

Dr. Reginald Farrar's report to the Local Government Board on the lodging of workmen employed in the construction of public works.

Contributors

Farrar, Reginald, 1861-1921.
Great Britain. Local Government Board.

Publication/Creation

London : Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office by Darling & Son, 1909.

Persistent URL

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REPORTS
TO THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD
ON
PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL
SUBJECTS.

(NEW SERIES No. 14.)

Dr. Reginald Farrar's Report to the Local
Government Board on the Lodging of
Workmen employed in the construction
of Public Works.

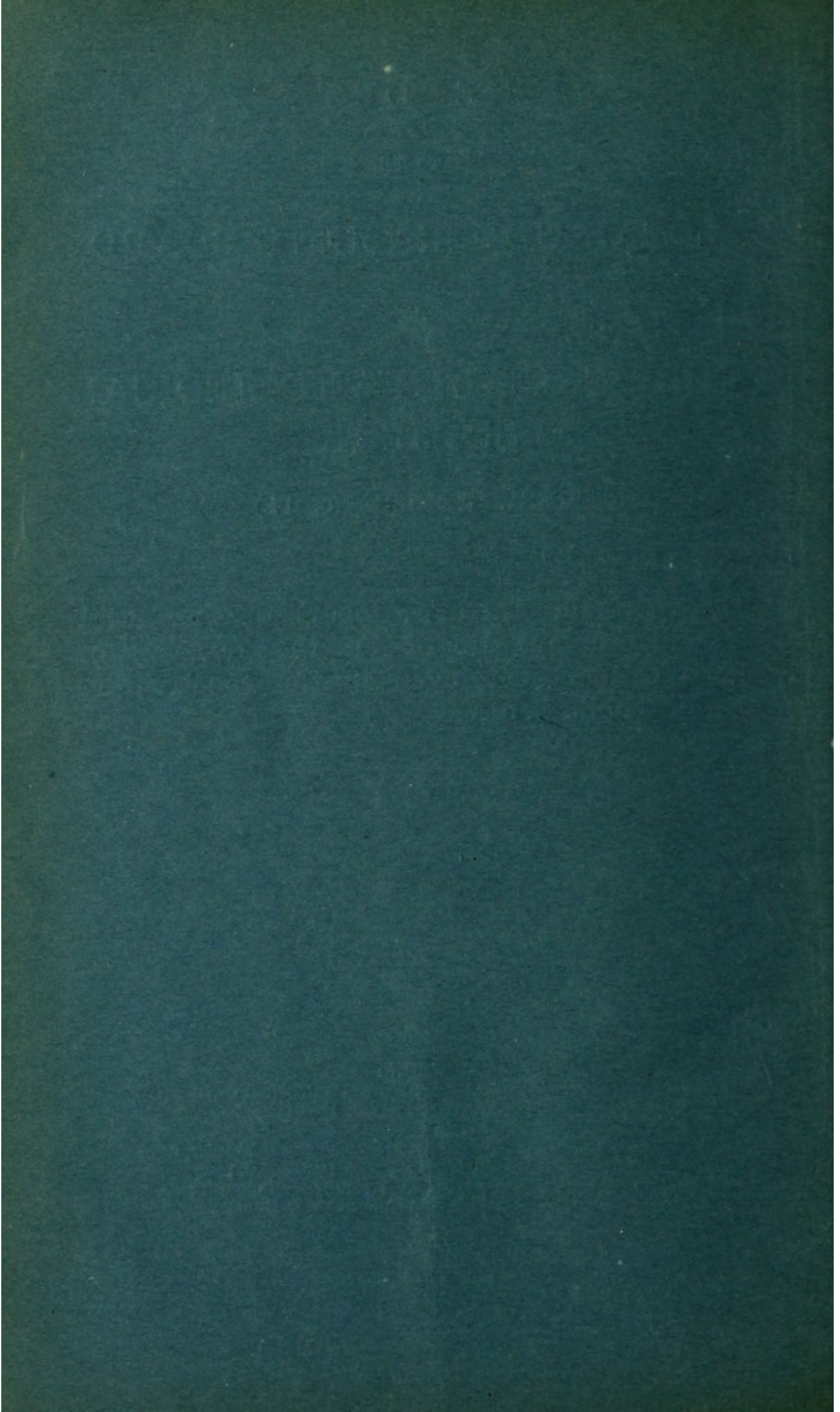


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1909.

Price Threepence.



212

Dr. Reginald Farrar's Report to the Local Government Board on the Lodging of Workmen employed in the construction of Public Works.

ARTHUR NEWSHOLME,
Medical Officer,
14th August, 1909.

In July, 1907, I reported to the Local Government Board on the accommodation of navvies engaged in the construction of the Brooklands Motor Racing Track (Report No. 272), making in this report some general suggestions relating to housing during works of construction.

The question of the lodging and accommodation of men employed on such works was thought to demand further investigation, and I was instructed to extend my inquiries.

I have, accordingly, paid special visits to certain works of construction, and have from time to time as occasion served, and in the intervals of other work, gathered information on this subject from different sources.

Works of construction specially visited by me include :—

Brooklands Motor Racing Track (work carried out by Messrs. Price & Reeves).

Kingsbury and Water Orton Railway (M.R.) (Nowell & Sons, Contractors).

Aynho and Ashendon Railway (G.W.R.) (Walter Scott & Middleton, Contractors).

Derwent Valley Water Scheme, Birchinlee Reservoir (Derwent Valley Water Board).

Derwent Valley Water Scheme, Contract A. (Fisher & Le Fanu, Contractors).

Sheffield Water Supply, Ashopton Tunnel (Sheffield Corporation).

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Leeds Water Supply, Ure Valley Scheme, Colsterdale Reservoir (Leeds Corporation).
 Harrogate Water Supply, Masham Reservoir (Harrogate Corporation).
 Manchester Water Supply, Heaton Park Reservoir (T. Byrom, Contractor).
 Fylde Waterworks, Grizedale Lea Reservoir (Blackpool Corporation).
 Ebbw Vale Water Supply, Carno Reservoir (T. Hodson & Son, Contractors).
 Pit-Sinking, Crumlin, Mon.
 Swansea Harbour Extension, King's Dock (Topham, Jones & Railton, Contractors).
 Pit-Sinking, Maltby (Maltby Colliery Company).
 Immingham Dock, Great Grimsby (Messrs. Price & Reeves, Contractors).

When visiting these works I have in every instance conferred with the Medical Officer of Health and the Inspector of Nuisances for the district concerned, and also with the Medical Officer of Health for the county in those counties where such an official exists ; with contractors, or their managers or engineers in charge of works ; with foremen and other officials ; with the missionaries attached to the works, and with many of the workmen themselves. I have also made it my practice to seek information from the masters of workhouses in the districts as to the numbers of navvies admitted to casual wards, and from the police force as to the practice of sleeping out, or as to disturbances resulting from the presence in the district of large numbers of immigrant workmen. In several instances I have made visits of inspection at night, sometimes accompanied by members of the police force, to common lodging houses, workmen's lodging huts, or places where men were sleeping in temporary shelters, farm buildings, &c. I have also made inquiries from clergy or other residents in the districts concerned.

I have on numerous occasions discussed the general questions involved with navvies themselves, and have held a special conference for this purpose with certain missionaries, who formerly worked as navvies, and who had an intimate knowledge, extending over many years, of the conditions of navvy life.

It would be impossible to name in detail the numerous persons from whom I have received information and assistance in the course of my inquiry, to all of whom I take this opportunity of rendering grateful thanks. I wish to record the fact that on every works which I have visited I have received from the officials of corporations, and from contractors or their managers or engineers, ready and courteous assistance in prosecuting my inquiries on their works, and have been ungrudgingly furnished with detailed information, including plans and statistics. Among those from whom valuable suggestions have been received I desire specially to mention Mrs. Garnett, who founded the Navvy Mission. This lady is universally known among navvies, and has an intimate knowledge, derived from a lifelong experience, of their needs and of the conditions of their life in every part of England.

The Navy Mission Society place a missionary in spiritual charge of almost all important public works, these men being in most cases ex-navvies well acquainted with the life and needs of the men in their charge. With very few exceptions, engineers and contractors welcome the presence of missionaries on their works, generally place a mission room at their disposal, and in some instances even pay their salaries.

Navvies move about from one public work to another, a distinct class or tribe, separated by habit and circumstances from the rest of the community. It is estimated that navvies and their families form a community numbering about 100,000.

In the early days of railway construction the housing accommodation for those men was very poor and scanty, or frequently none at all; many slept in sod huts, which they constructed for themselves, or in farm buildings, or wherever they could; wages, about half-a-crown a day, were paid at fortnightly, or in some cases monthly intervals, and most contractors kept provision stores and paid the men partly in food tickets, sometimes even forcing them to take a percentage of their pay in beer.

The evils that arose under these circumstances were so grave that a select committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the condition of the labourers employed in the construction of railways and other public works. The following extract from the report of this committee, published in July, 1846, is of interest:—

“As regards the class of labourers under consideration your committee cannot but conclude, on the evidence they have received from various parts of the country, that the circumstances under which their labour is carried on, are too generally of a deteriorating kind. They are brought hastily together in large bodies; no time is given for that gradual growth of accommodation which would naturally accompany the gradual growth of numbers; they are therefore crowded into unwholesome dwellings, while scarcely any provision is made for their comfort or decency of living; they are released from the useful influences of domestic ties, and the habits of their former routine of life (influences and habits the more important, in proportion to their want of education); they are hard worked; they are exposed to great risk of life and limb; they are too often hardly treated; and many inducements are presented to them to be thoughtless, thriftless and improvident. Under these circumstances, your committee fears that intemperance, disorder and demoralization, run a better chance of growth than decency, frugality and improvement, and they cannot wonder at the feelings of dislike, and dismay, with which the permanent inhabitants of a neighbourhood often view the arrival of these strangers among them.”

The condition of navvies has, on the whole, improved since the above was written, owing to voluntary provision made by contractors and employers. To this the improved general standard of comfort, the growth of philanthropy, the pressure of public opinion, and the special influence of such bodies as the Navy Mission

Society have contributed ; but to some extent the quotation is still applicable to existing conditions.

The Report contained, among other recommendations, the following, which I have already quoted in my previously-mentioned report on the accommodation of navvies engaged in the construction of the Brooklands Motor-racing Track.

“ Your Committee is of opinion that, previous to the collection of a body of these work-people at any spot, a sufficient lodging for them should be ascertained to exist. When the neighbourhood cannot adequately supply it, then the Company should be required to provide it. Your Committee adverts with pleasure to the evidence they have received from gentlemen largely engaged in executing great public works, to show, that comfortable arrangements for lodging the men are directly and indirectly amply remunerative for the additional expense they may at first entail.”

It was also recommended :—

“ That the Railway Companies constructing any works should be required to make periodical returns to a public authority of various particulars embracing the most important points affecting the well-being of the men ; these might comprehend the number of the men, the progress of instruction, the cessation of labour on Sunday, the accidents, and other details ” ; and that works in progress should from time to time be officially inspected by a competent officer appointed by such authority.

Other suggestions of this Committee dealt with the provision of constables, liability for accidents, regularity of payment of wages, regulation of “tommy-shops,” provision of relief and medical attendance to the sick and wounded, &c.

I am informed by the Secretary of the Board of Trade that, except in so far as they are covered by the Truck Act and Employers' Liability Act, no legislative effect has been given to the recommendations of this Committee. The Board of Trade have no jurisdiction over navvies, and no control over railways until a line is complete and ready for inspection prior to being declared open for traffic.

Although, however, the accommodation provided for navvies has been, on the whole, improved, and although the standard of comfort among the best men is higher, the difficulty of providing adequate accommodation is serious by reason of the presence of a large number of men on public works of inferior moral and physical development, casual and irregular workers, for all of whom it is not possible to provide lodging, and who are often unwilling to avail themselves of such provision if made.

It is often stated by men of wide experience that the old navvy is tending to die out, and is being replaced by morally and physically weaker men. This is said to be due, in part, to the replacement of human labour by machinery, and particularly by the “steam-navvy,” which may be roughly computed to employ 20 men while performing the work of 50. Each steam-navvy used has, therefore, displaced about 30 men, and the use of machinery in

general has in a measure superseded the need for special strength and skill, which were formerly characteristic of navvies.

Periods of trade-depression also tend to draft on to public works of construction men displaced from other employments, many of whom are social failures, having neither the will nor the physical strength requisite for continuous work. I shall presently show how this circumstance affects the problem of accommodation.

In this connection it may be noted that a deputation from the Navy Mission recently waited on the President of the Local Government Board to protest against the employment of local unemployed on works of construction in certain districts, to the exclusion of regular navvies. An authorised transcript of the statements of the members of that deputation and of the President's reply is published in the quarterly letter of the Navy Mission Society for March, 1909. Evidence was given to the effect that pressure is being brought to bear upon contractors practically to discharge navvies and take on the local unemployed. It was claimed not only that this policy is wasteful and economically unsound, because numbers of this latter class are unfit to perform navy labour, while others are too lazy to work, but also that it constituted a real hardship to genuine navvies, many of whom are thereby kept out of employment at a time when work is generally scarce and there is exceptional depression in respect of works of construction.

Wages.—Ordinary labourers on works of construction are generally paid $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ or $6d.$ an hour and may make on an average $3s. 6d.$ a day. I have heard of instances in which men were only paid $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ an hour. It is generally considered by the men that the standard wage should not be less than $6d.$ an hour. The work is subject to great fluctuations on account of weather conditions. One degree of frost stops concreting, and a hard shower of rain stops puddling for the day. Specially strong or skilled men, such as those engaged in tunnelling, may make $7s.$ or $8s.$ a day.

The carrying out of public constructive works, entails, as a rule, the temporary immigration into the district of a more or less numerous body of strangers, men, with some women and children. The amount of additional accommodation that may be required for these varies according to the nature of the work and the character of the district. In the case of works carried out in a limited area in the immediate vicinity of a large town, the workmen may be recruited from, or may find the necessary accommodation among, the normal population of the district, and the need for the provision of special accommodation may not arise.

Great numbers of navvies in large towns in or near which public works are in progress resort to common lodging houses.

In some cases, particularly if the works in progress are likely to lead to permanent increase of population and employment in the district, it may pay the contractors to build new houses or to lease existing houses for the accommodation of their workpeople. Thus, the contractors for the King's Dock, which is now being constructed for the Swansea Harbour Improvement Trust, have built 51 houses and rented other 60 houses for this purpose.

Even in rural districts, if there are any villages within reasonable distance of their work, a certain proportion of the workmen will

find for themselves private lodgings. Decent single workmen can usually do so, but self-respecting cottagers generally refuse lodgings to men who have become degraded by "sleeping rough," such men being usually dirty, and possibly verminous. Nor can women and children, dependents of navvies, easily obtain lodgings if strangers to the district.

The letting of private lodgings to navvies often leads to overcrowding in houses.

If the works are on a large scale private houses in rural districts will not suffice for the accommodation required.

In works of railway construction, or in the laying of aqueducts, lines of temporary or permanent rails, necessary for the transport of material, are sometimes utilised to convey workmen to or from their lodgings, whether these be private lodgings or temporary huts provided by the contractors. On such works accommodation of a less substantial type than may be required for more permanent work may be sanctioned, *e.g.*, tents, or light wooden or papier maché huts.

For lack of accommodation within convenient distance, many navvies walk long distances to and from their lodgings. I have known of several cases, and heard of others, in which men have walked as much as five or six miles each way. Those who ride bicycles can solve the problem of lodgings with greater ease.

Some works, particularly reservoirs for the water supplies of great cities, are situated in remote and mountainous localities, distant from towns or even villages. In such cases temporary accommodation in huts must be provided, or the work-people will be altogether homeless.

Many contractors erect, for their navvies, huts, which are generally temporary buildings of corrugated iron or wood. A common type is a hut let to a foreman, who takes in lodgers. He and his family occupy, say, two rooms at one end of the hut; at the opposite end is a dormitory for lodgers, and between the two a common kitchen and living room. The average number of lodgers in these huts is from 14 to 20. The men pay 12s. to 14s. weekly for board and lodging.

In point of cubic air space and general accommodation, these huts appear to be usually satisfactory. They are readily erected and taken down and can be carried from one public work to another; their initial cost is not great, and they probably pay the contractor in the long run. This system, subject to proper inspection, may be recommended.*

* Private huts, *i.e.*, not provided by contractors, but erected by private persons as a business speculation, of similar construction and accommodating a like number of workpeople, are often erected in the vicinity of public works. These offer good accommodation, but are open to the objection that "shebeening" (the illicit sale of intoxicating liquor) is almost always carried on in them. The practice is undoubtedly very prevalent and is a source of widespread demoralization among navvies. "Shebeening" often goes on in the contractors' own huts, but can be to some extent controlled in them, but this is extremely difficult to do in private huts. The sanitary arrangements of private huts in respect of water supply, drainage and refuse and excrement disposal are often defective. For these reasons it is to be desired that contractors should provide and retain control over all huts, but if private huts are allowed to be erected, they should be kept under close inspection, not only by the sanitary authority as regards their sanitary arrangements, but by the police to prevent the sale of intoxicating liquor.

A distinction is to be drawn between huts of moderate size in which, for an inclusive weekly sum, the landlady provides lodging, full board and washing, and larger huts, often containing as many as 40 men or more, in which the beds are sometimes constructed as bunks,* an arrangement objectionable in several respects. In these the men generally have to cook their own food and there is an almost complete absence of home comforts.

Recreation Rooms.—The provision of recreation rooms serving the purpose of clubs, in which the workmen may read, write, and play indoor games, should be regarded as a necessity of navvy life. In the absence of such provision the public house is practically the only place of resort available for navvies. These recreation rooms may usefully be made to serve as coffee houses for the sale of non-alcoholic liquors and other refreshments. In some instances they are provided by contractors; in some they are provided and managed by benevolent private persons. A coffee house managed by a private lady has been an inestimable boon to many of the navvies employed in the construction of the King's Dock at Swansea.

Many contractors, but not all, provide mission-rooms in which religious services can be held.

Shelters for Meals.—It is desirable that on all works shelters should be erected in which meals can be taken. These shelters should contain stoves on which tins of coffee, &c., can be heated. On extensive works it is generally impracticable for the men to return to their lodgings in the dinner hour, and in cold or wet weather it is a great hardship that they should have to eat their dinner in the open. Such shelters are also of service as affording a refuge during showers of rain.

The temperance question as affecting navvy life cannot be fully discussed in this report; neither can it be wholly ignored, for it is a matter of common experience that want of proper accommodation conduces to drunken habits among this class, and, conversely, that drunken habits, as leading to intermittent and irregular work, aggravate the difficulty of providing the necessary accommodation. It is also well known that navvies who are strictly temperate seldom fail of securing regular work and good lodging.

Some managers of public works have found it useful to have the control of the liquor traffic on their works in their own hands. This is done at Birchinlee (*vide* Appendix), and at Colsterdale the village erected in connection with the Ure Valley scheme for the water supply of Leeds, by means of canteens run on the lines devised by the People's Refreshment House Association. These canteens are under the charge of a manager who receives a fixed salary, and is generally given a commission on the mineral waters sold, and allowed to sell coffee, &c., for his own profit. Beer is sold, but the manager being allowed no commission on it is under no inducement to push its sale; indeed in some cases, as at Colsterdale, he is bound to retail it at the wholesale price, and being liable to lose on what is spilt, is rather under an inducement to discourage the sale. At Birchinlee and Colsterdale the amount of beer that may be issued on Sunday for each hut is limited to a

* On the Blackpool Corporation's works at Grizedale Lea, the huts were constructed with bunks; in these the cubic air-space per head was inadequate.

definite allowance in proportion to the numbers of lodgers. This arrangement is said to work satisfactorily.

In the absence of special clauses in local acts, such as Section 64 of the Derwent Valley Water Act, 1899, compelling the provision of housing accommodation, it is left wholly to the discretion of individual contractors for works of construction what accommodation, if any, they shall provide for their workmen. In some instances, as in the construction of the Weybridge Motor Track and of the Kingsbury and Water Orton Branch of the Midland Railway, no housing provision whatever is made, and the workmen are left to find lodgings for themselves as best they can; in others, as in the construction of the reservoirs for the Derwent Valley and the Leeds Corporation water schemes respectively, the arrangements are excellent; while other works of construction exemplify various degrees of difference, both as to the character and the amount of accommodation provided, between these extremes.

There are many works on which scores and even hundreds of genuine navvies are "sleeping rough" night after night. On some works they have no better provision than sod huts. I have conversed with many navvies who informed me that when pipe tracks were being laid they have, for want of other shelter, slept at night in the pipes, and, judging from my own experience throughout England, some hundreds of navvies must nightly be sleeping in haystacks, straw-yards, cowsheds, even hen-houses, and pigsties or out in the open. Life under such conditions is conducive to physical ill-health and moral deterioration.

A contractor who provides proper and adequate lodging for his workmen is in most cases able to attract to, and retain on, his works a sufficient number of competent men. The services of strong, steady, and respectable navvies are greatly in demand: such men are usually able to choose their own job; where they find themselves well cared for, there they will stay, but if the conditions are not to their liking they have seldom any difficulty in finding work elsewhere, nor do they usually find it difficult to obtain lodgings either in huts or in private houses when such are available. When, however, as often happens, a contractor, in the absence of other accommodation, fails to make adequate provision for his workmen, the best navvies cannot be induced to remain on such works, and their place is taken by men of an inferior stamp. The men on works of this class are often quite content to "sleep rough," in pipes along the lines of aqueducts, in sod huts, in barns, cowsheds, and other farm buildings—in short, under any kind of temporary shelter, or even in the open. Often, especially in the summer-time, navvies of this type, though they may have the price of a lodging in their pocket and lodgings are easily to be procured, will prefer to "sleep rough" rather than expend on lodgings money that will purchase beer. Decent cottagers will not let lodgings to men of this type; hut-keepers, even though they may have vacancies, will not admit them to their huts; and respectable navvies will not associate with them. They rapidly deteriorate in character, in health and strength, and become casual and irregular workers, who alternate short spells of work with bouts of drunkenness, and seldom stay long on any one job.

It is obvious that when a large proportion of the men employed on any given works are casual and intermittent workers, a larger number of men must be retained in the neighbourhood than are employed on the works at any one time : to keep 500 men constantly at work a contractor often needs to have at least 750 names borne on his pay-sheets, and thus increases the immigration into and consequent strain on the accommodation in the district.

A contractor who carries out public works of construction in a district and who imports into the district a large number of labourers may properly be held to be morally responsible for providing accommodation for his workpeople, and should be under obligation to do so. It is also to be desired that he should be required to provide such conditions of life as shall attract a definite number of regular workmen rather than an indefinite number of casual and intermittent workers.

If a contractor were bound to provide lodging it would be to his interest to fill such accommodation with steady and regular workmen, and promptly to dismiss any men that refused to avail themselves of it.

Under existing conditions there is often a marked difference between the provision made by municipal corporations or corporate bodies, such as the Derwent Valley Water Board, and that made by private contractors. In works undertaken by the former there is no question of private profit for the undertaker, and therefore no temptation on this account to save money at the expense of the comfort of the labourers employed. On the other hand, works let out to private contractors are usually allotted to the lowest tender, and, owing to stress of competition the margin of profit is "cut" so fine that they are under a strong inducement to save money by neglecting, unless compelled to do so, to provide lodgings for their workmen.

Colonies of navvies may be the means of importing and spreading infectious disease in the districts where they work. In this connection there is especial danger in respect of small-pox, to the infection of which navvies are particularly liable, both from their nomadic life, including their use of common lodging houses, and from the fact that they often resist re-vaccination when small-pox is prevalent, on account of the loss of work which a sore arm may occasion. In the Annual Report of the Medical Officer to the Local Government Board for 1905-6, Dr. Parsons has recorded a large number of instances in which small-pox has occurred among colonies of navvies, in some of which the disease spread to the surrounding community. It is of urgent importance that when a considerable body of navvies is imported into a district provision should be made for isolating cases of infectious disease that may occur among them.

The Labour Market for Public Works.—The highly mobile condition of this industry and the lack of proper organization seriously affect the problem under discussion. Employment on public works is of necessity subject to marked fluctuations in respect of time, place, and seasonal conditions, but the difficulties thus arising are needlessly enhanced by the fact that no properly collected and co-ordinated information as to employment can be obtained, and the supply of labour is left very much to chance.

The best information at present available as to works in progress is to be found in the "Quarterly Letter to Men on Public Works" issued by the Navy Mission Society. This publication gives a schedule of public works in progress which the editors spare no pains to render as complete as possible. This schedule is of very great value, though in most instances it gives no information as to the number of men available or required on any given works. The Quarterly Letter is distributed free to navvies by the Navy Mission, and has a very large circulation among them. Advertisements for labour required on any works are commonly inserted in "The Labour News," which is a well-known channel for such information. Information as to public works is also given in the "Public Works Magazine," edited by Mr. D. Smith, of Birmingham.

A strong and steady navvy can, as I have said, as a rule* obtain work readily enough, but although the supply of casual and irregular labour is in excess of the demand, it is often difficult for a contractor in the present absence of properly organised information to obtain a sufficient supply of competent labour on his works. Hence, in order to ensure a reserve on which to draw, some contractors allow advertisements to remain in the "Labour News" even after the requisite number of workmen has been obtained, and in some cases good workmen are attracted to these works only to find that their services are not required. This is a great hardship and ought to be prevented.

Need for a Labour Exchange.—In no other industry is the need for the regularisation of employment by means of a national Labour Exchange advocated in the recent Majority Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress, Part VI., Chap. IV., more plainly manifest.

In this connection the following extract from that report is of interest :—

"With regard to private employers it may doubtless be urged that a large reserve of labour is really essential to them; that if they have not such large reserve available it will be impossible for them, in the face of competition, to accept new contracts suddenly advertised; that such contracts will go elsewhere—possibly abroad—and will carry with them, as is too often the case, other orders. The result would be that the general volume of trade undertaken by them would decrease. We recognise further, to the full, the difficulty there may be in certain occupations, such, particularly, as the docks, both on the part of the men and on the part of the employers, in inducing them to regularise industry. We think, therefore, that the Board of Trade should send officers to visit localities where intermittent employment prevails, and should endeavour, through conferences with employers and employed, to arrange for some schemes by which the industry may be to a greater extent regularised. A provision in this sense has, we understand, been inserted in the Port of London Act for establishing a London Port Authority."

* Note.—In ordinary times, but at the time of writing there is a serious depression in this trade.

The following are the sections in the Port of London Act referring to the engagement of casual labour :—

Section 6.—(1)

- (ii) An order authorising the construction of new works shall impose on the Port Authority an obligation to provide such housing accommodation for the persons to be employed at the new works when constructed as the Board of Trade may from time to time consider requisite.

Section 28.—(1) The Port Authority shall take into consideration the existing methods and conditions of engagement of workmen employed in dock, riverside, and warehouse labour in connexion with the Port of London, and shall, either by themselves or in co-operation with other bodies or persons, by establishing or maintaining or assisting in the establishment or maintenance of offices, waiting-rooms, and employment registers, and by the collection and communication of information and otherwise, take such steps as they think best calculated to diminish the evils of casual employment, and to promote the more convenient and regular engagement of such workmen or any class thereof :

Provided that nothing in this section shall deprive any person of any legal right which he would otherwise possess with regard to the engagement of labour.

(2) The Port Authority may make bye-laws with respect to admission to, and the maintenance of order in, such offices and waiting rooms, and otherwise for the purpose of carrying this section into effect.

A Bill to provide for the establishment of Labour Exchanges is now before the House of Lords, having passed the House of Commons.

Cheap Railway Fares.—The Commission further recommended that arrangements should be made to enable the Labour Exchanges to grant passes entitling workmen travelling to a situation to specially cheap railway fares ; in suitable cases the cost of the passes might be provided and recovered afterwards from the workmen.

This recommendation is particularly applicable in the case of navvies. Having no trustworthy means of finding out where work is to be obtained, many navvies (perhaps the majority) now tramp from one public work to another on the strength of vague rumours of possible employment. This statement applies not only to shiftless and casual workers, but even to strong and steady men, who, though their chance of obtaining work may be good, yet do not care to expend money on railway fares unless they can be certain of employment when they reach their destination. To be able to secure engagement by means of a labour exchange, and to be forwarded cheaply by rail to the place where their services are required, would be a great boon to this class.

Detention in Casual Wards.—Navvies in search of work and without funds sometimes need to resort to casual wards of work-houses, but men genuinely anxious for work as a rule avoid the casual wards on account of the detention involved, which makes it

impossible to start work in the following morning ; they will "sleep rough" by preference, unless actually driven to the casual wards by stress of weather.

Detention to perform tasks in casual wards involves a real hardship to genuine navvies. Workhouse masters should in all instances endeavour* to differentiate between professional and habitual vagrants and men genuinely in search of work, and to release the latter in time to find work in the morning without exacting the usual task.

"*Subbing*."—One of the worst influences affecting the moral and social conditions of navvies is the practice of "subbing," or paying instalments of wages daily, or at short intervals, instead of the whole wage weekly or fortnightly. The practice came into vogue when wages were paid at monthly intervals. Wages are now, as a rule, paid weekly, but men are often allowed to "sub" daily to within 6*d.* or less of the full amount due to them, a few pence being withheld in order to keep the workman's name on the pay-sheet. When men arrive penniless on public works it is necessary that they should at first receive an instalment of their wages to enable them to obtain food and lodging, but this advance is not required by steady men after the first week, or, at most, two weeks, and I have not been able to discover any good reason for the continuance of the practice after this period.

The opinion of experienced persons interested in the welfare of navvies is practically unanimous that "subbing" is demoralizing to the workman and injurious to the best interests of the contractor. Most contractors resort to "subbing" in order to secure a sufficiency of available labour ; for the practice certainly tends to attract workmen, though not of the best class, to works, and in many of the advertisements in "The Labour News" the words "sub daily" are inserted as an inducement.

The bad effects of "subbing" are as follows :—

1. It encourages thriftlessness and debauchery, the money that is paid in dribblets being spent from hand to mouth ; for when a man of the navvy class draws a substantial sum at the week's end he may, if a steady fellow, spend it in the purchase of good clothes or in paying for good food and lodging, or, if he is married, remit the greater part to his wife ; but if he only draws two or three shillings at a time he seldom has the resolution to save out of the money, but spends it as he gets it, usually in drink ; on this system more drink is consumed than in the debauch to which the navvy who draws weekly wages may give way on Saturday night.

* General Orders of the Local Government Board as to the Discharge of Casual Paupers were issued on December 18th, 1882, and June 11th, 1892. Under these Orders a large discretion in this respect is entrusted to Boards of Guardians. In the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, pars. 178 and 179, a system of way-tickets for men on tramp in search of work is recommended. Some such system would seem to be particularly applicable to the conditions under which navvies are employed.

2. The daily sub attracts an inferior class of workmen to the works, who lower the moral tone of the whole body. Where the practice obtains there are always to be found a large percentage of those irregular workers, of whom I have already spoken, who alternate spells of two or three days' work with spells of drinking and idleness. These, as before noted, add to the difficulty of providing proper accommodation.

Some of the best contractors refuse to "sub" after the first week, and in consequence generally retain a superior class of men on their works.

Recommendations.

1. That every corporate body or contractor intending to commence works of public construction involving the employment of navvies in any district, on which any number of workmen exceeding 100 not previously resident within three miles of the works shall be employed, should be obliged to notify the Local Government Board, and also the County Council, or the sanitary authority of the district, as may be hereafter determined, of such intention, not less than 14 days before the commencement of such works, indicating the general scope and the probable duration of such work, and approximately the number of workmen it is intended to employ. If at any date subsequent to the commencement of the work a larger number of workmen shall be employed than were specified in the original notification, a further notification specifying approximately the number of such workmen should be made as above. On the completion of such works the central and local authorities should again be notified.

2. That such works should from time to time be open to inspection by inspectors of the Local Government Board.

3. That contractors should endeavour to arrange with the railway companies for the granting of specially cheap fares to workmen.

4. That workmen should, if necessary, receive instalments of their wages during the first fortnight of their employment, but that after this time wages should be paid weekly, and that no contractor should advertise "Sub Daily," or words to that effect, as an inducement to attract labourers to any work.

5. That any contractor or employer of labour on works of public construction who shall employ on such works any number of workmen exceeding 100 not previously resident within three miles of the works should, except as hereinafter provided, and unless sufficient and satisfactory accommodation already exists in the neighbourhood, be obliged to provide accommodation for such workmen to the reasonable satisfaction of the County Council or the District Council as may be hereafter determined. The temporary buildings to be provided should, unless the duration of the work is likely to be very short, include buildings sufficient for the isolation of cases of infectious disease that may occur among the workmen or their families.

Temporary buildings provided for the accommodation of workmen should be registered by the County Council or the District Council, and should be open to inspection by persons duly authorised by either of these bodies.

If, however, temporary buildings be erected within three miles of any part of the works, for the accommodation of workmen employed on such works, by private persons other than the contractor or employer, these may, if approved by the County Council or the District Council, be accepted in lieu of provision made directly by the contractor or employer, but should be subject to the same conditions as to the character of the accommodation provided, registration, and inspection as if they were provided by the contractor or employer.

6. The medical officer of health for the district should, when such temporary buildings are first erected, and afterwards from time to time, examine and report to his Council whether in respect of construction, lighting and ventilation, water-supply, drainage, and excrement and refuse disposal these buildings are of a satisfactory character, and whether the cubic accommodation of the sleeping apartments is such as to afford not less than 300 cubic feet of free air-space for each occupant.

7. The provision of the necessary temporary buildings should, unless the duration of the work is likely to be very short, be held to include the provision of a suitable room for purposes of recreation.

8. Temporary sheds in which meals can be taken and food warmed should be provided on all works.

9. On all works on which more than, say, 200 men are employed a canteen should be provided in which light refreshments and non-intoxicating liquors may be sold. If intoxicating liquors are sold in such canteen the manager should receive no profit on and have no interest in the sale of such liquors.

10. No intoxicating liquors should be allowed to be sold in any temporary building other than the authorized canteen.

11. A clause requiring the provision of accommodation on the lines above laid down should as far as practicable form part of all contracts and all Acts of Parliament authorizing public works of construction.

REGINALD FARRAR.

APPENDIX.

Considerations of space preclude my giving details of all the works I have visited. I have therefore selected for special description three works as illustrative of various conditions dealt with in the body of this report.

The village of Birchinlee, erected by the Derwent Valley Water Board for the accommodation of men engaged in the construction of the Howden and Derwent dams, is described in detail as a model of excellent provision. On Contract A of the Derwent Valley Water Scheme some provision had been made by the contractors for housing their workpeople, but the accommodation was inadequate as to quality and amount. The circumstances of the construction of the Kingsbury and Water Orton Branch of the Midland Railway illustrate the conditions that may arise when no provision whatever of the kind is made by the contractors,

The Derwent Valley Water Scheme.—Under the Derwent Valley Water Acts, 1899, 1901, and 1904, a scheme is in progress for impounding and distributing the waters of the rivers Derwent and Ashop and their tributaries for the supply of Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, and Sheffield. For carrying out this scheme a board called the Derwent Valley Water Board has been formed, consisting of representatives of the corporations of the four towns above named and a representative of the County Council of Derbyshire.

By Section 64 of the Act of 1899 it is enacted that—"The Board or their contractors shall to the reasonable satisfaction of the medical officer of health for the county of Derby erect fit up and maintain hospitals or infirmaries and temporary huts or other buildings necessary for the accommodation of the servants and workmen employed by the Board and their contractors and the Board shall provide and pay for all such assistance whether of doctors surgeons or nurses as may be necessary and proper for the efficiency of all such hospitals or infirmaries . . ." By the same section it is enacted that such hospitals, huts, or other buildings shall be subject to the inspection of the medical officer of health or other person authorized by the local sanitary authority concerned, and a money penalty is prescribed for failure to carry out the provisions of the section.

Under this scheme the Derwent Valley Water Board are themselves carrying out the construction of the Howden and Derwent dams, the excavations at Bole Hill Quarry, and the Bamford and Howden Railway, but have let out to contractors the construction of different lengths of the Derwent Aqueduct under contracts entitled respectively "A," "B," "C," "D," and "E."

On an average of the four months February to May, 1908, 2,080 men were employed on the whole scheme, of whom about 1,050 were employed on that portion of the work which the Board retained in their own hands, and the remainder on the separate contracts.

Settlement at Birchinlee.—For the accommodation of their own workmen the Board have erected corrugated iron huts at Birchinlee, a remote spot among the hills, and several miles from the nearest village.

The work on the reservoirs and at Bole Hill Quarry was started in 1901, and was expected to last 10 years; the huts and other buildings have, accordingly, been well and solidly constructed, being erected on stone foundations or wooden piles, and having brick fireplaces and chimneys. They are lined and ceiled with matchboarding.

The huts in which workmen, not including foremen, are lodged are of three classes, viz.:—Large huts in which single men are taken as lodgers, larger married quarters, and smaller married quarters.

There are 54 large huts, 24 small huts for married workmen, and 6 foremen's huts. There are also 12 other buildings, some of which are shops and some very small huts for married workmen. The present population is 940, namely, 581 men, 226 children, and 133 women.

The large huts are let to hut-keepers at 10s. per week including 5 cwts. of coal, the married quarters at 6s. 6d. per week including 3 cwts. of coal, the foremen's huts at 7s. 6d. per week including 3 cwts. of coal, and the very small huts at 5s. 9d. per week including 3 cwts. of coal. The tenants have to comply with the regulations as to cleanliness, admission of lodgers, dogs, lamps, &c., and the huts may be inspected by the Village Inspector at any time. There are no other special precautions as to shebeening and no case worth mentioning has occurred in the village. The Village Inspector being always on the spot there is practically no opportunity of practising it without detection.

The larger lodging huts which each give accommodation to 10 single men besides the hut-keeper and his wife, consists of a central room, used as a living room 17 feet square and 10 feet to the ceiling, with a good cooking range, and on one side a dormitory 17 feet by 19 feet, on the other the hut-keeper's bedroom and a small single bedroom, a larder and a scullery opening out of the central room. The dormitory is well lighted and ventilated and gives 317 cubic feet of air-space per head.

These huts are let to married couples, other than foremen or gangers and their wives, as hut-keepers.

Of the married quarters the larger contain a living room 18 feet 6 inches by 13 feet by 10 feet in height, two bedrooms each 13 feet by 9 feet by 10 feet in height, a scullery and a pantry. The smaller class have each a living room 14 feet 6 inches by 13 feet by 9 feet 6 inches in height, one bedroom of the same dimensions, a pantry for each hut, and a scullery common to each pair of huts.

The cost of erecting these huts, which are built in pairs, was as follows :—

Workmen's lodging huts	...	...	...	each	£190
Larger married quarters	...	...	...	„	£135
Smaller married quarters	..	...	...	„	£110

Water from a reservoir above the village is laid on into each hut, which is also provided with a detached water-closet. The lodging huts have trough-closets, three for each pair of huts (20 men), and a separate closet for women. There are no baths in the lodging huts but there is a separate bath-room hut containing five private baths where a hot bath can be got for 2d.

The village is drained to outfall works consisting of settling tanks and bacterial filter beds, the effluent being discharged into the Ouzleden Brook, a tributary of the Derwent. Sanitary ash bins are provided for each hut, the contents of which are collected and burnt in a destructor.

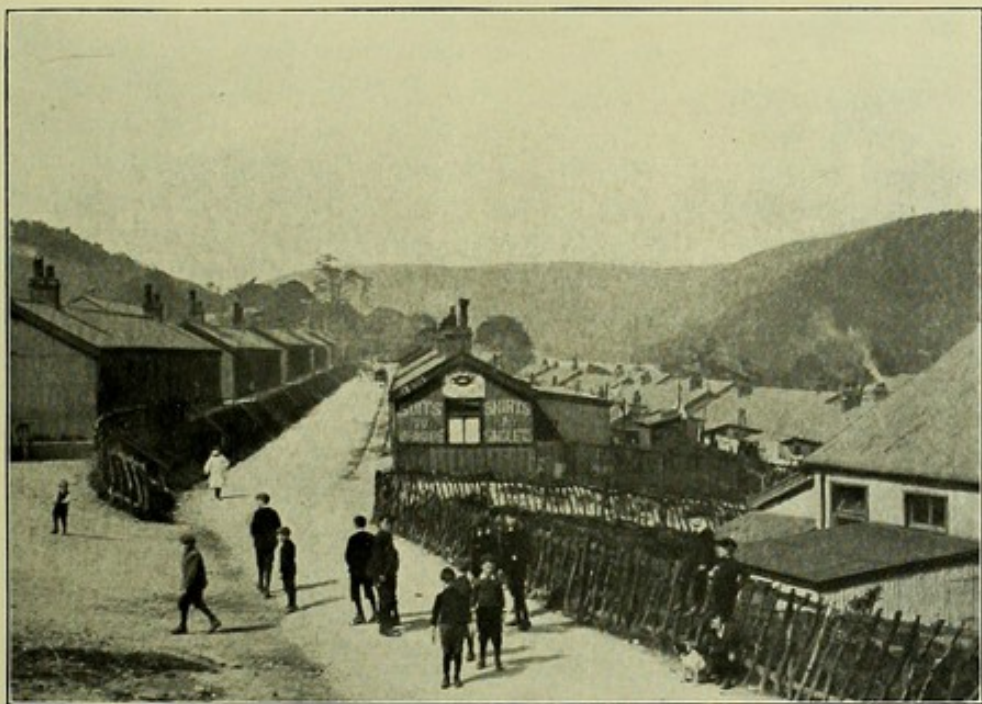
The sanitary arrangements of the village are under the charge of a Village Inspector employed by the Board; three men in the summer and five in the winter are employed as scavengers under him.

The village roads are well laid out with kerbed footpaths.

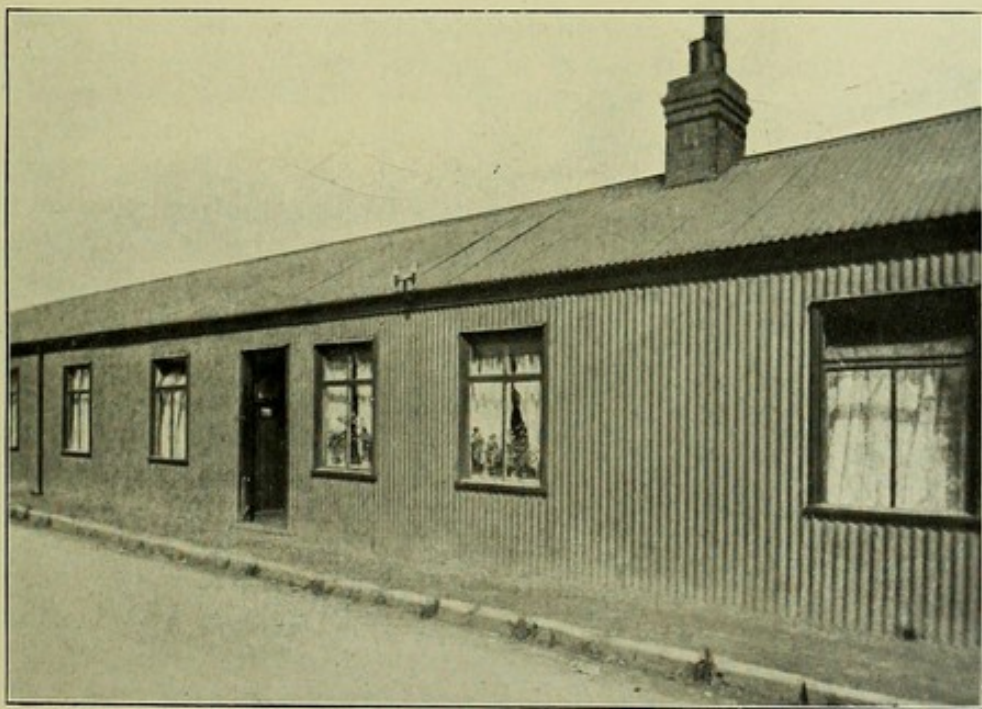
Allotments for gardens are given to those who wish for them.

There is a grocer's and provision dealer's hut; the Board exercise supervision over the prices charged in this, and, to obviate the effects of monopoly, allow hawkers to come into the village to compete.

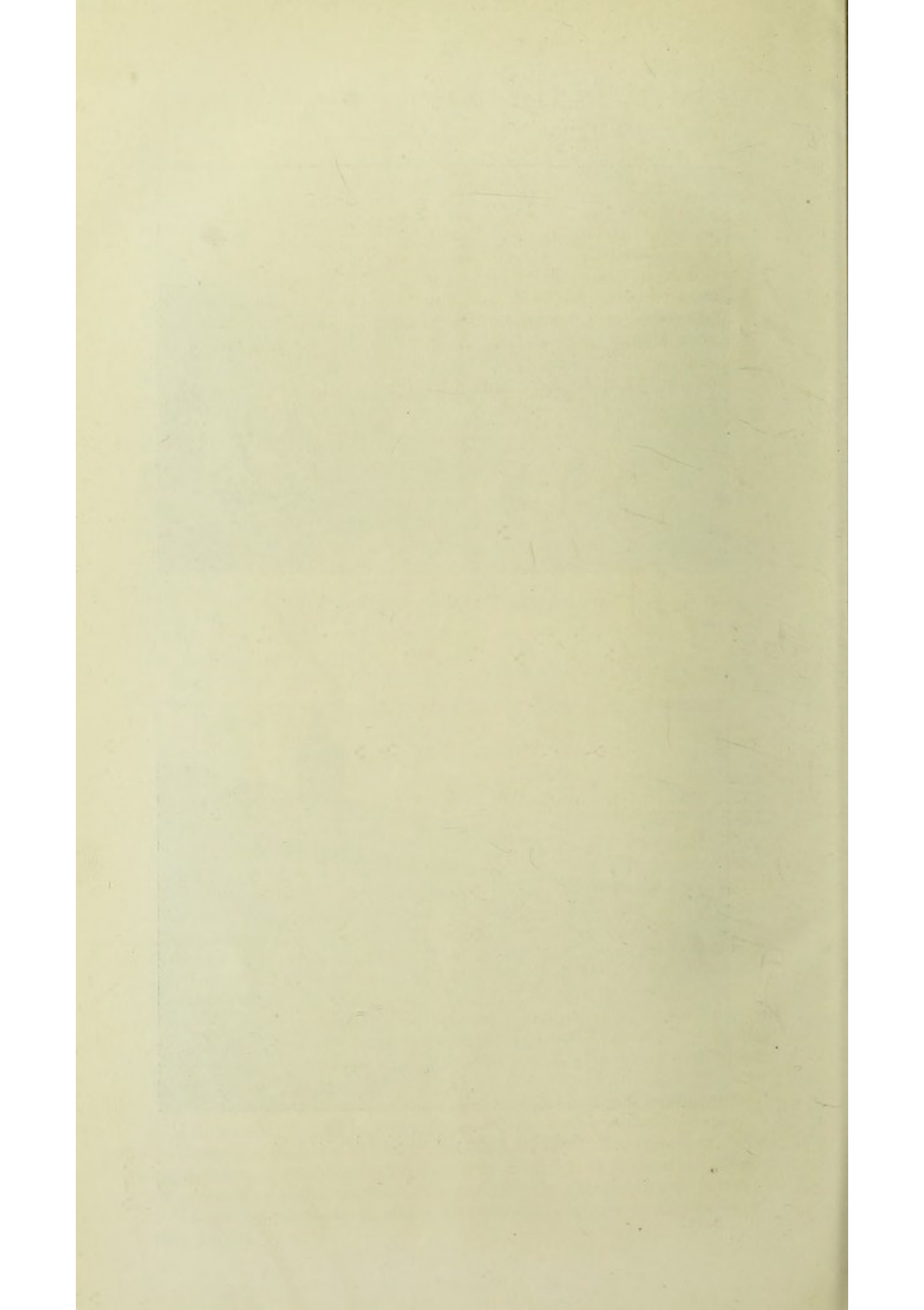
There is a canteen, of which an account is given in the body of this report.



BIRCHINLEE VILLAGE. GENERAL VIEW.



WORKMEN'S LODGING HUT, BIRCHINLEE.



There is also a spacious recreation hall with a stage for concerts, &c., and a parquet floor for dancing ; also a mission room. For the children there has been provided a well planned and well equipped school. The number of school children on the register in May, 1908, was 150, and the average attendance 145.

There is a well equipped hospital and a separate sanatorium for infectious cases. All men directly employed by the Board receive gratuitous medical attendance for themselves and their families, whether in cases of infectious or general disease or accident, the Board retaining for their workpeople the entire services of a doctor who resides within a mile of the village.

The Board also pay the services of a nurse, a chaplain, and a missionary.

The equipment of the village includes a post office, a policeman's hut, and a lock-up.

No person is allowed to reside in the village who has not first passed the inspection of the doctor, and in ordinary cases newly arrived workmen are required to pass a week's quarantine in the "doss house," a hut having accommodation for 40 men, about half a mile from the village and on the opposite side of the valley. They receive a bath, and their clothes are disinfected in a Lyon's disinfector detached from the "doss house."

The accommodation of the village appears to be ample for its purpose. There is no overcrowding, and at the date of my visit there were more than 60 vacancies in the lodging huts. Most of the men employed at the Bole Hill Quarry find lodgings in Grindleford, Hathersage, and adjoining villages.

From the above description it will be seen that in respect of that portion of their scheme which is being executed by their own engineer the Derwent Valley Water Board are amply carrying out the provisions of Section 64 of their Act, and that the settlement of Birchinlee is a village in which not only the essential sanitary and social requirements but also the amenities of civilised life are provided.

Contract A. (Bamford Filters and Derwent Aqueduct from Derwent to Grindleford). This contract was let to Messrs. Fisher and Le Fanu. In consequence of local complaints and allegations in the local newspapers as to the inadequacy of the accommodation provided for navvies employed on this work, the Chapel-en-le-Frith Board of Guardians requested the Member of Parliament for the High Peak Division of Derbyshire to address a question to the President of the Local Government Board, calling attention to the nuisance arising from workpeople being attracted to Bamford neighbourhood without suitable accommodation being provided for them. In consequence of this question, which was put on May 27th, 1908, I was directed to visit the district and make inquiries. This I did on June 2nd and 3rd, 1908.

I shall discuss the provision made for workmen on this contract in some detail because the conditions are, not only in themselves but in respect of the exaggerated complaints to which they locally give rise, to some extent typical of those that occur on other works.

The average number of men employed on the contract from the beginning of the work down to the date of my visit was 273. The numbers for the first five months of 1908 were rather higher, viz.:—

January	...	...	...	...	...	319
February	...	...	...	...	...	332
March	...	...	...	...	...	330
April	...	...	...	...	...	342
May	...	...	...	...	...	405

On the 18th of May the numbers had reached 475. These figures are exclusive of about 20 gangers and about 100 persons consisting of skilled workmen, weekly gangers, time-keepers, store-keepers, &c.

Provision was made for the accommodation of these men in 14 huts, viz., 10 at Bamford, 2 at Ladybower, and 2 at Grindleford. These huts were calculated to accommodate a total of 266 men; 6 of the huts at Bamford and the 2 at Grindleford were owned by the contractors; the remainder were privately owned; there were, in addition, 6 foremen's huts owned by the contractors.

I visited all the huts at Bamford and those at Ladybower. They were temporary buildings of an ordinary type constructed of wood, covered in some instances with felt sheeting, or of corrugated iron. Their construction and arrangement calls for no special description. Dr. Sidney Barwise, Medical Officer of Health for the County of Derby, says of them, "In going round the huts there was very little to find fault with. Some of the huts were scrupulously clean, and the keepers of these huts had naturally refused to take in navvies who did not appear to be clean, or to keep in the lodging-house navvies who, they find, are dirty in their habits."

Though the huts themselves were not, on the whole, otherwise unsatisfactory, I consider that the amount of air-space provided in the dormitories was inadequate. The following table gives details of the accommodation in the huts at Bamford:—

ACCOMMODATION IN NAVVIES' HUTS AT BAMFORD.

Lessee.	Owner.	Air-space in Dormitory. Cubic feet.	Men accommodated in Dormitory.	Air-space per man.	Accommodation elsewhere in hut.
Perrin	Perrin	2,051	13	158	—
Large	F. & L.	4,336	15	289	—
R Sharman ...	F. & L.	3,554	17	209	—
G. Sharman ...	G. Sharman...	3,647	18	203	—
Duncan	Duncan	5,931	33	180	3
Dutfield... ..	F. & L.	2,285	12	190	6
Mytton	F. & L.	2,285	12	190	3
Day	F. & L.	2,285	12	190	2
McLaughlin ...	McLaughlin...	2,530	12	211	—
Meaney	F. & L.	—	4	—	—

It will be seen that several of the huts fall short of 200 cubic feet of air-space per head. It would be quite reasonable for the sanitary authority to insist on a higher standard. In the huts at Birchinlee over 200 cubic feet of air-space per head is provided. I suggested that in huts owned by the contractors themselves the amount should be not less than 250 cubic feet.

In addition to the huts the contractors have provided a reading-room and mission-hall, and Mr. Ross, their resident engineer, has kindly lent a piano for entertainments and services in this room.

The water supply of the Bamford huts is good and ample.

The huts are drained to cesspools which overflow into a road drain and thence into a small ditch. The surveyor of highways and the inspector of nuisances of the Chapel-en-le-Frith Rural District, in which the huts are situated, have on several occasions made representations to the contractors in respect of nuisances arising from defective drainage, the deposit of refuse by the roadside, and neglect to keep the roadway in proper repair. In February, 1908, the Rural District Council addressed a remonstrance to the contractors on the subject of their failure to comply with those representations.

The quality of the accommodation provided for their work-people by the contractors on Contract A, though it cannot be wholly condemned, is thus inferior to that provided by the Board at Birchinlee. It must, however, be borne in mind that the men engaged on the "cut and cover" work of this contract are there for a much shorter time than those engaged in the construction of the dams.

It remains to discuss the question whether the accommodation was, as locally alleged, actually deficient in amount.

The average number of workmen employed during the month of May was, as already stated, 405, besides about 120 gangers, time-keepers, skilled workmen, &c. ; while, exclusive of the six foremen's huts, accommodation was provided in huts for 266 persons. Of the remainder many, if not most, found lodgings in Bamford, Hope, and neighbouring villages.

The population of Bamford at the census of 1901 was returned as 510 ; the number of inhabited houses 110 ; uninhabited 14. Since 1901 more than 50 new houses have been built. I could not learn of any definite cases of overcrowding in the village, though, no doubt, most of the cottages were fairly full. One respectable navvy with whom I conversed told me that he had found lodgings as soon as he arrived in the place, and that he would undertake to find lodgings, if necessary, for a friend that night ; in fact, that there was room for another lodger in the house in which he himself lodged. It is, doubtless, true that many men have tried in vain to find lodgings, but the cottagers, not unnaturally, refuse accommodation to men who do not look clean.

The same remark applies to the huts at Bamford and Ladybower. I visited these by daylight, and also between 10 and 11 at night. Most of them were fairly full, but in a few there were vacancies for one or two additional lodgers. Within the fortnight preceding my visit, the largest hut, Mrs. Duncan's, had sometimes had as many as 12 beds vacant, and there were apparently two or three vacant at the time of my inspection, but the hut-keepers will not give accommodation to, nor will the other lodgers tolerate the presence of lodgers who are dirty and possibly verminous.

On the other hand, I found sleeping in the pipes near the filter beds a large number (probably I spoke with 50 or 60) of men

claiming to be navvies employed on the works, most of whom were perfectly sober, and many of whom stated that they had applied in vain for lodgings at several huts. I conjecture from what I could learn from the police, or from navvies whom I met in the public-house, many of whom stated that they were lodging with "Mrs. Greenfields" (*i.e.*, "sleeping rough"), that probably at least 200 men were without proper lodging. It must be remembered that many of these men are shirkers, or only occasional workers, with whom respectable navvies are unwilling to associate, and whom, as being dirty, respectable hut-keepers are unwilling to lodge.

After making, however, due allowance for the irregular workers, I came to the conclusion that several *bonâ fide* and fairly respectable navvies had tried in vain to get lodgings. Messrs. Fisher and Le Fanu themselves admitted that at the time of my visit their hut accommodation was rather limited. They had arranged to erect a large hut to accommodate 40 men at Ashopton; if this were not sufficient they were quite willing to erect another, and generally they expressed themselves as prepared to consider any recommendations which I might make.

The presence of a large number of loafers and of irregular and intermittent workers who, though they "slept rough" of choice, assured credulous sympathizers that they were quite unable to find a proper lodging, gave rise at Bamford, as commonly happens on other works, to a full crop of exaggerated statements in the local newspapers and elsewhere alleging a serious shortage of accommodation. For instance, I was positively informed at my conference with the guardians of the Chapel-en-le-Frith Union that 1,000 men were employed by Messrs. Fisher and Le Fanu on Contract "A" in the middle of May 1908, and that 400 had been dismissed in the fortnight preceding my visit. It was also alleged that the contractors had by advertisement attracted labourers to their work in excess of their requirements. Messrs. Fisher and Le Fanu assured me that they had never advertised for labourers during the run of the contract; they had once or twice advertised for skilled workmen, but not for unskilled labourers.

Kingsbury and Water Orton Branch of the Midland Railway. Nowell and Sons Contractors.—In consequence of representations made to the Local Government Board, I visited this work in September, 1907, and again during 1908.

The branch line in question runs from Water Orton to Kingsbury, a distance of four miles, traversing portions of the Castle Bromwich, Tamworth, and Meriden Rural Districts of Warwickshire and passing through the property of Lord Norton of Hams Hall.

The lack of accommodation for workmen on this work was made the subject of strong protest in the local press.

The work was begun in April, 1907, and the contract was estimated for 18 months, or about 12 months from the date of my inquiry.

At the time of my visit some 300 men were employed on this line, of whom about 200 would be navvies, and the remainder bricklayers. I was informed by the Contractors that the greater part of

the brickwork on the line was finished, and consequently the bricklayers would shortly be discharged, and that during the ensuing winter very few men would be employed on the line.

No structural accommodation has been provided by the contractors for the men in their employ, but Mr. Nowell, a member of the firm, informed me that before starting the work the firm got lists of lodgings in the neighbourhood which would be available for navvies. Many of the men found lodgings in neighbouring villages, Coleshill, Curdworth, Castle Bromwich, Lea Marston, Minworth, Water Orton, and Whitacre, &c., walking in some cases three or four miles to their work. Possibly also some of the men found lodgings in Birmingham.

Trains were run along the line by the Contractors to pick up men at different points and convey them to their work.

So far as I was able to ascertain, a majority of the men found lodgings in the neighbourhood, but at the time of my visit I found a number of men who, according to their own statement, were "sleeping rough," because they were unable to find lodgings.

Complaints having been made by Lord Norton as to men sleeping out in his grounds at night, search was made by the police, and on one night in August, 1907, 27 men were found sleeping out without shelter. In consequence of these complaints the contractors dismissed from work a number of men who had been found sleeping out, and have subsequently dismissed others found so doing.

Mr. David Smith, the Navy's Missioner, informs me that about 50 genuine navvies have been so dismissed.

Inspector Parker, of the Warwickshire Constabulary, through whose district the line runs, informed me that the number of men sleeping out was at the time of my visit insignificant, but conversations with the navvies led me to believe that not a few genuine navvies were unable to find lodgings.

It appears to be the fact that a large number of respectable labourers found lodgings in the neighbourhood. Nor, as far as could be ascertained by Mr. Negus and Mr. Brotherton (Inspectors of Nuisances for the Castle Bromwich and Meriden Rural Districts, respectively), had any substantial amount of overcrowding resulted from this letting of lodgings. On the other hand, on this work, as is generally the case where regular huts are not provided for navvies, there was a floating contingent of irregular workers, who do two or three days' work at a stretch, draw a "sub." and then move on elsewhere. Respectable cottagers will not let lodgings to men of this class, even when they apply for them, and it is probable that some of the complaints which I heard came from such men.

On visiting the district at night in company with the Missioner, I ascertained that a considerable number of men who were apparently regularly and steadily employed on the work were camping out in barns and outhouses, not wholly destitute of shelter, but having no better bed than straw, for which they were indebted to the charity of farmers.

In addition to deficiency in satisfactory sleeping accommodation, there appeared to be a genuine grievance in the fact that no shelter was provided in which men could eat their meals or take refuge in

wet weather. Under such circumstances the men usually took refuge in the engine sheds, in which there were no benches on which they could sit and no stove for warming their tea, &c.

About a dozen wooden latrines were erected at different points along the line. In spite of this provision nuisances were frequently committed in Lord Norton's woods.

At the time of my visit I urged the contractors to take into serious consideration the question of providing proper huts for some, at any rate, of their workmen, or at least to provide shelters in which meals might be taken. They promised to consider the question, and I wrote later to remind them of my suggestions, but no steps were taken.

