

THE DRAINAGE OF NEW ORLEANS.

THE NECESSITY FOR A THOROUGH SYSTEM FOR THE REMOVAL OF OUR SEWAGE.

The Sanitary Demands for It.

If anything was needed to show the pressing necessity that now exists, and always has existed, for a thorough system of drainage here, the late overflow of the rear portion of our city ought certainly to be enough. This matter has been the subject of the closest scrutiny and study by the civil engineers resident here as long ago as the Spanish domination, and it would seem that the same variance of opinion still exists as it did then. The peculiar topography of the site of our city being below the high water line of both river and lake, the absence of almost any grade whatever on which to base a system

OF NATURAL FLOW

of drainage, present difficulties that might easily have proved serious obstacles to the engineer in the early days of our city, but it would now seem, with the rapid advances of engineering skill, the remarkable improvements in mechanical devices for elevating water and the inventions made in sewage drains, something might be done to relieve us of the present obstacle to the betterment of our great metropolis and its sanitation. Year after year the equinoctial storms of September or the heavy rains of spring have submerged the city from the Metairie Ridge up to say Claiborne street, and year after year have we heard of newer and more certain devices to prevent these

DISASTROUS RESULTS.

This city is not now what it was a burg of only 50,000, and this era is that of seventy-five years ago. What the people then could afford to pass over we cannot now, and it was therefore to lay before our readers the opinions of scientific men, both as to the necessity of a better system of drainage, and also as to the means of procuring it, that the interviews and opinions given below were obtained.

IT NEEDS NO VOUCHER FOR ONE TO APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT WITH A SYSTEMATIC DRAINAGE OF THE LAKE SWAMP

our rear the health of our city would be immeasurably improved.

The action of the sun on the moistened vegetable matter lying exposed to its action between Broad street and the ridge, and the ridge and Lake Pontchartrain, has been, according to the opinion of our leading physicians, one of the most fruitful, if not the only, cause of the presence of yellow and other malarial fevers here. The open canals, field and income with all the stenches of the city of Cologne, add their powerful force to the swamps, and under the most careful surveillance and the use of

A SEA OF CARBOLIC ACID,

unless these can be drained and our city must still suffer. What is the remedy and how it is to be applied is not for us to say; that we leave for the honor to the engineers, but what is imperatively needed is that a system once for all should be established. In the past it has been the habit of almost every city administration, or rather the increasing of every new civil engineer, to put into force his own peculiar ideas relative to the drainage of the city, and it hardly had this work been commenced when his successor would be inducted into office and a new system planned. The result of all this has been that now our drainage system is a sort of heterogeneous

IMPROVING THE PATROWORK

of no one knows how many. The surveyor of yesterday dug a canal here and the surveyor of the next day would dig another elsewhere, leading somewhere but not effecting any practical result.

The following are the results of our reporter's interviews with the gentlemen who so kindly expressed their opinions:

WHAT DR. CHOPPIN THINKS.

A reporter of the DEMOCRAT then called upon Dr. Choppin, president of the Board of Health. The doctor was busily engaged with health matters when the reporter called, and with much willingness dropped his other business to assist in a press interview.

Reporter—Doctor, I have called upon you to express an opinion relative to the necessity now existing for a solution of our drainage question. Have you made any examination into our matter?

Dr. C.—I have, sir. I have thought over this subject for a long time past, and am now, as I have been before, thoroughly impressed with the importance of the adoption of a system of drainage of our city which would remedy the present

evil. You may feel satisfied that, for the better sanitation of our city, there should be some other system adopted than that at present at work.

Dr. C.—Perfectly satisfied of it. In my opinion our drainage system should be moved much further back than they are now and rendered much more powerful. Mind you, I do not give this as my peculiar system of my own, but simply as the result of my observations. Our gutters should be flushed with water from our river daily; that is, those running at right angles with the river. On those streets the grade of the gutters should be raised midway between those running from the river to the lake, so that they may be able to wash them either way. In my opinion, all gutters, or if you can call them so, ditches, should be

OPENED TO THE LAKE SHORE.

and then dishing machines, or these newly invented water elevating wheels, established to carry the water in our rear to the lake, where it should be emptied along the city front to raise water enough to flush the gutters, that a stream might be kept up, leaving no out-of-catch basins.

Rep.—What a beautiful canal near or quite near the Metairie ridge portion of our city?

Dr. C.—The canal on Broad, Galvez, Hagan and other avenues I am satisfied they ought to be flushed from the basins. This would drive all the filth and malarial waters out of them, and fill them with clean and healthy water. In my opinion, do you think these canals should be left open or unworked, do you?

Dr. C.—No, sir. I do not. All open canals should be covered or unworked, but particularly that on my street, that is, the Metairie ridge, which would do through the heart of the city. It would not cost very much to culvert these drains, and the effect of it would be to at once raise our health standard.

Rep.—Respecting the idea of making the Metairie Ridge our rear protection, do you favor that idea?

Dr. C.—I think that if we drained to the lake it would open up the swamps behind Metairie ridge and thus prevent the malarial gases from rising, which would, under the combined influence of heat and moisture, favor the increase of disease of the febrile type. I would prefer to have, as I said before, the lake made the outer line of our drainage.

In this connection there is a matter that I think ought to be attended to, and that is, seriously. When you pass through our streets, say at noon, you can observe piles of the scrapings of the gutters lying about near the sidewalks, from which a foul smell arises. Under the heat of the sun there is a sort of fermentation, which cannot but be deleterious to the public health. If the authorities flushed the gutters and drains there would be no necessity for shoveling out this mass of decomposed matter.

DR. WARREN STONE'S OPINION.

In response to the interrogatories propounded to Dr. Stone by the reporter, he said he had always held the opinion that it was a prime necessity for the health of our city, and that it would not be until our rear swamps were thoroughly drained that a perfect sanitation here could be expected. He favored the daily cleaning of the rear gutters with water, and that as to the means of accomplishing this, he said that as to the engineers, as they know more about such matters than he, as a physician, possibly could, there could be no doubt but that the swamps in the rear of our city were breeders of malarial fevers, and their drainage was required to preserve our sanitation, and that as he expressed it, the drainage of New Orleans was one of the most difficult matters

and civil engineers had to contend with. For years we have suffered from the lack of proper attention to this department of our social economy.

There is another thing that is most injurious that would not occur if we had a proper drainage system, and that is the daily scraping of our gutters of morning and the deposition of the matter on the streets in piles, that the sun may heat them, breeding malaria. All this should be stopped.

Other measures will have to be taken and enforced without a change every time a new administration comes in. It must be adopted and then persevered in.

PROF. FORTAINE'S PLAN.

Knowing that Prof. Fortaine had devoted much time and study to the drainage question of this city, and appreciating how much weight would be given to his opinions, a representative of the DEMOCRAT called upon him, with the following result:

Between New Orleans and the lake there can be no doubt but that at its bottom the Mississippi river is now running no higher, as the bottom here is greater than at the bar.

The surface current is greater than below, for there is little or none there, and hence what we see in rapid motion above is not all indicative of the current. Reasoning from this, other outlets would increase the bottom current and afford a more speedy outflow of the river. Nature has already indicated that she intends now, as she has before, to effect an outlet to the sea through Lake Pontchartrain, and the Bonnet Carré crevice.

Taking this as a fixed fact in nature, the Professor's idea was to avail himself of it with reference to the drainage of New Orleans. His plan is to open and guide the Mississippi current running through the crevice, so that it might course along near the edge of the lake nearest the city, forming there

A DEEP CHANNEL.

into which through several outlets from the city sewers they might be emptied.

The strong current of the river would at once carry off the malarial drainage. This canal might be a large canal in the lake itself, which at some future date would render that broad expanse a marsh, and afterwards a dry plain with a small body of water in the center, but in matters in which the health of a great city is involved, it would amount to a miracle. Of course this plan would come in contact and opposition with several industries and interests, and would engender much ill feeling, but this must be expected.

The Professor was satisfied that this opening of the Bonnet Carré crevice and the formation of a rear canal or river channel would be of the greatest benefit as it could be led back into the river down

NEAR THE ENGLISH TURN.

and thus a steady current surrounding our city would be insured. This Professor had made a neatly drawn map showing more fully than our reporter could detail the details of his plan, but we regret we cannot present it to our readers.

SURVEYOR J. A. DHEMEGOURT'S OPINION.

In response to the reporter our City Surveyor presented the following report as embodying his views:

OFFICE CITY SURVEYOR, New Orleans, May 18, 1877.

Hon. Jno. McCaffrey, Administrator of Improvements.

Sir—At your request I have made a thorough examination of the protection levee along the lake shore, from the New canal to the upper line protection levee, a distance of 2200 feet. That levee being built with fine sand, is easily washed away by the least movement of the lake water, and the result is that the water enters a double row of three planks, buried at the time of construction about three feet into the sand. During every north, northwest and west wind the waves roll up to the very top of the revetment, and get on an incline plane of considerable degree, gradually carries away the sand from the footing of the planks, and undermines the revetment to such an extent as to allow the swelling to pass under it, thereby reaching the levee, from which it only washes away the fine sand of which it is made.

TO OVERCOME THIS EVIL.

and save from destruction that neighborhood which has cost the city several hundred thousand dollars, I propose to prevent any further digging at the foot of the revetment, by building, at about 110 feet from the end of said revetment, a double row of close piling 2 feet 6 inches apart, secured together by means of a longitudinal piece, 6 feet through the space of 2 feet 6 inches at every 5 feet and 1/2 inch round iron bars, with head at one end and iron nut at the other.

The space between the bottom of the lake and the top of the piling, to be filled with ballast, (the latter being better on account of its weight), will be put to keep down the facines.

The waves beating against this breastwork, built in front of the revetment, will create a distance of 2 or 2 1/2 inches from each other, will dig sand from under the facines, which, on account of the weight of the ballast, will sink gradually, thus forming at all times a perfect joint on the bottom.

For experience I have acquired in this kind of work enables me to say that in the course of 3 or 4 years, those facines and brickbats will go down something like 3 or 4 feet.

A work similar to the one now proposed was built 30 years ago on the west side of the Port Chartrain railroad, at least 300 feet further in the lake than the protection levee, and though no canal was taken of it, it still exists, and is the only protection of that portion of land advancing into the lake, in the rear of the city.

As I have stated above, I propose planting a double row of piles 4 by 6 inches, 15 feet long, driven 10 feet into the sand and at 2 feet 6 inches apart, with a space of 2 or 2 1/2 inches between them, bolted to the piling at 2 feet 6 inches apart, and secured by 1/2 inch round bolts on strings 4 by 6 inches inches, placed about 20 feet apart.

OUTSIDE THE ROWS OF PILING.

As shown on the accompanying plan and section.

The 6 or 7 of the above work will be as follows for each 5 feet in length:

Lumber, 620 feet, cutting piles and stringers, at \$15 per 1000..... \$9 30

One 1/2 inch round bolt 3 feet 6 inches long..... 1 00

One 1/2 inch round iron nut..... 2 00

Ballast, 2 tons..... 2 00

Labor required for planting piles, laying stringers, bolts, facines and ballast, about..... 15 00

Total..... \$27 80

Say \$5 50 per running foot.

The above price of material is very near the actual cost, but the workmanship will differ, as it is very difficult to calculate very correctly the labor required for a new kind of work. About 20 feet of the upper end of the protection levee is now in a dangerous condition, and ought to be attended to at once. In order to know exactly the cost price of the work, I think it would be well to have constructed by reliable hands a small section, which will submit to the consideration of the City Council a plan I have conceived to build the protection levee at a much less cost than has been done so far.

I am convinced that the space between the breastwork and the shore would be filled up to the height of high water in three or four years.

Very respectfully, J. A. DHEMEGOURT, City Surveyor.

J. L. CUMMINGS'S OPINION.

At the request of the reporter Mr. L. J. Cummings presented the following as his opinion on the subject:

If the canal levees are elevated and strengthened as recommended by the City Surveyor, and ordered by Mr. Cockrem, the once Administrator of improvements, on such useful and feasible conditions, the increase of the height of the building of flood gates in the canals. If flood gates, or rather locks, are to be erected, it would appear to me that the canal companies were the proper parties to build them and to incur the expense, as well as to control them, so as to accommodate the traffic for which their canals are designed. It would be much better, in a sanitary point of view, to allow the lake water to circulate freely and uninterruptedly in and out of the canals in no manner whatever to intercept it by flood gates.

While upon this subject I would most earnestly recommend that the end of both canals be connected in a direct line with the Mississippi river, by thirty-six inch iron pipes, and the same to be provided with suitable stopcocks, and lateral branches at short crossings, the former to be made available to admit a free circulation of

water through the canals, from the river to the lake, or the reverse, and the latter to be rendered useful in supplying the adjacent streets with an ample supply of water either for fire or for street cleaning purposes. The advantage of this plan is, that it is an improvement in providing water for fires.

THE CLEANING OF STREETS.

and to the drainage canals in keeping them well supplied with water to prevent the accumulation of filth therein can scarcely be estimated. Were the canals connected with the river in the manner indicated, they would not be the dirty, stagnant receptacles for filth, which they now are. These and many more of the final black ditches which run through the center of some of the otherwise most beautiful thoroughfares of New Orleans, could be made streams of pure running water, and the health of the city improved thereby beyond measure.

Many of the engineers who addressed your letters upon the subject of a protection levee for this city, I perceive, recommended the adoption of the line of the river as the point of view. This plan, in a sanitary point of view, is certainly the most feasible, as to anything of its great economy as a temporary expedient in accommodating the area this side of the ridge above mentioned. But there are other considerations to be taken into account, and which are given in their views of a protection levee for this city. By an examination of the map it will be seen that the city of New Orleans extends to and along the lake shore, the latter boundary being being the line of the river, and the former the line of the city.

The swamp included within the exterior boundaries of the city being at least double that which is enclosed between the ridge above and the river. The drainage of this immense area of land is not, therefore, provided for by the drainage of the river, and yet I am informed that the whole of this property is subject to drainage as well as to other municipal taxes. Its drainage is not only not provided for by the plan proposed by the engineers who have recommended the levee to be placed upon the ridge, but it is contemplated to pour the immense accumulation of filth from the thickly populated area this side of the ridge over and upon the entire surface of the dike itself, which will, in turn, be carried out, and the entire drainage of the area within the ridge is poured over into the swamp beyond, New Orleans will continue to be celebrated as the world over as a graveyard for all new comers.

The swamp between the ridge and the lake will thus be converted into a miasmatic pest-hole, the exhalations from which will be wafted by every lake breeze into this city, bringing disease and death to multitudes of its inhabitants, and make New Orleans avoided, as it justly should be, by all who are not afflicted with the cholera, or a frog or an alligator. Indeed, I doubt whether even these animals would not abandon this district should you pour the filth of this city constantly upon its surface. I cannot conceive how a number of people would have any objection for their own best interests, could for a moment think of continuing to make the swamp a pest hole to be avoided rather than the attractive and desirable place for residence it would become.

IF PROPERLY DRAINED.

Extend your levee to the farthest limits of the city, and as near to the lake as may be economical and practicable, but by no means attempt to build a levee upon the mountain quicksand foundations out into the lake, where it would be greatly injured by the waves, and for a moment think of continuing to make the swamp a pest hole to be avoided rather than the attractive and desirable place for residence it would become.

Since carbolic acid was used for the first time, in 1874 and that its efficacy is still doubted by a healthy public, a scientific experiment is being made to-day it depends entirely upon ourselves to aid such favorable climatological conditions and to render them still more propitious by hygienic measures rigorously applied. I would therefore call your attention to some measures which appear to me most important:

1. The gradual raising of the surface of the ground in order to diminish the development of the deleterious miasmas in the sub-soil water, and the constant presence of these miasmas have been so well demonstrated in the report of the Board of Health of 1873.

2. THE RAISING AND GRADING OF THE LEVELS OF OUR STREETS, SIDEWALKS AND YARDS, in order to facilitate the drainage of fluvial waters and household slops.

3. The establishment of a more efficient system of sewerage, and therefore, our climate and more in accord with modern progress.

4. The classification and regulation of all industries, which, by their emanations, refuse and dangers, jeopard life and the public health.

5. The objection of the construction of all buildings to be made in such a manner as to allow above all of free ventilation under ground floors, which should be six inches above the ground, the ground itself to be six inches above the level of the city.

6. A judicious distribution of water, particularly in the interior and more remote quarters of the city. We would thus establish upon a solid basis a hygienic and public salubrity which would enable the Board of Health to put into practice all the perfected means afforded by the physical sciences to insure comfort and security to the community.

If we wish a permanent sanitary condition, and the return of immigration and of our commercial prosperity we need a complete drainage system, and the construction of this system should be considered a public duty. I am assured that mud to a considerable depth, as well as shifting quicksands exist in the lake near the shore, and that the fact of their existence is a source of disease by the existing marshes, made doubly obnoxious and dangerous by the present system of drainage, would at once be removed.

As I have stated above, I propose planting a double row of piles 4 by 6 inches, 15 feet long, driven 10 feet into the sand and at 2 feet 6 inches apart, with a space of 2 or 2 1/2 inches between them, bolted to the piling at 2 feet 6 inches apart, and secured by 1/2 inch round bolts on strings 4 by 6 inches inches, placed about 20 feet apart.

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rious consideration, and he argued that it was the duty of the press of New Orleans, for the common interest, to urge upon our authorities the necessity of immediately adopting a general system of drainage, and that it was at any rate, he said, that he might be able to cast length upon the relations of the swamp around with disease, but as the subject was one upon which all intelligent physicians and scientists agreed, he would not dwell upon it. He would, however, call attention to the fact that the very heart of the city itself needed the most attention and consideration as the swamp, for it was a well known fact that a large proportion of the grounds on which our residences were erected in the most fertile portions of the city were lower than the bottom level of our drainage, ditches and gutters. Under such circumstances it was not surprising that the lower floors of these buildings were constantly damp and breeding malaria, which, in many cases, which he illustrated, beneath the level of the yards, which the levee were lower than the drainage level of the street. And in case of rain what was the consequence, through our streets and even our yards presented a healthy appearance, and the water under our houses, into which the refuse of the court and sinks were washed, to remain stagnating. This was one of the details, said Dr. Gaudet, which demanded the most serious attention on the part of our Board of Health, and the details could only be remedied by a thorough system of drain to one-half-way measures.

On the same subject we have the following communication (written at our request) from DR. CHARLES TURPIN, one of our most distinguished native physicians, who has for many years given much attention to the sanitary necessities of our city:

Dear Sir—Your young lady friends do not place too much confidence in these figures, for they are only approximate, and would not serve as a criterion in "close" cases.

We may convey some encouragement to them by saying that in cases where the interest is questioned not given fully, nevertheless they will be credited with so much of them as are answered correctly. For example, let us take a proposition in mathematics. The answer may not be correct, owing to some error in calculation, and yet the problem has been carried out in a manner to satisfy the examiner of the knowledge and intelligence of the applicant, and hence so much will be placed to the credit of the person examined.

The same manner will comparisons be established among the different applicants regarding answers in history or geography, for example. The more complete will be the answers the more credit will be given to the applicant. As singular as it may appear

which has caused more general puzzling among the applicants, the greatest puzzle (and the first assistant) was that which required the location of the "Hosok" mountains, known also as the Green mountains, in Western Massachusetts. And yet there was not one of the applicants who had not heard of the Hosok Tunnel, and of the Hosok river, which finds its source in that range of mountains.

References to maps and atlases, after the examination, even failed, in many cases, to locate these mountains, which certain other maps and atlases plainly indicated them.

Tripitation must have had a great deal to do with the failure to answer certain questions. A case in point: One of our most competent lady teachers actually located the Balkan Mountains, (referred to daily in the war dispatches) in Austria!

A MISTAKE. It is claimed, has been committed somewhere in connection with the examination, which should be remedied before the table of the successful candidates is made out. We leave it, of course, to the Board to do this, as it is a matter which refers to the fact that some (very few) of the applicants for teacherships were permitted to enter their names for several grades, and actually underwent two or three examinations, with the attendant hope that if they failed in one grade they might succeed in another. This is not considered as unfair, because it was intended that all applicants should have the privilege of entering their names for examination in as many grades as they chose it should have been so, and it is not, where it was understood that they could enter for one grade only.

Among some of the members of the School Board there is a decided inclination to reverse the tact rule which includes them as competing with the white teachers. The proposition is to have the examination of these colored teachers shall be considered as a competition among themselves without regard to others. Strong arguments are advanced in favor of this proposition, which is brought forward in the interest of the colored teachers.

THE COUNCIL MEETING. We refer our readers to the official proceedings of the City Council, published this morning, which contain the joint monthly financial report of the Administrator of Accounts and of the Administrator of Finance, also, the second report of the Administrator of Finance, and the report of the Auditor of Accounts, which is a very interesting document in the accounts of F. Mayers, wharfinger under the former administration.

A lengthy and the report of the City Surveyor relative to the drainage of the city is also published, together with a report of the Engineer in charge of the proposed double row piling in front of the protection levee at the lake.

A resolution was adopted at the meeting authorizing the Administrator of Improvements to advertise for ten days for sealed proposals for repairing the protection levee at the lake according to the plans and specifications of the Surveyor.

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