

PART VI.

ON THE SUPPLY OF PROVINCIAL TOWNS.

251. Your Majesty's commands to us directed that, after reporting on the suitability, for the supply of the metropolis, of the sources of water in the high grounds of England and Wales, we should further report "how the supply from the remaining sources may be most beneficially distributed among the principal towns."

252. In accordance with these instructions, we began to make inquiries as to the supply of some of the provincial towns, and as to the gathering grounds in various parts of the country generally available for water supply. But we soon found that such an inquiry must be one of great magnitude, involving a large amount of statistical and topographical investigation extending over the whole kingdom. We felt that it would be impossible for us to undertake this without further powers, while its prosecution would delay, probably for some years, the more important and pressing question as to the metropolitan supply. For this reason we resolved to complete our report on the latter subject, and to limit our recommendations on the former one to a few general principles.

To aid in these researches we have had prepared an elaborate map of the catchment basins of the various rivers in England and Wales; we have published this map in Appendix BN., and it will form, we believe, a useful groundwork for future investigations.

277. 253. We have received evidence from Mr. Bateman, as to the supply of Manchester and Glasgow, and he has also given us valuable data as to the supplies of a large number of towns in the Lancashire district, illustrating his remarks by the map, Appendix BO.

2097 et seq.
2570-80.
4620.
1381-407.
277-9.

We have also had much evidence about the supply of Liverpool, from Mr. Duncan and several other witnesses.

1061 et seq.
4774 et seq.
4964.
5652-5735.

Mr. Dale has given us some information as to the supply of Hull, and we have already mentioned, in Part I., his proposal for bringing water from the Westmoreland lakes for the supply of various towns in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Some particulars as to the supply of Sheffield are given by Mr. Holmes, borough surveyor, and Mr. Jackson, chief constable.

Mr. McClean describes the works he has constructed for the supply of various towns grouped together in Staffordshire, and which are illustrated by the map, Appendix BD.

254. We have alluded, in Part I. of this report, to the proposal made by Mr. Bateman, that if his plan for supplying London from the hills of North Wales were carried out, his aqueduct might be used for the supply of a large and very populous manufacturing district in the midland counties through which it would pass. Messrs. Hemans and Hassard also contemplate affording a large supply to towns in the centre of England, by their conduit from the Lake district.

255. There are two remarks of a general nature that suggest themselves in regard to provincial supplies.

In the first place, it appears to us that the Legislature should always jealously watch any proposal for a town taking water from a gathering ground at a distance from it, lest by so doing it may deprive other places nearer to such gathering ground of their more natural source of supply. Mr. Bateman has put this argument so forcibly in the case of Liverpool that we may quote his words:—

277-9. "I think that it was altogether wrong that Liverpool should have been allowed to go to this district, because Darwen, Accrington, Blackburn, Wigan, and many other places are large and flourishing towns closely contiguous to the Liverpool gathering grounds, the whole district having a dense population where the inhabitants can only look to this little cluster of hills for a supply of water. Liverpool has put its paw upon that supply, and has very considerably limited the power of the surrounding districts getting an additional supply of water; and I would venture to suggest, as it is a national question, that if Liverpool should be permitted to go to Bala Lake for water, where it may take water without injury to any manufacturing interest, those hills being as it were the great manufacturers of water, the Rivington district should be held liable to have water abstracted from it for the supply of any neighbouring town which could not otherwise get a supply of water."

This argument ought not to be lost sight of in regard to the proposals for supplying London from Wales or Cumberland; for before either of these plans could be approved, it ought, we think, to be conclusively shown that the abstraction of water from these sources

could not stand in the way of the supply of other places nearer to them. In regard to the Lake scheme, this would be, we conceive, a very powerful objection, as that district has already been several times pointed to as the best source of supply for large and growing masses of population in the north and centre of England.

At any rate, when circumstances render it necessary that water should be brought from a distance, care should be taken to include in the scheme the supply of all places along the route by which the water is conveyed. In the case of Liverpool, for example, if water should be procured from the upper Dee, as is proposed, the project should embrace the supply of Chester and all other places on the way.

256. Then, secondly, we would strongly call attention to the remarkable tendency that towns in the manufacturing districts have to arrange themselves in groups. Take for example the enormous group around Manchester, the group of the Potteries, the group of towns immediately to the north of Birmingham, the groups on the Tyne and near the mouth of the Wear, and many other instances.

This tendency ought always to be considered as an essential element of any arrangements for water supply. Such a group of towns uniting together may go for a much better and more perfect scheme than any one of them separately, and the Legislature ought not only to encourage but as far as possible to compel such a combination.

Instances of the favourable effects of such combinations are afforded by Manchester, which sends, or contemplates sending, supplies in all directions radially around the city, and in Staffordshire, where several towns have been successfully supplied in this way by Mr. McClean.

On the other hand, instances of the unfavourable results of a neglect of this precaution have been experienced in some parts of the country.

Referring again to the Cumberland Lake district, it is obvious that it might be made, by a united effort, available for providing an almost unlimited supply for great groups of manufacturing towns in the north of England; but it is only by a large union of districts that the expense of such a scheme could be justified.

We therefore consider that when any town belonging to a large group, particularly if forming the nucleus of it, comes to Parliament for a water bill, the scheme should be so designed as to include the whole group.