

CHAPTER VIII

Tidal Land Reclamation (Works)

Broadly speaking, the operation of reclaiming riparian and littoral lands may be classified under two headings:—

- (a) The “inning” of saltings and marshes;
- (b) The shutting up of breaches in river and sea banks, and the consequent arrest of tidal inundation.

During the long depression from which agriculture in the United Kingdom is now slowly recovering, the former practice has been under a cloud. In Tudor days many schemes of this kind were pushed to fruition, as the number of Acts passed with that object testify. It is probable that the exodus of refugees from the Low Countries, many of them specially skilled in this art, stimulated the popular demand. Moreover, landowners were in Queen Elizabeth's day compelled by law to reside a large part of each year on their properties, and their energies were consequently devoted to the means of increasing the cultivable area of their estates.

Under the second category of works falls a class of undertaking peculiarly prolific in casualty. It involves operations in which, often over a long frontage, the searching test of hydrostatic pressure is applied. From a weak spot in a half-consolidated embankment, from a few yards of porous filling or badly-punned clay has frequently started a “wash-out” when success was nearly achieved, necessitating a resumption of operations *de novo*. Casualties are apt to be left unrecorded, whereas they are the school of success. Perhaps in some degree to this cause may be traced the fact that literature descriptive of such undertakings is scanty.