

Dwellings for the labouring classes : report of th medical officer of health to the sanitary committee.

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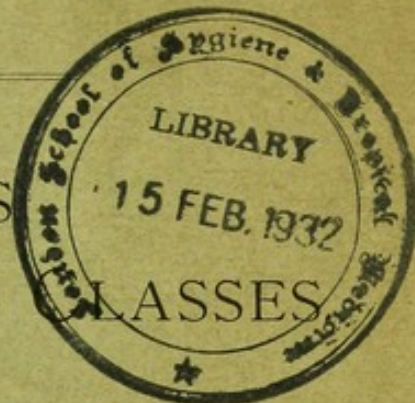
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NEWCASTLE

P. 12115.

City and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

DWELLINGS
FOR THE LABOURING CLASSES

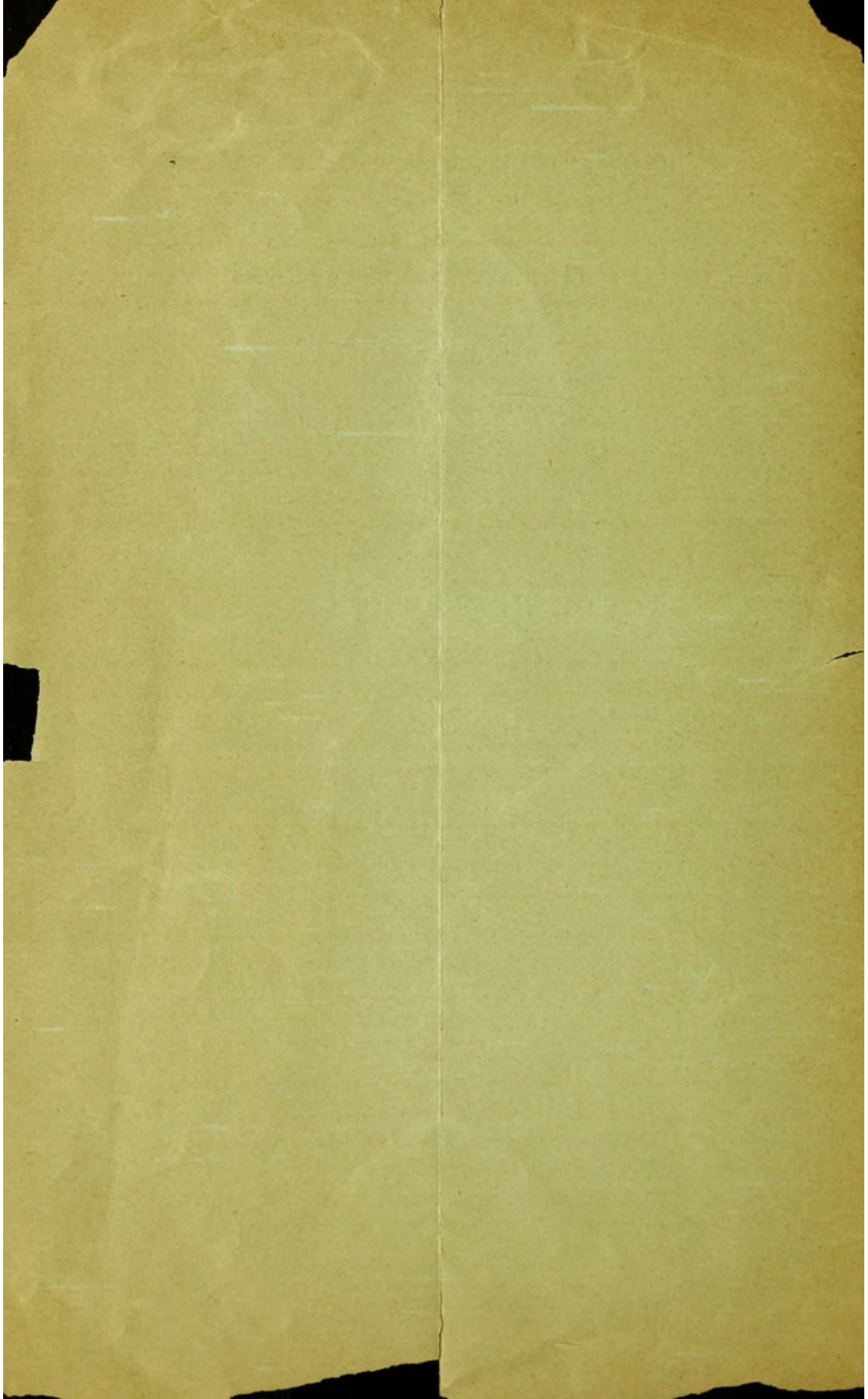


REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
TO THE
SANITARY COMMITTEE.

October, 1890.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE :
ANDW. DICKSON, 30 AND 32, HIGH BRIDGE.

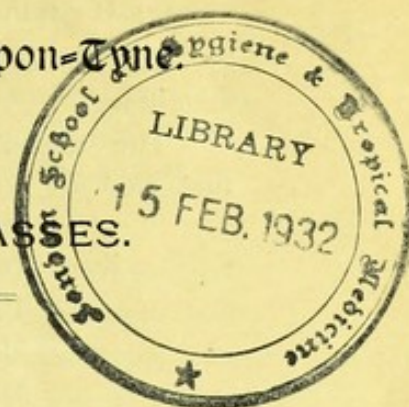
1890.



City and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

DWELLINGS
FOR THE LABOURING CLASSES.

REPORT
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As instructed by the Committee, the Medical Officer of Health has applied to the Medical Officers of Health of the large towns of Great Britain, and has been favoured by them with information on the subject of Dwellings for the Labouring Classes. The following queries were put :—

(1) Has your Corporation erected any Dwellings for the Labouring Classes? If so, please state the number of lettings in the form below.

Number of Lettings.	Number.	Rents per week.
of 1 Room.		
of 2 Rooms.		
of 3 Rooms.		
of more than 3 Rooms.		

(2) Are the rooms occupied by the class of persons for whom they were provided?

(3) Do they give general satisfaction?

(4) Has the Corporation dealt with any old or insanitary property under 'Torrens' or Cross's Acts or under Local Powers? If so, to what extent and with what results?

(5) Have you any printed report on the foregoing matters? If so, will you please favour me with a copy?

(6) Are you in favour of erection by the Corporation of Dwellings for the poorer classes? If so, what are your reasons?

(7) If not in favour of such erections, what are your objections?

The replies made are submitted. They may be summarised as follows:—

The towns with respect to which information has been furnished are

Birkenhead,	Leeds,
Birmingham,	Leicester,
Blackburn,	Manchester,
Bolton,	NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE,
Brighton,	Nottingham,
Bristol,	Oldham,
Cardiff,	Portsmouth,
Derby,	Preston,
Glasgow,	Salford,
Halifax,	Sheffield,
Huddersfield,	Wolverhampton.

The Newcastle Sanitary Sub-Committee on the Housing of the Poor visited Liverpool in July, and Edinburgh and Glasgow in September of the present year, and gained a large amount of valuable information as to the action taken by the Corporation and private bodies in those cities for providing better dwellings for the working classes. These visits will form the subject of a special report by the Committee. A brief reference to some of the leading facts observed will be made presently.

REPLIES.

Query 1.—Of the above 22 cities and boroughs, in Glasgow and Huddersfield only have the Corporation built any Dwellings for the Labouring Classes. The provision so made consists of:—

LETTINGS.	GLASGOW.		HUDDERSFIELD.	
	No	Rent.	No.	Rent per week.
Of 1 room ..	24	£8 per annum.	Nil.	
Of 2 rooms ...	58	£9/18/- per annum	1	3/4
Of 3 rooms ...	8	£13 to £16 per annum.	35	{ Front room, 4/1 Back room, 3/7
Of more than 3 rooms .	Nil.		1 20 100	{ 6/- 5/6 4/8
Total ...	90		157	

In 1885, the Corporation of BIRMINGHAM rejected a proposal to build workmen's houses. In 1889, they resolved to erect 22 cottages, at an estimated cost of £4,000, and the work of erection was begun in February last (Report of Birmingham Improvement Scheme, page 9). No information as to the completion of these dwellings has been received.

In MANCHESTER, a scheme has been approved by provisional order under Cross's Acts, for the demolition of bad property and the erection of labourers' dwellings, in four areas, but no dwellings have yet been erected. The combined area affected will be about four acres in extent.

Queries 2 and 3. — The GLASGOW Dwellings are occupied by a highly respectable class of tenants; but they are all people who never have any difficulty in getting accommodation. The dwellings give satisfaction. The HUDDERSFIELD Dwellings are occupied by workmen, joiners, masons, smiths, letter-carriers, policemen, and labourers. They also give satisfaction, but the tenants think they "are paying enough rental."

To Query 4, the following is a summary of the replies received:—

Under Torrens' Acts.—In NOTTINGHAM, a large number of houses have been condemned and demolished under Torrens' Acts (A.D. 1868, et seq.), and no special difficulties have been experienced in dealing with them.

Under Cross's Acts (Birmingham Improvement Scheme).—Under the Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act, 1875, the Corporation of BIRMINGHAM, shortly after the passing of the Act, acquired a large amount of property, comprising 3,744 houses, of which 3,054 were occupied by artizans. The total population of the area was 16,596, including 13,538 persons of the artizan class. The property was, to a large extent, acquired without putting into force the compulsory powers of the Act. The rateable value of the whole was £67,536. The estimated net cost of the scheme was £550,000. On the acquisition of the land, operations were commenced. New streets were formed, and land was let for the erection of Artizans' Dwellings. The total expenditure (liability) on the scheme amounts to above £1,500,000. (See Report on Improvement Scheme, page 7).

BRIGHTON.—Two schemes are now in process of completion. The areas are not yet cleared. It is proposed to clear the areas and let out the land to builders for houses for the Labouring Classes. The population of one of these areas (Thomas Street, &c.), is estimated at 1073.

MANCHESTER.—Scheme approved. (See reply to Query 1.)

NEWCASTLE.—Under the Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act, 1875 the dilapidated property known as the New Pandon Group, consisting of houses occupied in 1875 by 958 persons, was acquired by the Corporation and demolished in 1878. The hollow in which the houses stood was filled up and levelled, and is now crossed by two thoroughfares for streets, and some new buildings (offices, &c.), are being erected on the ground. The proposal to build a block of Artizans' Dwellings was objected to by the owners of vacant tenement property in the district of Byker as being unnecessary, and the objection was allowed by the Local Government Board, consequently no new dwellings were erected by the Corporation. The cost of the property purchased, exclusive of land obtained by agreement, was £25,500.

Adjoining the above area is another known as the Old Pandon Group, covered to a great extent with old and dilapidated property, occupied in 1875 by 943 persons. At the time of the acquisition of the New Pandon Property, the Corporation also acquired the worst of the dwellings in the Old Pandon Group. Most of these were pulled down. A few were put into repair. For the purchase of this property £38,300 was paid.

The total expenditure on the two areas amounts therefore to £63,800. The money was borrowed. The interest and redemption are charged on the rates.

NOTTINGHAM.—Between 1881 and 1885 the Corporation cleared an area comprising 232 houses, including 104 for Artizans. The procedure was found expensive and cumbrous. The property cost double its estimated value.

WOLVERHAMPTON.—“The Corporation have cleared off much old property in the centre of the town under the Artizans' Dwellings Act and have some of the land waste, some taken up with business premises.”

Under Local Powers.—The Corporation of BOLTON have demolished about 300 houses as unfit for habitation since 1877, and as many more have been pulled down for street improvements. (See Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health, 1889.)

The Corporation of BLACKBURN "have closed a considerable number of dwellings."

In GLASGOW, under their "Improvement Trust Act, 1866," the Corporation have dealt with dwellings occupied by 51,000 persons, extending over an area of 88 acres. The Medical Officer of Health describes its results as being "good in respect of health, crime, and social amenity." (See also Report on the Operations of the Glasgow Improvement Trust.)

The Corporation of HALIFAX are now "closing about 30 houses. More to follow."

The Corporations of HUDDERSFIELD and OLDHAM have dealt with old and insanitary property, but apparently not to a very large extent.

The Corporation of SALFORD "some years ago dealt with some insanitary property under their Local Acts." They have at present in contemplation the improvement or demolition of certain blocks of property.

For Street Improvement Purposes.—In Bristol, Bolton, and Salford, there has been a large amount of demolition of insanitary dwellings for street improvement.

In Bristol, Cardiff, Derby, and Preston, insanitary property has been dealt with under the Public Health Act.

In reply to Query 5, printed Reports have been forwarded by the Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham, on the results of the Birmingham Improvement Scheme; and by the Medical Officer of Health for Brighton, on one of the areas proposed to be dealt with under the Artizans' Dwellings Improvement Act.

The Annual Reports of the Medical Officers of Health for Bolton, Leicester, and Newcastle, contain information bearing on the subject in the respective towns.

Query 6.—The replies with respect to the erection of Labourers' Dwellings by the Corporations of Towns, shew some difference of opinion. Thus, replies decidedly in favour of the erection of dwellings by the Corporations are given by the Medical Officers of Health of Halifax, Huddersfield, Portsmouth, and Sheffield. The first of these gentlemen arrives at that conclusion on the grounds that the Corporation who demolish ought to replace. The second gives no reason for his opinion. The third

considers that houses so provided would be "better built and more conducive to health" than the existing dwellings. The fourth bases his advocacy "on sanitary and other grounds." The Medical Officer of Health of Wolverhampton, although not expressing a positive opinion as to the Corporation erecting dwellings, thinks that better houses at lower rental would be provided by the Corporation than by others building as a usurious investment.

The Medical Officer of Health for Oldham "doubts whether Governmental ownership is the best thing."

The Medical Officer of Health for Derby, holds that, other builders failing to provide suitable accommodation, the Corporation should do so.

The Medical Officer of Health for Bristol prefers that the supply should be left to private enterprise, but does not see how the matter can be dealt with otherwise than by the Corporation when dangerous overcrowding ensues on extensive demolition of property near work centres. The course to be adopted should depend on local circumstances.

Four replies, viz., from the Medical Officers of Health for Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, and Manchester, support the erection of dwellings by the Corporation, but only to a very limited extent, and to serve as a model or object-lesson to private builders.

The reply of the Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham to the query as to the desirability of the Corporation acting as builders of Workmen's Dwellings, is a decided negative; a view entirely concurred in by the Medical Officer of Health for Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The Medical Officers of Health of Birkenhead, Blackburn, Nottingham, Preston, and Salford, leave this query unanswered.

In addition to the foregoing observations the following is a short summary of special action for the improvement of the Housing of the Working Classes taken in the three under-mentioned large cities.

LIVERPOOL.—The Corporation have lately built the Victoria Square of Artizans' Dwellings at Nash Grove, in Scotland Ward, after demolishing the unhealthy dwellings, &c., which formerly occupied the site. 1,310 persons were displaced. The Corporation paid £3 a yard for the site, cleared it, offered it for sale by auction for the purpose of Artizans' Dwellings, and receiving no offers, built the present Victoria Square on 9,195 superficial yards of

land. The buildings are five storeys high. The accommodation provided is :—

	86	Tenements of 3 rooms.
164	„	„ 2 rooms.
21	„	„ 1 room.
	1	Superintendent's house, 4 rooms.
	272	Dwellings.

The total cost is as follows :—

Estimated commercial value of land, at 22/6 per yard	£10,125
Cost of Buildings	 58,000
Total	 £68,125

£18,000 has been written off as lost capital on land bought. The financial results, irrespective of land cost, are fairly satisfactory, the average yearly interest realized in 1887-1889 being 3 per cent. on outlay.

The Death Rate of the new dwellings is stated to be about 20 per 1,000, as compared with a rate of from 40 to 44 per 1,000 in the old ones, which were inhabited by very poor people, whereas the Artizan's Dwellings are tenanted by mechanics and others earning from £1 to £2 a week.

Adjoining Victoria Square are two blocks of Labourers' Dwellings, one of which is not quite completed. The other contains 50 tenements (let in pair rooms and single rooms) built by the Corporation at a total cost (site and buildings) of £7,056. In addition to the above, and at no great distance from them, two streets of four room tenement houses have recently been erected by speculating builders on land sold to them by the Corporation at 15/6 per yard. The sites are 12 feet wide by 24 feet in depth. The dwellings are not models for imitation.

In EDINBURGH, under the Edinburgh Improvement Act, 1867,—the Corporation have spent £560,000 (of which £380,000 were provided out of the rates) in demolishing insanitary dwellings and providing new streets. Under the Edinburgh Police Act, 1879, upwards of 1,000 houses (*i.e.* tenements) have been closed during the last five years, the Corporation merely condemning and closing the dwellings, leaving the provision of better accommodation to private enterprise and philanthropy. The Edinburgh Social Union, under the direction of Professor Geddes, has bought up, improved, and re-let, a large amount of condemned houses, in courts and closes.

The Edinburgh Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Poor (Limited), of which Bailie Russell, M.D., is chairman, have provided an excellent block of tenement dwellings for 40 families, including baths, wash-houses, a large drying attic, a play ground, and other conveniences, at a cost of about £6,000 for site and buildings. This Association now pays a dividend of 4 per cent.

At Rosemount, a large and well-designed square of dwellings for the better class of mechanics, built by private enterprise, has been in existence for several years.

A well-arranged Model Lodging House for 380 persons, in the Grass Market, was opened a short time ago by a limited liability company. This is designed and conducted on the Glasgow system, presently to be described.

GLASGOW.—Under the Glasgow Improvement Trust Act, 1866, as previously stated, a large amount of insanitary property has been demolished. The Corporation have spent £87,212 on seven Common Lodging Houses (including one for females), and nearly £20,000 on Model Tenement Dwellings. The Common Lodging Houses have been so successful as to lead to a recent proposal to build another for married couples.

The Model Tenements in the Salt Market and Steel Street are of a somewhat superior class, and are provided with such conveniences as iron beds or wire spring mattresses, &c. The Corporation made the sites by demolishing bad dwellings, and, failing to sell the land, offered at about half its cost to them, built the Model Tenements, which are described as a social and financial success, returning (since repairs have been charged) interest at the rate of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. A block of 36 single room tenements is in course of erection.

The Corporation of Glasgow occasionally themselves repair and make habitable old properties. Under their "Ticketed House" system, upwards of 23,000 tenements of one or two rooms each are kept under close supervision, somewhat on the same lines as is provided, under section 90 of the Public Health Act, 1875, for the regulation of houses let in lodgings.

HENRY E. ARMSTRONG,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

*Health Department,
Town Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
25th October, 1890.*

