadwick worked by administering, by advising and by sheer strength of character to cut away the rotten idea that wages could be paid out of Poor Relief, and to substitute in its place the idea of man's right to a living wage for honest work done. That is the supreme work of Chadwick's administration of the New Poor Law. He remade a demoralized, unwanted, disgraced animal into a man.

The Act was harsh and even brutal, but the situation was desperate. To-day surgical operations are performed at short notice to save people from lives of lingering torture. It was thus with the New Poor Law. The root evil had to be cut out at once: and Chadwick, thwarted by a strenuous opposition, abused most by those people he was to benefit, forced his unwilling Commissioners to administer the Act and so perform the first essential operation.

As the originator of the scheme for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Chadwick deserves gratitude for a highly important service to the country. At a time when the population was increasing by leaps and bounds, when cholera was claiming its thousands, he pressed forward

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this scheme, which, though it passed almost unnoticed into law, is now of the utmost importance for Government statistics and to the medical profession and to the world at large. His work for this scheme was the work of an agitator. Chadwick did not administer the registration, he did not even invent the idea. But having seen its importance he agitated successfully for its introduction. He was a born agitator.

Some men are born satisfied, some dissatisfied. Some of these latter understand that the mechanism of the world's work is faulty. They appreciate that the machine creaks. They stammer and stutter dissatisfaction. They prophesy destruction—and the world laughs. Others utter meaningless perorations on the need for reform until their throats are dry from the flow of their words: these are the bores of the world. Others vituperate against a system and clamour for its overthrow though they have nothing but vague unthought-out theories to put in its place: these are a danger to the world. And some, agitating for the removal of evils, have practical remedies to apply: and these are the salvation of the world.

Such a man was Chadwick. It is impos-

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sible to think of the evils he tackled without realizing that he always had schemes to put in their place. They may have been poor schemes, mistaken schemes, but nevertheless he never agitated against an evil without first committing himself to a positive reform. Indeed it is to his credit that many of the improvements for which he agitated are still in force to-day. Again, as an agitator he worked his will not on individuals for their or his own benefit, but on public bodies, on corporations and even on governments—which fact enormously increased the difficulties of his task.

To agitate, to administer and to work strenuous hours require a fourth accomplishment, which was possessed by Chadwick. He was an indefatigable investigator. Nothing was too much trouble for him. No work was so hard, no situation so deep that he would not investigate it for himself with indomitable courage, keen insight and a thirst for knowledge. With Chadwick it was not simply a question of hearing evidence, but of actual personal investigation. He risked his life over and over again when making inquiries into the sanitary conditions of the large towns. He was thus

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in a position to see as well as to hear the facts about the case he was investigating. It was impossible to prevent him. He was forced by his inquiring nature into the middle of the morass. Knee deep he made his notes and put his questions. A master of detail, he displayed his facts with clearness and backed them with unanswerable statistics. Few flaws could be found, for he rarely made mistakes, and he seemed to have a genius for getting at the essentials of the matter in hand.

Thus we have seen that he was a worker, an administrator, an agitator and an investigator. By training he was neither a statesman nor a medical doctor. Yet in a sense he was both. He did not legislate in the House of Commons, it is true, but he agitated and prepared bills for other people to do so. He was a statesman in so far as he worked out schemes (based on Bentham's *Constitutional Code*) for the welfare of the nation. And he was a doctor in the sense that he worked to prevent illness. "To get at the root of the matter which causes sickness" was his aim. He regarded most doctors with abhorrence. He argued that they were social parasites existing on those

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ills which man has created by his surroundings. "Prevention is better than cure" is a well-worn proverb, but it does accurately describe Chadwick's attitude towards disease.

In comparing Chadwick with his contemporaries it is not difficult to see wherein he outshone them all. Lord Shaftesbury, an eager humanitarian socialist, softened the crude indifference of his age, but as an administrator he was singularly modest. Richard Cobden, with all his marvellous oratorical powers and his fervent hatred of the Corn Laws, was successful in that one instance only, and afterwards became an ardent opponent of reform in other directions. Robert Owen founded a new religion which has steadily grown and expanded since his death, but cannot be said to have been more than a model employer in a new industrial era. William Cobbett, whose journalistic efforts had great effect at the time of their publication, was a passionate teacher with no great knowledge, who spent a varied and interesting life defending the underdog by a wholesome trouncing of the men who held the whip hand.

All these men have an honoured place in history. All are better known to the general

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public than Chadwick: but when we come to investigate the socio-political history of the nineteenth century we are astonished to find the influence of Chadwick confronting us at every turn. It is curious that the important political movements of the time—the franchise reform of 1832 and the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846—seem to have left him unmoved, but they serve to overshadow his work in other directions and leave him unnoticed amidst the flares of political controversy.

To arrive at a true understanding of the social philosophy which governs a man's life it is often necessary to consider his work as a whole, but in Chadwick's case his earliest essays, which attracted the attention of the radical philosophers, contain the conception of his social philosophy. Broadly speaking, it falls into three parts.

Firstly, he believed in the absolute necessity for applying scientific knowledge to local and central government. He believed that efficiency could only be attained by men trained in knowledge and administration of the law. He ridiculed voluntary workers. In their place he wished to put highly trained and skilled men responsible

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to a central authority, men conscious that their work was being supervised by superiors capable of dismissing them if they proved unsatisfactory. He argued that unpaid voluntary workers administering the law in their leisure hours were incapable of producing the desired efficiency in local government, and he could quote numerous instances to prove his point.

Secondly, he saw the necessity for central control of local government and the necessity for suppressing the corruption and inefficiency in parochial government. This was a fierce attack on the believers in *laissez faire*. Charles Kingsley in his novel *Yeast* gives a vivid description of the lack of proper control in the administration of local government. In the country districts the paternal system of government still lingered on and the resident gentry frequently tried to deprive the labouring man of his newly found self-help and independence by boundless and indiscriminate almsgiving. "If half the money," says Kingsley in the preface to the fourth edition of his novel, "which is now given away in different forms to the agricultural poor could be spent in making their dwellings fit for honest men

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to live in, then life, morals and poor rates would be saved to an immense amount."

This benevolent philanthropy Chadwick termed inefficiency because it was uncontrolled. Indeed it was uncontrollable. No central authority could possibly hope to deal effectively with the demoralized system if the poor, instead of being encouraged to develop their independence, were to be relieved by the gentry of their worst ills without any attempt being made to discover the fundamental cause of their poverty. Chadwick wanted this and similar symptoms of parochial chaos done away with. Again, many parishes were under the control of tradesmen and manufacturers, "who exploited both paupers and public in the interests of their own pockets."<sup>1</sup> This Chadwick adequately termed corruption.

Finally there was his Sanitary Idea. This was the great principle which inspired all his life's work. Stated simply, it was that man should have scientific knowledge of the conditions through which his health might be affected and act upon that knowledge. Chadwick firmly believed that all disease resulted from dirt and insanitation,

<sup>1</sup> *The Chartist Movement*, Mark Hovell.

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and that these were the causes of death before the appointed time. To a very large extent he was right. The sanitary condition of England at the time of the formation of the first Board of Health was unquestionably responsible for much epidemic and endemic disease. With Lord Shaftesbury he fought hard against the powerful interests which stood in the way of his dream of a clean and sanitary England. His method of cleansing England may be criticized. Indeed there is a good deal to be said for the member of the House of Commons who, on the motion for the dissolution of the Board, stated that England wanted to be clean, but not to be cleaned by Chadwick. He was before his time, with the result that the public felt that it was being bullied. But if he did not actually succeed in cleaning the people he did at any rate prepare the bath. It took time before the nation took the plunge, but Chadwick roused the public conscience and turned on the hot water. To him the credit for this movement must be given, for to him more than to anyone else England owes this great step forward. A standard was set up which was quickly followed in other countries, and

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which is accepted to-day as a matter of course. Few are the people to-day who when they see a motor-van in their town labelled B . . . District Board of Health, realize that this is merely a development of a great idea originating with Edwin Chadwick. People regard such things as necessities of life, but in reality they were conceived in the mind of a great sanitarian, whose teachings were rejected in 1854, but who, with the inauguration of the Ministry of Health in 1918, has now come into his own.

Why, then, was a man who combined all these qualities not called upon to help in directing the affairs of the nation from more important posts? Why was he not Prime Minister or at least of cabinet rank?

"Chadwick," said Sir John Simon in his book on *English Sanitary Institutions*, "erred by impatience; but patience under sufferings of one's own, and patience towards others are not equal measures of magnanimity." Again, in their *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, J. L., and Barbara Hammond write of Chadwick that his "capable qualities were largely spoilt by the hard tone of his mind." These two opinions

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answer the questions as to why he remained merely an efficient public servant and was retired at the age of fifty-four.

Chadwick as a grand inquisitor, as a draughtsman of unanswerable reports, had no equal. He pursued the subject of sewerage, drainage and water supply through a long series of years. He administered the Poor Law Amendment Act with a ferocity that brought a downpour of abuse on his head. He ran the Public Health Board as an autocrat would govern an empire. He did all these things efficiently, fiercely and in an aggressive manner. He was dictatorial and bureaucratic. He made enemies easily and quite unnecessarily. He lacked the art of appearing to give way without actually doing so. He never condescended to argue, he merely stated facts. His own knowledge was tremendous, but he assumed no knowledge in others. He was ungracious in his methods, provoking in his attitude. He went to work in the same way as a tank in modern warfare. He forced his views on others without acknowledging or listening to their side of the question. For him there was no other side. Had he not seen by his own experience the havoc which

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insanitation, disease and dirt were causing among the labouring classes? Why, then, did others remain unmoved by his experiences as detailed, catalogued and published in his reports? To him it was incomprehensible. If they approved of his agitation, let them join 'The Health of Towns Association and help in the efforts to spread correct information regarding the functions of the proposed Public Health Board, or help remove the groundless agitation that centralization meant the curtailment of the people's local liberties. If they disapproved then let them get out of the way. He, Chadwick, had not the time or the patience to try to win them to his point of view.

That was the man. A driver, a forcer, a pusher ahead, not of himself for his own personal ends—his worst enemies never accused him of this—but of his ideals, of his Sanitary Idea, which he knew to be right and which time indeed has proved was right.

But is it to be wondered at that he was hated? He made no effort at compromise. He hardly troubled to answer his critics. He just drove on until he was driven out.

He made no appeal to the masses as

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Cobbett did with his brilliant gibes at the propertied classes; he did not stir the heart of thousands like Garibaldi in his fight for national independence; or awaken the pride of his countrymen with his imperialistic achievements like Disraeli. He had no great cause with which to enthral the imagination; he had only a hatred of disorder and incompetence, only a fierce desire for the better sanitation of his country. Public Health, Sanitation, Education, Local Government were then, as now, dull subjects. Beyond a wide distribution of his reports, which although containing facts of momentous importance were dull reading, Chadwick made no attempt to organize a popular demonstration to help him. Any such course he would have regarded as vulgar. He was content to force the issue himself, relying on his own ability. But if to this ability, conscientiousness and energy, had been added an attractive manner, who knows to what great heights this man might not have risen?

Yet in spite of this lack of tact he was a lovable man. His friend and biographer, Benjamin Ward Richardson, speaks of him as a man whose "strong will contended with

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a gentle and generous heart, and in the conflict, which he saw could not for ever be maintained, he sought for some other outlets of relief, which might be, at one and the same time, grand in design and great in usefulness." He was obstinate and liked to impose his will on others. He never allowed his heart to rule his head. He never allowed his heart to argue with his head. He did great work for humanity, but he worked even harder for efficiency. As an attractive personality with humane principles working for the good of mankind, he compares unfavourably with many of his contemporaries. But as a great administrator working for the cause of efficiency and order, he stands head and shoulders above them all.

If he had had the gift of leadership added to those gifts we have already described, he would perhaps have travelled farther along the road of greatness than he actually did. But he failed to see that the evolution of reform travels at the pace of the slowest mover. The charges against him are simple. He was regarded as a bureaucrat and as one who wanted to do things too quickly. *Festina lente* was the creed of his



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days. The era of swiftly moving events and swift action was yet to come. Like all great men, in short, he was before his time.

His political position is difficult to define. He was a Benthamite in theory, but he did not hesitate to bring in the State where he thought that by its intervention the freedom of the individual would eventually be enhanced. He was so disgusted with what he saw of private enterprise that he was continually flung back on his idea of a scientific centralized government. It was not so much the system of private enterprise that he fought, but the method on which it was run. He had a strong preference for the paid expert official—an idea which Sidney and Beatrice Webb have since so greatly developed.

Chadwick started his public career when individualism was at its height: but by 1870, when the Education Act was passed, the period of Collectivism had fully set in. This corporation had been already foreshadowed by the Factory Act (1833) and the Municipal Act (1835), and Chadwick's greatest work was done during the period of transition from one to the other. No man did more than he to build the bridge

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of association between the two, but whether he would have wished State intervention to develop still further it is difficult to decide. The collectivist doctrine is that the welfare of the individual depends upon the welfare of the State. In so far as Chadwick's life was devoted to organizing the State so that the individual might be free, happy and contented, he may be called a collectivist. But whether Socialism, which is the inevitable development of this idea, would have been approved of by Chadwick it is impossible to say.

The developments that have resulted from Chadwick's work are manifold, and only a brief summary can be made.

It was Chadwick who first perceived that no individual can be expected to perform his private work and at the same time be held responsible for his town's drainage, water supply and sanitation. These matters must be attended to by a corporate body elected by the population of the town, and the interest of that body should be the welfare of the inhabitants.

It was Chadwick who first faced the problem of efficient local self-government

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organized from a central office. It is to him we owe the degree of efficiency to which we have so far attained in the organization of our various home departments of government.

It was Chadwick who first conceived the idea of the State's duty to the individual by the appointment of assistant commissioners and factory inspectors. It was he who incorporated this idea in the Poor Law Amendment and Factory Acts. He saw that with the advance of industrialism and the scramble for increased production some system of governmental regulation was necessary. He saw that unless some such system was devised exploitation of the weak would be inevitable and would react upon the welfare of the community.

Finally it was Chadwick's greatest performance that he forced on a dense and unwilling nation his Sanitary Idea. It is to him that we owe what seems a commonplace axiom to-day—the idea that people are materially affected by environment. He proved to the world that it is impossible for men and women to live clean and sober lives or to work well and honestly under conditions of squalor and disease. He

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proclaimed this principle to the world and was met with abuse. "He looked," he told Richardson, "for every opportunity that should give an historical future to a peculiar and sensitive position." He was right. He gained his "historical future." By common consent Edwin Chadwick is acknowledged to be the greatest pioneer in modern sanitary science—a science which has helped enormously in promoting the welfare of the people.

Edwin Chadwick's life has inevitably to be considered in four distinct phases.

First we saw him a young man struggling for a position as a barrister and supplementing his income by journalism. Unsettled and disturbed, he felt that there was some other work waiting for him; his Sanitary Idea began to take shape in vague notions that the accepted methods of the "practical man" were wrong. Already he felt the awakening of a social conscience. But still uncertain of his aim, he continued training to be a barrister until his journalistic efforts brought him to the notice of the radical reformers. This was the first phase.

Under the influence of Bentham that

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unsettled and disturbing feeling became quieter. The Idea, which had been germinating in his mind for so long, took shape. It had arrived—his Sanitary Idea. He was quick to see how much Bentham could teach him and content to wait to launch his attack until the right moment came.

Bentham's death brought him the opportunity to allay his other burning passion, his passion for work. The strenuous routine drudgery of officialdom, how he revelled in it, how he excelled at it! As Secretary to the Poor Law Board his energy was needed and used, but not spent. Still there remained the Idea. This was the second phase.

Disappointment with the work of the Commissioners led to a rupture and the disbanding of the Board. Then he launched his Idea. Writing a momentous report based on actual experiences and unanswerable statistics, he flung at the public a document regarding its sanitary condition. He entered into the fight which followed with renewed energy, and the Government, thankful to keep him quiet, appointed him to a Royal Commission on the Nation's Health. Once again he confronted the

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public with facts which startled the Government into setting up a Board of Health. The battle was half over, so he thought. With Lord Shaftesbury he worked and schemed for the success of the Board, but "the interests" were too much even for his strong will. He failed and retired a broken man. This was the third phase.

There he was still in the prime of life, out of the public eye, retired on a pension. A great public servant dismissed from the public service, because he was too hasty and not tactful enough. In this the fourth phase, was he sad or was he still obstinate? Did he at last see that a people cannot be dragooned, but must be led? He had launched his Idea, and he had failed to get it accepted by the public. Was he still proud or did he curse his limitations? Did he think of these things as he rested at East Sheen? Beaten by his own character, did he see that men are themselves their greatest enemies?

And as the remaining thirty-six years of his life rolled by his obstinacy increased. He himself, a reformer, an agitator, became a reactionary. Medical science advanced, and great steps forward were taken. A new

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science, bacteriology, took the field. Did he support it? "Germs! bacteria!" he may have said, "what are they but the inventions of doctors? There is no such thing as a germ." "To avert . . . sickness . . . direct the public exertions in removing those circumstances which shorten life," he might have quoted from his own writings of sixty years back. To him cholera was still nothing but a smell. Yet, to quote his own words again "the great crime of the class of practical men is their dishonest dealings with evidence; shutting their ears to it, and when it is forced upon their perception deprecating it." And yet to him cholera was but a smell, which, rising from filth like steam from boiling water, injuriously affects all with whom it comes in contact. The great worker himself was at last tired. "No compromise!" was the thought uppermost in his mind. There are no such things as germs. . . .

As he lived on at East Sheen he must have reviewed all his great struggles with the obstinate, stupid public. Did he, as he passed away from this world to that special heaven which is prepared for those who work fourteen hours a day, did he realize how

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obstinate he himself had been right up to the very end?

To-day his name and his ideals are being kept before the public by the activities of the Chadwick Trust. In his will Chadwick made certain financial arrangements for the propagation of the science to which he had devoted his life. The following is an extract taken from a pamphlet on the Chadwick Trust kindly supplied by Mrs. Aubrey Richardson, O.B.E., Clerk to the Trustees:

"The Trust funds and the income thereof were to be applied for the promotion of Sanitary Science in the widest possible sense. At the discretion of the Trustees they could be used in establishing professorships in either the medical or the engineering aspect of Sanitary Science; in providing scholarships, maintaining lecturers or scholars, holding examinations, assisting publications or subsidizing institutions, or in providing for the delivery by competent persons of lectures on Sanitary Science 'or in any such manner as in the opinion of the Trustees will tend to promote Sanitary Science.' . . . From 1895 to 1913 the greater portion of

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the income of the Trust was devoted to the maintenance of the Chadwick Professorship of Hygiene and the Lectureship on Municipal Engineering at University College, London, and a capital sum was given for the provision of the Chadwick Laboratory of Hygiene in that College. Grants were also made to the Sanitary Inspectors' Association. From 1907 to 1912 a scheme was in operation for providing a course of lectures at the University of London, South Kensington, on recent advances in Sanitary Science and Municipal Engineering. . . . Since 1913, while an annual sum has been devoted to subsidizing the Chadwick Professorship and Municipal Engineering at the University of London (University College), a new departure has been made in the way of providing courses of public Chadwick lectures in London and other large towns in Great Britain by competent lecturers on almost every aspect of Sanitary Science."

The vast field over which Sanitary Science has now spread will be realized when it is stated that amongst many others of the lectures mentioned in the last paragraph of

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the extract, some have been given on such divergent subjects as *The Evolution of Epidemics, Forests, Woods and Trees in Relation to Hygiene, Causes of Infant Mortality* and *The Disposal of the Dead*.

Thus amidst the hubbub and rush of modern London, whose main streets are washed nightly, and whose sanitary arrangements every foreigner praises, Chadwick's Sanitary Idea is still taught. Truths from the master mind on Sanitation are still propagated in the University; men and women listen to professors teaching the new developments; and in Whitehall stands the Ministry of Health, surely the greatest memorial of all.