

THE CHELSEA WATERWORKS.

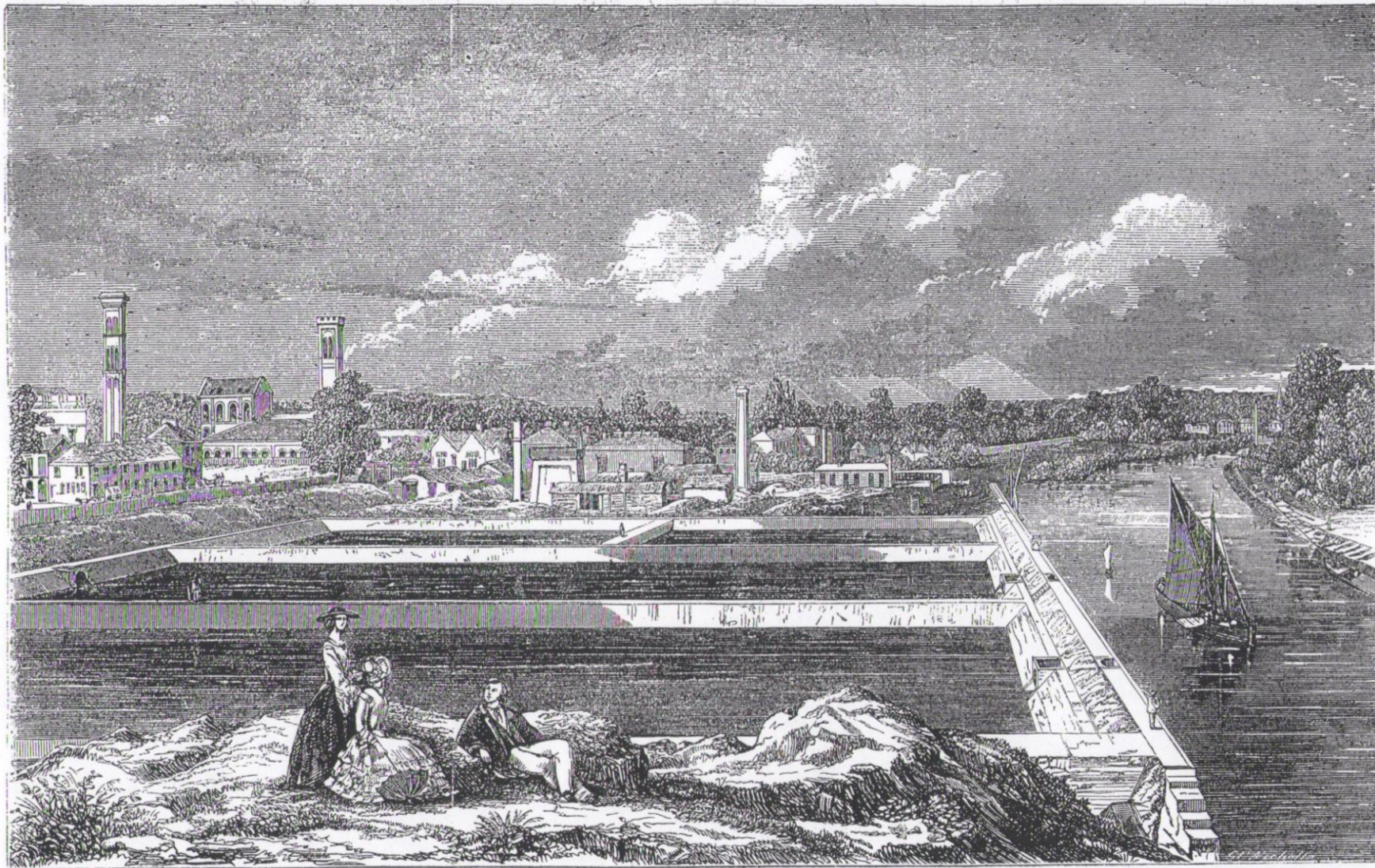
THE water supply of London has of late occupied considerable attention, and sanitary reformers have marshalled forth a stately array of statistics, to prove that the salubrity of a neighbourhood depends in a great measure upon the quality of the water supplied to it by the mains of this or that company. The doctrine that filthy water, charged with every species of abomination, is productive of the most injurious effects on the human frame, scarcely requires the support of figures; nevertheless, in this age of scepticism, it is well to have some data to fall back upon, even for the assertion that dirty water is not merely distasteful but poisonous.

In order to show what share the impurities of water have in the propagation of cholera, diarrhoea, and the kindred diseases, Mr. Simon, the medical officer of the Board of Health, took nine districts on the

south side of the Thames, in which the cholera of 1848-9 had raged with unusual intensity. These districts were in the parishes of St. Saviour's, St. Olave's, and St. George's, Southwark; in Bermondsey, Newington, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Camberwell, and Rotherhithe. It would have been difficult to select in London nine districts less favourably known to sanitary enthusiasts. Now, throughout these districts, two rival water companies had run their mains. House by house they had fought for possession of the districts; side by side their pipes were laid along the streets; but the pipes of one company were charged with water taken from the Thames at Battersea, "contaminated with the outscourings of the metropolis, swarming with infusorial life, and containing unmistakable molecules of excrement;" while the pipes of the other were filled with water in a reasonably pure condition, which had been pumped from the Thames at Ditton. The comparison

established by Mr. Simon between the houses served respectively by one or other of these companies, showed that the population drinking dirty water suffered a mortality three and a half times greater than the population drinking the purer fluid. Thus, all other circumstances remaining the same, and something like a parity between the social position, dwelling-houses, &c., of the persons selected for comparison, having been established, the terrible fact was revealed, that the more filthy the water, the more severe had been the onslaught of cholera.

Within the last two or three years the dangers of water-drinking have been considerably diminished, and death has been exorcised from our cisterns. For this happy state of things we are indebted to the "Metropolis Water Act" of 1852, which ordained that all water supplied to London from the Thames should in future be obtained from above Teddington Lock, where the stream is untainted by the noisome sewage of



RESERVOIRS OF THE CHELSEA WATER COMPANY AT SEETHING WELLS, KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES.