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# THE SLUM

## ITS STORY AND SOLUTION

HARRY BARNES





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THE SLUM  
ITS STORY AND SOLUTION





# THE SLUM

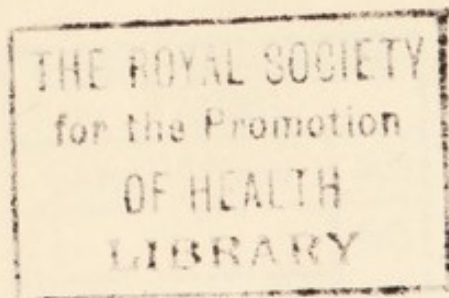
## ITS STORY AND SOLUTION

BY

HARRY BARNES

Author of "Housing: The Facts and the Future"

18/-



LONDON

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# CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	PAGE xiii
THE BIRTH OF THE SLUM . . . . .	I

## PART I THE STORY

THE EIGHT STAGES . . . . .	II
----------------------------	----

### STAGE I

1838

CHAP. I	OLD STATUTES AND MODERN SLUMS . . . . .	24
II	THE TUDOR TILT AT THE MODERN SLUM . . . . .	28
III	PLAGUE AND PESTILENCE . . . . .	30
IV	WAGES AND BREAD . . . . .	32

### STAGE II

1838-1851

V	THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS . . . . .	35
VI	THE DISTRICT AUDITOR . . . . .	37
VII	FALSE ECONOMY . . . . .	38
VIII	THE FIRST LONDON ENQUIRY . . . . .	39
IX	THE GERM OF TOWN PLANNING . . . . .	43
X	MEN AND MEASURES . . . . .	44
XI	EDWIN CHADWICK . . . . .	46
XII	THE PROVINCIAL ENQUIRY OF 1842 . . . . .	49
XIII	DR. SOUTHWOOD SMITH . . . . .	55
XIV	THE FIRST ROYAL COMMISSION . . . . .	59
XV	HEALTH AND CHARACTER . . . . .	62
XVI	CROWDED BEDS AND BROKEN RIBS . . . . .	63
XVII	THE PIG AND THE STY . . . . .	65
XVIII	THE MORE IT CHANGES, THE MORE IT IS THE SAME . . . . .	67

CHAP.		PAGE
XIX	WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE !!! . . .	69
XX	TIED HOUSES—A EULOGY . . .	71
XXI	A JOLLY MONCK . . .	75
XXII	ALLOTMENTS—A TIRADE . . .	77
XXIII	COAL-WHIPPING AND BEER-SIPPING . . .	79
XXIV	CLEANLINESS AND GODLINESS . . .	81
XXV	A PRETTY PICTURE . . .	83
XXVI	THE COMMON LODGING-HOUSE . . .	85
XXVII	"EAT CAKE". . .	87
XXVIII	THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST ROYAL COMMISSION . . .	89
XXIX	THE ROUT OF THE DISTRICT AUDITOR . . .	91

## STAGE III

## 1851-1868

XXX	THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY . . .	93
XXXI	THE LODGING-HOUSE ACTS . . .	110
XXXII	MR. POLICE COMMISSIONER HAY . . .	112
XXXIII	ONE FAMILY—ONE ROOM ! . . .	119
XXXIV	THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUSE . . .	121
XXXV	GEORGE PEABODY . . .	123
XXXVI	PRE-WAR PHILANTHROPY . . .	127

## STAGE IV

## 1868-1875

XXXVII	WILLIAM THOMAS McCULLAGH TORRENS . . .	130
XXXVIII	THE LEGISLATIVE TANGLE . . .	133
XXXIX	HOUSING POWERS . . .	137
XL	APATHY . . .	141
XLI	OCTAVIA HILL . . .	142

## STAGE V

## 1875-1890

XLII	PEERS AND PARLOURS . . .	156
XLIII	LONDON—THE BOARD OF WORKS . . .	164
XLIV	THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL . . .	169
XLV	PRINCE AND PRELATE . . .	172
XLVI	THE SECOND ROYAL COMMISSION . . .	176
XLVII	THE CLERKENWELL COMEDY . . .	180



# CONTENTS

xi

CHAP.		PAGE
XLVIII	THE OLD GUARD . . . . .	184
XLIX	A GREAT LADY . . . . .	188
L	A GREAT GENTLEMAN . . . . .	195
LI	THE MIDDLE MAN . . . . .	198
LII	SIR RICHARD CROSS . . . . .	203
LIII	MR. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	205
LIV	PRIVATE BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC UTILITY SOCIETIES . . . . .	209
LV	THE RAILWAYS . . . . .	214
LVI	THE SECOND LONDON ENQUIRY . . . . .	216
LVII	CLERKENWELL . . . . .	218
LVIII	MILE END OLD TOWN . . . . .	220
LIX	BETHNAL GREEN . . . . .	223
LX	ROTHERHITHE . . . . .	225
LXI	SHOREDITCH . . . . .	227
LXII	REFLECTIONS . . . . .	228
LXIII	THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW AGE . . . . .	230
LXIV	THE BOOTH ENQUIRY . . . . .	232

## STAGE VI

### 1890-1909

LXV	THE COMMITTEE OF 1906 . . . . .	239
LXVI	ALDERMAN THOMPSON . . . . .	241
LXVII	MR. J. S. NETTLEFOLD . . . . .	244
LXVIII	MISS CONSTANCE COCHRANE . . . . .	246
LXIX	THE FINDINGS . . . . .	249

## STAGE VII

### 1909-1919

LXX	THE COMMITTEE OF 1912. . . . .	251
LXXI	THE HEDGE . . . . .	253
LXXII	THE GAPS IN THE HEDGE . . . . .	255
LXXIII	GATES . . . . .	257

## STAGE VIII

### 1919-1929

LXXIV	A ROYAL COMMISSION . . . . .	259
LXXV	THE MEMORANDUM . . . . .	260

CHAP.	PAGE
LXXVI THE DEPUTATION . . . . .	264
LXXVII THE REPLY . . . . .	268
LXXVIII IN THE PRESENT . . . . .	271

## PART II

### THE SOLUTION

I THE LAST LAP . . . . .	285
II ASCERTAINING THE FACTS—THE SURVEY . . . . .	287
III TRANSPORT . . . . .	290
IV TOWN PLANNING AND ZONING . . . . .	295
V REPAIR . . . . .	302
VI BACK-TO-BACK HOUSES . . . . .	317
VII ACQUISITION AND COMPENSATION . . . . .	320
VIII HIGHER BUILDINGS . . . . .	323
IX THE STANDARD . . . . .	333
X OLD WINE INTO NEW BOTTLES . . . . .	344
XI MANAGEMENT . . . . .	349
XII THE RESOURCES . . . . .	353
XIII THE AUTHORITY . . . . .	358
JOURNEY'S END . . . . .	360

## APPENDICES

I THE TORRENS ACTS . . . . .	377
II THE CROSS ACTS . . . . .	380
III PROVISIONAL ORDERS AND SCHEMES MADE AND OPERATED UNDER THE HOUSING ACTS 1876-1929 . . . . .	384
IV TABLES OF PROCEEDINGS TAKEN IN RESPECT OF UNFIT HOUSES AND HOUSES NOT REASONABLY FIT 1883-1888, 1898-1928 . . . . .	390
INDEX . . . . .	393



## PREFACE

IN 1931 there is to be a new offensive against the Slum. This book is for those who take part in it.

The struggle is one which for a century has engaged the best people.

The way the attack has developed, the positions gained and made good are shown herein.

Last but not least, the story is humanised by some account of those who have been leaders in the fight. Each passing year is an eminence, and from the height of a century it is now possible to survey a stricken field.

In continuing the fight nothing can be more heartening than to know there is an objective, that it is attainable, and that past struggle has brought it within reach. How clear and well-defined that objective is! *Nothing more and nothing less than a separate dwelling for each family, with adequate accommodation, set in surroundings clean and comely.* Why this attainment has been so long delayed needs explanation; that explanation this book gives.

It is threefold. There is no money in housing the poorest people well; there has always been money in housing them ill. That is the financial explanation. There is an historical explanation and a technical one; in these pages the three are given.

At one time the first would have been sufficient, but we have got beyond that. People are ceasing to say "we can't afford to replace the slums," and are beginning to say "we can't afford not to replace



them." Upon such people and their increase I rely. For their sustenance and support I offer this recital of what the past has done : *for their incitement too.*

What the past has begun it is for us to continue and complete. That strain in men which sets them to improve on what has gone before, is not spent, and this generation will not differ from their forbears in giving it bent. To this practical end this book is written. For no dilettante pleasure or academic interest, but so to force attention, that action will follow, is the motive that drives my pen.

People can be housed decently, and people must be housed decently. It is a disgrace that they are not, and a duty to ensure that they are. That is the theme which, with damnable iteration, I voice in these pages.

Slums can be defined. The family is the slum potential. It depends on moral qualities and material possessions. Lack of either may produce a slum ; lack of both will.

Pack a family into one room, deny it every amenity, it may have the austerity of a stoic, but it will go hard to maintain those sanitary conditions that distinguish a dwelling from a slum.

That truth may be no less stoutly maintained because it is equally true if there be moral deficiencies, the provision of amenities will fail to secure their proper use.

As we proceed we shall hear these antiphones of environment and character continually sounding.

To provide a proper environment is the duty of the State ; to inculcate those qualities which form character the duty of the Church.

I use these terms State and Church at large ; the one to embrace the collective activity that rises out



of the organised will of the people and rests on their collective resources, the other, those ethical and emotional agencies which, varying in form, have as their common function the elevation of individual character.

In this matter the State is the instrument of the Church. In the absence of economic advantage, the impulse to act in the interests of the poor can only be aroused by ethical and religious appeal. Some day it may be clear that what is ethically right cannot be economically wrong, but for this we must wait.

Meantime, let us work to its margin the field of social sensitiveness now marked out.

In the matter of extracts it will soon be apparent that I am debtor to writers, ancient and modern. I have endeavoured to distinguish between what is mine and what is not, but am not sure I have always succeeded. If there be a doubt, should it be praise bestow it on the unacknowledged ; if there be blame, let it rest on me.

My special thanks are due to the publishers of Maurice's *Life of Octavia Hill* (Macmillan & Co.), Edwin Hodder's *Life and Work of Earl of Shaftesbury, 1886* (Cassell), and the *Charles Booth Enquiry, Life and Labour in London, 1902*.





## THE BIRTH OF THE SLUMS

WHEREVER people congregate sanitary questions arise. Unsolved, they leave to their successors the problem of the slum.

These questions I suspect were not absent from the British camps whose entrenchments mark the slopes of Sussex and Wiltshire Downs. The lake dwellings of Somerset had advantages, but would not be altogether clear of trouble. Cabins of "clay and wattle made" no doubt would have shocked a sanitary inspector, but all these have gone, and cannot be charged with being the foundation of the modern slum.

We must come further down to the Feudal System, to that aggregation into town and village on which the social structure of the country is built.

If we take as our guide the words "narrowness, closeness, and bad arrangement" we shall soon be hotfoot on the path to our slums.

The words are applied to buildings—if we were speaking of animals, we should speak of "herding"; if of people, of "huddling" together.

Why have buildings herded and huddled together?

First for protection, then for convenience, and at all times because of poverty.

There is an almost universal type of village and town. It develops first as a main road, then as a number of courts, yards and alleys entered from the main road by narrow passages or through narrower doorways. No one acquainted with the older towns and villages or the old parts of them, can have failed to mark this development.

Notable examples are the Wynds of the High Street and Canongate of Old Edinburgh, the Chares of Newcastle-upon-



Tyne, in Fleet Street they still bear the name of Courts—Mitre Court, Wine Office Court, Bolt Court and many another.

Every old country village is an example of this development, as is also every one of the old and smaller country towns. Kendal is an excellent example, here they are called Yards and numbered as they go.

These Courts vary in width from six to twelve feet ; some are narrower than the first, few wider than the second.

There was reason for this type of development. For ordinary life the Courts gave ready access to the main road, and facilitated the distribution of goods from the market-place formed by the opening out of the main road. They were convenient to the common water supply of well, pump or pond. They permitted supervision by the Watch. In emergency the Courts formed a protective barrier to the main street, a kind of rampart to the village. There was protection, there was convenience, and there was shelter, all provided at the lowest cost.

In the villages and smaller unwallled towns residents had from these Courts ready access to the countryside ; if the sun had small admittance, the wind could sweep up through them, and through their narrow ways attractive glimpses could be caught of field and wood beyond.

Villages grew into towns by a multiplication of such roads. The roads might cross at right angles, as at Chester, or converge on a bridge as at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, or straggle through the city as at York, but in all cases the frontage was parsimoniously divided between the frontagers, and the rear filled up with courts and alleys. It is still possible to see in Fleet Street and the Strand buildings which remain within their original limits of not more than twelve or thirteen feet in width.

It was this type of development which gave birth to the slum. Its defects were accentuated within walled towns. The limitations became stereotyped and perpetuated. To be within the wall was to be safe, to share in the city life, to enjoy its amenities and to reap its prosperity. The City Wall put a premium on building land. Streets could not be



widened or multiplied ; open spaces could not be increased. It was a barrier to the sun and the free movement of air ; it shut out the view of the countryside and generated all the disadvantages since accentuated, particularly in London, by the embankment of railways.

The past casts long shadows, and the present lay-out of countryside and town is still affected by it. Old boundaries remain to cramp and dwarf, old courts and alleys slowly festering into slums are still with us, hindering and hampering health and housing.

But while the Feudal System gave birth to the slum, the Industrial System was a good foster-parent.

It may be questioned whether the development was in degree or in extent ; whether it made worse slums or merely more slums. The distinction is academic.

It is difficult to visualise the actual living conditions of the working classes in the Middle Ages ; they cannot have been worse than those which blot the early pages of our industrial history.

It is idle to cry over spilled milk ; as idle, to deplore the evils that attended those early years.

There is something Titanic in the activities of the first half of the nineteenth century. There was the strength of a giant and it was used as a giant might use it.

A new world had come into being. Napoleon had harrowed Europe like a field, and it was ready for any crop. North America was seizing on its prairie lands with unappeasable avidity. South America had shaken off Spain, and was anybody's prey.

Inventions and improvements in power and machinery were like blackberries on a hedge. By what power human fecundity is made to correspond with the fecundity of the world, I do not know, but so it was. The population more than doubled, and all who came were needed. The mine devoured man, woman and child with equal impartiality, while factory and field alike were fed with young life.

Double shifts kept the beds warm in the common lodging-house, but there were limits to their capacity and such shelter



as there was had to be increased. In that increase is to be found the main source of the modern slum.

It was not to be expected that the new dwellings should show much advance on the old. Why should they? No one was compelled to provide accommodation for the working classes. Here and there philanthropic individuals did what they could. More than one hundred and fifty years ago John Howard on his estate at Cardington in Bedfordshire found in the rebuilding of his cottages an outlet for the humanitarian spirit, which was later to find a European field.

Housing reform commenced in the village, and it was long before it spread to the town. The reason is clear. In the villages there was authority if only of the landowner; in the town there was none. Every man built that which was right in his own eyes. In some of the greater towns, long-sighted landowners anticipated town planning, but otherwise little or no regard was paid except to the return to be got from their outlay.

Is it surprising? If in the machine shop, the mill, the factory, the pursuit of profit obliterated human sympathy, why should it linger among the bricks and mortar which sheltered the slaves of spindle and loom.

The houses that were erected were governed in their construction and design solely by the rents which could be obtained. The rents that could be obtained were in their turn governed by the wages that could be earned, and the wages that could be earned were in the long last governed by a standard of life which made no exorbitant demands in the matter of housing.

Shelter was the main thing; to be warm and dry. Health was as God gave it, and for the rest, it must take its chance. There was no sanitary service, no public opinion and no Parliamentary powers. What wonder that ill-planned and defective structures are the legacy left to us.

One of the most difficult things to realise is the comparatively recent enactment of Public Health legislation. It seems incredible to me that I was a year old before the Local Government Board was set up and five years old before this



country was divided into Urban and Rural Districts, the authorities of which were vested with sanitary powers.

Prior to 1848 there was no general Public Health Act, and the Act of that year was only adoptive and not compulsory.

A few towns had sanitary powers, and bye-laws of some sort or other, but for the most part there was nothing but the play of economic forces to govern the construction of working-class homes.

Naturally the construction varied; in some places old models were so closely copied that they are now barely to be distinguished from ancient slums.

There are, however, "modern" slums, which cannot be traced back to the Industrial or Feudal Systems. Of these something must be said.

A "modern" slum has been defined as an area more or less free from those site and structural conditions which go to make an insanitary area within the meaning of the Housing Acts; the conditions of "narrowness, closeness and bad arrangement."

Such property has come into being during the last half-century in many parts of London and the Provinces and presents a considerable phase of the slum problem.

The "modern" is to be distinguished from the "ancient" slum in that the insanitary conditions result not from the construction or arrangement of the buildings, but from a failure to maintain a proper sanitary standard. The enforcement of the Public Health Acts and the bye-laws made thereunder, together with some assistance from the Town Planning Acts, should rid us of these. For ancient slums, only slum clearance provides the remedy.

Many houses, originally of good design and construction, have become the nucleus of a "modern" slum by reasons commonly associated with the growth of towns.

Well-to-do people will have light, air and sunshine, open spaces and gardens, and if they cannot run both a town and country home, will leave the first and cleave to the second.

This centrifugal movement is accentuated by the pressure of business on the suburbs. To be surrounded by shops,



warehouses or factories is not pleasant and will not be submitted to if it can be avoided.

Houses at one time desirable dwellings are abandoned by their occupiers and, through a series of descents, become the habitat of more families than one.

This process is not confined to stately mansions ; many thousands of houses of modest size and simple character, formerly the home of one family are now divided into two.

Slum dwellers take the habits formed in their old homes to the new area they enter, and their advent hastens its downward process.

This efflux and influx of population from old areas into new arises from many causes. Among others it has been pointed out that in London great Exhibitions, by reason of the accommodation that has to be found for workmen, waitresses, stall attendants and other persons connected with them, have caused considerable overcrowding in their neighbourhood.

In materials there is a limit of elasticity which, if passed, results in a " permanent set ", and it appears that permanently evil results may attend even so temporary a strain as an Exhibition.

The effect of a permanent influx is undoubted. Irish immigration into Liverpool and the construction of the Great London Docks are notable instances of the deteriorating influence on a district of an increase in the lower paid population, while alien immigration has left its mark on our sea-port towns.

Lastly, there is the cumulative effect of minor causes. The coming of a railway, the diversion of a road, may cause an isolation that leads to neglect. The price of cleanliness is eternal inspection, not necessarily official, but by the passer by who, moving continually to and fro on well marked lines of traffic, evolves a public opinion which cannot be too grossly outraged by sanitary neglect.

The change of a neighbourhood through the intrusion of new industries has an expulsive effect on the earlier and more prosperous inhabitants and an attractive effect on a poorer and less careful type.



Buildings carelessly constructed, or constructed on badly made ground, will develop defects that drive away occupiers who care for comfort and have the means of attaining it.

Neglect to repair will produce the same effect and in general the diatribe of Jacques might be parodied :

House by house we ripe and ripe  
And house by house we rot and rot.

One bad tenant, one neglectful landlord, may act like a cancer turning a neighbourhood from a pleasant suburb into an unpleasant slum.

A definition of a slum given by Mr. Duckworth, a worker with the late Mr. Charles Booth, is worth attention,

“a street, closed court or alley tenanted by a casual, thoughtless and rough class of inhabitant not necessarily vicious but apt to contain bad characters.”

The definition in Section 4 of the 1890 Act, and Section I of the 1930 Act is that of an area in which

“the narrowness, closeness and bad management, or the bad condition of the streets and houses or groups of houses within such area, or the want of light, air, ventilation and proper conveniences and other sanitary defects, or one or more of such causes are dangerous or injurious to the health of the inhabitants of the buildings in the said area, or of the neighbouring buildings.”

The latter definition directs attention to the building, the former to the tenants.

The poverty associated with low wages need not of necessity lead to “slum” habits, but it strongly predisposes to them, and in the great classification adopted by Mr. Charles Booth, poverty was generally found to be present in slums. The terms employed by him—Gas-works poverty, Dock and water-side poverty—are illustrative of this.

It is this fact of poverty that makes the “slum” problem particularly difficult.

So much for the creation of slums. Their clearance is a longer story.

If filth did not breed disease, should we be filthy still?



## 8 THE SLUM: ITS STORY AND SOLUTION

It took plague and pestilence to awaken our fathers to the need for action.

By 1830 men had begun to turn in their sleep and by 1850 were very thoroughly awake. They became veritable thorns in the flesh of those still disposed to slumber. Placid politicians, intent on foreign policies and fiscal fights, were sadly annoyed to have thrust upon them such intrusive and sordid subjects as drains and sewers, footpaths, roads and refuse. Nuisances were indeed a Nuisance, but at last it became evident that the only way to remove one nuisance was to give the incessant, insatiable, sanitary reformer something of what he wanted.

Stage by stage the great structure of legislation was built up which is now almost complete, under which principles have developed which, if definitely, directly and determinedly employed, could in a generation, remove from our villages, towns and cities, the foul blots that remain.

This book aims to tell something of the men and measures that have been employed since 1830 on this task, and precedes that story by summarising the result of their work in the chapter that follows.



PART I  
THE STORY





## THE EIGHT STAGES

IN our progress we must wade not through blood, but filth. Muddy England is a euphemism applied to the time when the first steps were taken to that antithesis of the slum, the adequate dwelling for the separate family.

It is a labyrinth into which we are about to plunge, a labyrinth demanding some Ariadnean thread.

Unco-ordinated and unrelated as the efforts of the past appear, they are not really so. Consciously or unconsciously they move according to plan; they pursue the course of a river, swollen by tributaries, marked by shoals and rapids, changing direction from mile to mile, yet somewhere winding safe to sea. It is not easy to locate with exactitude its source. A thin thread, it may disappear into mediaeval haze, and it is not till the nineteenth century that it gathers into flood.

Efforts are governed by the law of acceleration, and that way encouragement lies. A few years in one century may do what generations have failed to accomplish in another.

Our journey will take us through two periods, each with four stages.

### THE FIRST PERIOD

This is one in which sanitary measures, only indirectly affecting the dwelling, were predominant. It would be more correctly termed a period of health rather than housing effort. As a boundary-stone between the two periods the year 1875 may be conveniently placed. In that year the Public Health Acts were consolidated, the framing of bye-laws regulating the construction of buildings became an integral part of Public Health administrations, and the Cross Act for dealing with insanitary areas was passed. In



this first period, when health was stressed so much more than housing, may be distinguished four stages; that prior to 1838 and those from 1838 to 1851, 1851 to 1868 and 1868 to 1875.

*The First Stage.*

Of the first stage little need be said. Prior to 1838 there was no national effort to amend the housing conditions of the poor. Quaint ordinances stray across the pages of ancient statutes, and here and there a gleam of private benevolence shines out like a good deed in a naughty world, but there is little story to tell. Slums were being created in ways that have been traced, and the problem yet to solve was being slowly propounded.

*The Second Stage.*

The second stage marks the beginning of the battle. The issue was joined in 1838, when Edwin Chadwick launched his famous first report on the sanitary conditions of the labouring classes in the Metropolis, and it closed in 1851, three years before he and his colleagues, Southwood Smith and Anthony Ashley Cooper, reaped the reward of their labour, being refused the opportunity to continue it by a Parliament sore and smarting after five years of vigorous scrubbing. Of these thirteen years and the men who shine in them, much will be said, but not more than is their due.

The task before them was the removal of organic filth.

They directed attention to unpaved roads, the needs for sewers and drains, water supply, and the removal of refuse.

It was an inevitable beginning. A well-kept house in 1838 was an oasis in a desert of dirt and disease. Its cleanliness only accentuated the filth that surrounded it.

Insanitary conditions were such that no individual action could improve them. With no sewage system, no adequately organised collection of refuse, men might sweep their own doorsteps, but it would only be at the expense of others. If England was to be cleansed it had to be a collective task.

The second stage differs from the first not because the relationship of housing to health comes to an end, but



because legislation on housing ceases to be general and indirect, and becomes direct and particular.

Before this change, of which the first sign is in 1851, there must be noted the effort to remedy social evils apart from State action, which marks our national character in every crisis. No social reform of any importance but has been marked in the beginning by an attempt to reach the desired ideal by voluntary action. The appeal by Robert Owen to the factory owners ; by Wilberforce to the planters ; by Bell and Lancaster to the Churches ; illustrate the principle which, in housing, found its expression in 1847. In that year, at the instance of Dr. Southwood Smith, was established the Metropolitan Association for the improvement of the dwellings of the industrial classes. This movement developed as time passed—fostered in part by loans at low rates of interest, in part by the sale of sites at reduced values, and in part by charitable endowments made during life and after death ; but despite all, at last proved insufficient to provide the higher standard, and meet the greater cost of housing.

Lastly, we may note in this stage the first of a trinity of Royal Commissions on Housing, of which the last is still to be. Moved for in the House of Lords by Blomfield, Bishop of London, presided over by the Duke of Buccleuch, it surveyed the sanitary conditions of the labouring classes of England and Wales and paved the way for the first Public Health Act in 1848.

A sad survey it was !

Between it and the Second Royal Commission on Housing more than forty years were to stand, and in that time the worst of the Sanitary conditions of the country were to be remedied. The time is now ripe for the Third Royal Commission ; forty-three years separated the first from the second, forty-five years have passed since the second was held, and its successor should not tarry.

### *The Third Stage.*

The third stage lies between 1851 and 1868. It marks the emergence of housing as a thing in itself. Public



Health legislation is in being ; year by year sees it growing. The vicinity of the house has long been under observation, but the eyes of sanitarians are beginning to turn on the house itself.

In 1851, Anthony Ashley, afterward seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, secured the passage of an Act for the establishment of lodging-houses (not to be confounded with common lodging-houses) for the working classes, and in so doing became the precursor of Addison, Chamberlain, Wheatley and Greenwood.

A voice crying in the wilderness then, Now!!!

His Act was the beginning of collective action in the housing of the working classes, and time shows that action slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent. How jealously watched at first? Hampered by what restrictions? Restrictions in the acquisition of land, and in its use, restrictions on administration and procedure. These disappear, at least in part, as the days go by, before the experience and impatience of housing administrators yet to be. But how dead a letter that early Act was! A grain in a mummy's hand.

Ashley burnt his candle at both ends. In the same year, 1851, he secured the passage of another Act, one to regulate common lodging-houses, in which the needs of the poorest, least industrious, and most irregular of the working classes were provided for. In the hands of the police this became a great instrument of improvement.

From this Act we may trace a movement which, in one direction, has led to the erection of the great model lodging-houses in London and the provinces ; in another as admirable, to houses which, coming into being through the Rowton House Company, had their origin in the inspiration which produced "Sybil," and are a gleam from the many faceted character of Disraeli. The movement has not yet reached its apogee, which remains to be found in the more plentiful provision of hostels for single men and women.

In this stage, too, the age of philanthropy is upon us. George Peabody is the patriarch, the successor of Southwood Smith and his friends. He is the head of a chosen



race who have followed him in his efforts to secure decent dwellings for the decent worker. In him begins that long line that begat Barnett, Iveagh, Sutton, Cadbury, Lewis, Leverhulme, Rowntree and many another, to take their part in a movement no less worth while because at last it is lost in the sands of uneconomic rents.

*The Fourth Stage.*

The fourth stage opens with a direct frontal attack on slum conditions by the Torrens Act, passed in 1868 for the improvement or demolition of existing dwellings—an Act remarkable more for its implication than its application.

Sanitation up to 1868 had stayed at the threshold ; it has now to pass the door. It is difficult, sixty years after, to realise how great that step was. The Englishman was to clean his castle as well as its courtyard. The clean house in the clean street was the slogan for the future and Torrens' Act was the voice that sounded it. 1868 is a memorable date in our history. Through the wood we have at last touched the tree and the axe is laid at the root thereof. Threatened trees live long however, sixty years have passed and the real work of the Torrens Act has yet to be done. The reconditioning of the single house which was the Torrens ideal still waits fulfilment in a hundred towns and a million houses. Torrens was to live twenty years longer and to hear men, at the end of his life, say they had never heard of his Act ; but he made housing real. In his Act housing at last got to houses, and a contact was made never to be broken.

The Torrens Act opened two new chapters in the history of slum clearance. The first was the great chapter on Compensation—that problem which follows hard on the heels of compulsory purchase. It is a chapter which records the subordination of private interest to public welfare.

We see the compensation clauses gradually stripped of the wide and general phrases on which excessive claims were based and substantiated ; we see the 10 per cent. allowance for compulsory purchase disappear, together with the allowance for the value of buildings that have no value ; and



at last we see discounted that part of the value of land that vanishes with the restriction of its use to housing.

The second chapter sounded the challenge that was taken up by the Cross Act of 1875, and continues to-day. It records the conflict between the two schools which debate whether salvation is to be found in re-conditioning the single house, or in clearing the insanitary area.

A brief stage—this fourth stage—only lasting from 1868 to 1875, but one in which men came to two important conclusions.

Sanitarians were entangled in a series of Health Acts that the most pedestrian person failed to read. A clamour for consolidation began that found response in the Public Health Act of 1875; the landmark of public health.

More important was the conclusion that slum conditions were too widespread, too deeply rooted to be improved by pulling down single houses. The insanitary area had come within the ken of the slum explorer. Slum dentistry had advanced a stage. It was useless to stop the tooth, the whole set must go. And so we come to the Cross Act of 1875 and to the Second Period, in which housing finally emerges as a distinct factor in public health. It, too, moves in four stages, 1875 to 1890, 1890 to 1909, 1909 to 1919, and 1919 to the present day.

## THE SECOND PERIOD

### *The Fifth Stage.*

In this fifth stage—1875 to 1890—new developments of old problems burst into view; problems many of which still await solution.

The pattern grows more varied, new threads cross and recross the incompleting stuff.

Antagonisms become manifest; controversies begin that neither time nor experience abate.

The dwelling or the tenant, which is it that needs to be reformed? Pamphlets appear—the Pig and the Sty—of which dying echoes may still be heard. The piece-mealers, and the whole-hoggers arrive to play their parts on this stage as they do on every other, and they babble as loudly



as ever. Are single houses or whole areas to be swept clean? The Guelphs and Ghibellines were not more contentious than the devotees of Torrens and of Cross. Each finds his backer and his ring.

What a systole and diastole it all is! See the wide swing of 1838 over the conditions of a whole town, narrowed down in 1868 to those of a single house. In 1875 the swing began again, from the insanitary house to the insanitary area; it was to swing outward to the town in 1909 and in 1929 bade fair to reach the region.

House Planning, Area Planning, Town Planning, Regional Planning, so it goes. Exhilarating, but not without peril, which experience alone can avert. Enough to say that a house may be seen from the ground and lost sight of from the sky. As our range increases let us see that our sight improves, and that while we do some things we do not leave other things undone. In 1875 men were satisfied that larger powers were wanted and they were granted. The Cross Act of 1875 promised the millennium. The new heaven and the new earth were at hand. London and every other swollen city were to be purged of their ill contents. Rookeries and nookeries, courts and alleys were to be swept away. New and improved dwellings were to rise on every hand; an enlightened Board of Works, surrounded by benevolent vestry men, were to wave away the slums with a fairy wand. The rights of property were to be invaded on an irresistible scale.

Alas, with the increase of powers came the increase of responsibilities, the growth of difficulties. Procedure became more important, compensation more difficult: the position of the Central Authority more prominent, the restrictions on the Local Authority more irksome, and the removal of these restrictions more eagerly sought.

The tragic mask was still at the disposal of the actors. The old dread diseases were well in hand, but new scourges loomed as large. Tuberculosis had taken the field and was responsible for the greatest mortality. The earlier diseases had drawn men's eyes in a more dramatic way to unpaved and unsewered streets, foul wells and fouler cesspool. Con-



sumption pointed with stealthy fingers at narrow ways, dark and unventilated rooms. Light, air and sun were seen to be sanitary agents. Open space about the house, cubic space inside it, windows to let light in, and chimneys to let air out all began to be matters of concern. What laws had written small, bye-laws were to write large, and to the paving and sewerage and water supply of the fifties were now to be added size and height of rooms, window and yard space. Middens passed to ashpits, these to earth closets, these again to water closets. Common use to private use. Slum clearance was getting on, and the veterans of 1838 looking on in admiration breathed a *Nunc Dimittis* of praise.

This period developed the controversy between the cottage and the tenement which still rages with unabated bitterness. Here, too, appears the problem of transport, complicated by the cost in time and money of travelling and the desire of the worker to live near his work.

In fact, there is not a phase of the Slum problem that is not opened out.

As a whole, the stage is marked by two things apparently opposed—the first, the movement of attention from the vicinity to the dwelling; the second, the perception that the dwelling must be considered in relation to its vicinity.

The width of the street is seen to be as important as its paving, and an open space as a sewage system. Ideas are leading men from the improvement of a dwelling to the improvement of an area, and will lead them in due course to the improvement of a town and later to a region. Town Planning and Regional Planning are nascent in the Cross Act of 1875.

Charles Booth's enquiry into the social life of the London poor is perhaps the outstanding example of what wealth in the hands of imagination may do. Commencing in this stage it was to go on into the next and to leave behind it in its nine volumes a record that will be studied as long as men's needs are men's care.

### *The Sixth Stage.*

The sixth stage from 1890 to 1909 was spent under the



ægis of the all-embracing Act of 1890. It is a code of conduct to which Local Authorities are called to conform. The call it must be confessed, fell on comparatively dull ears. Not without some cause. The procedure under it was tedious, protracted, expensive; the results surprisingly slow.

It was nineteen years of propaganda rather than of performance. The old order of philanthropy had passed or was rapidly passing. The slum clearances of this time were the work of a new class, men whose activity was local rather than national—W. Thompson in Richmond, J. S. Nettlefold in Birmingham, T. R. Marr in Manchester, and many another.

The stages are shortening and the pace is quickening. Town Planning has arrived, a great body of interest has been aroused. The microscope and telescope are both at work.

On the one hand, attention is being narrowed to the consideration of the internal arrangements of the dwelling; on the other, it is being widened to bring within its scope park and playground. What are called "sanitary conveniences" are seen to be not the only conveniences required. There is a dawning conception that the dwelling is not only a place in which to eat and sleep but also a place of work. Ideas which had been confined to factory and mill begin to enter the minds of those who were thinking of housing. The fact that more women worked at home than away from it is dimly apprehended, and on that follows the thought that labour-saving arrangements and devices may be as appropriately and profitably applied to the dwelling as to any other home of industry.

The new vision begins to track the processes of domestic work, to count the unnecessary steps that follow ill-planned arrangements, to consider the fatiguing postures that ill-placed and ill-designed fittings induce. The waste of fuel and the waste of food caused by deficiency or defect in the provision for their storage, preparation and use, are noted. Improvements in plan and fittings are devised and applied.

If function precedes organism, the domestic organism is



beginning to be a fitting instrument for the domestic function.

The housing movement in this period is at once centripetal and centrifugal. It deals in inches for its provision of cupboards and in acres for its provision of open spaces. It is a period of pupilage rather than of craftsmanship, but the lesson is being learnt—the skill acquired, that is yet to be fully employed.

Firm foundations for the faithful are being laid: foundations on which the structures of the future that are to replace the slums will yet be built. A public opinion on housing is being created that every year strengthens and deepens.

### *The Seventh Stage.*

The seventh stage was ushered in by the 1909 Act. This Act added to and enlarged the old powers. It had a sharper edge to cut through the old difficulties of procedure and expense. In it was registered the first expansion of the idea which gives the Cross Act its character. Local Authorities under it were set to consider not only how to improve a built-up area, but how to prevent areas and much larger ones from becoming built up in the old bad way. They were to Town Plan. Housing formed a fresh liaison. The solitary path she began to tread in 1851, when a Housing Act was passed which was not a Health Act, was ended for awhile. Housing and Health having been legislatively separated, Housing and Town Planning became joined, but only until legislature should them part, which happened in 1925. In future, Town Planning measures as, in the past, health measures will be separate from housing measures, not because there is no connection between them but because they are capable of a separate existence and the genital cord may be safely severed. The association while it lasted was mutually beneficial, and the effect on the layout of building estates will be permanent.

So we come to 1913 which is for housing what 1870 was for education. In 1870 public opinion determined that the children of the country could be educated up to a certain



standard only at the public expense. In 1913 the same conclusion was reached in respect of housing.

The Liberal Party said in the report of the Land Enquiry of that year :

“ It shall be a statutory duty resting upon all Local Authorities, to see that adequate and sanitary housing accommodation is available for the working class population employed, or reasonably likely to be permanently resident within their area. It should be made a definite statutory duty of every Rural District Council to provide a cottage for every person permanently employed in a Rural District for whom a cottage is not otherwise provided.”

The Conservative Party in *The History of Housing Reform*, published in 1913 by the National Unionist Association of Conservative and Liberal Unionist Organisations, gave its full approval and support to a Bill introduced by Sir A. Boscawen which, for the first time in the history of slum legislation, made the definite proposal that the State should give financial aid to Local Authorities in order to enable them to deal with the housing problem of the poor, and in actual words gave expression to the analogy on which the whole argument must be founded : “ in what respect is there such an immense difference between Housing, Education and Roads that a principle which is right in the last two cases is wrong in the first ? ”

The Labour Party in 1912 said :

“ Local Authorities should be required to furnish sufficient and suitable cottages to be let at rents within the competency of the local wage standard and with the aid of Treasury Grants.”

Thus the three great parties each set their seal to a doctrine to which all alike had soon to subscribe under conditions that were then unforeseen.

The importance of these declarations rests on the fact that they were made prior to the war, and after sixty years of sustained private effort clear of the difficulties caused by the increased costs brought about by the war. They are an open confession of the impossibility of securing adequate dwellings for the working classes, if public assistance is not given.



If these things were true in the green tree, can they be false in the dry? Five years of war with the cessation of building, the rise in prices, wholesale and retail, the increase in wages, the improved standard, have brought those who would remove the slums to-day face to face with a situation that never menaced their fellows in the past.

A much larger part of the working classes cannot pay an economic rent. The Rent Restriction Acts register that fact. They have stopped the production by private or philanthropic enterprise of dwellings to let, and have increased overcrowding not only in quarters where it has hitherto prevailed, but in many other places. The new slum is marked by the main features of the old; dwellings intended for the occupation of one family are occupied by more than one, so that all are deprived of the private use of sanitary conveniences and many have to make shift with substitutes for other conveniences hardly less essential. This is in effect the starting-point for new slums, and is bringing into being a new burden for generations to come.

The seventh stage closed with the war.

### *The Eighth Stage.*

The eighth and present stage commenced with the 1919 Act. That Act was preceded by sundry estimates. None were exaggerated, though later they were said to be, and time has but served to prove them. In it and its successors of 1923 and 1924 a quadriga of statesmen driven by the demand for better dwellings have been put through their paces. They go in pairs—Addison and Mond, Chamberlain and Wheatley—all stressing that side of housing which attempts to bring new additional houses into being. They are the successors of Shaftesbury rather than of Torrens and Cross. The problems of the existing dwelling, its repair and replacement, and the clearance of the insanitary area have received from them comparatively little attention.

It has been left to their successor, the present Minister of Health, Mr. A. Greenwood, to make that his particular contribution to the solution of the problem of the slum.

The Housing Act of 1930 is the Slum Clearance Act *par*



*excellence.* The Slum is its *fons et origio*—its centre and its being. While not the final measure, it is not far from the final. It is to work in quinquennial periods. It contains within it the seed of the future and it may well be that, at the end of its first five years' working, we shall see placed on the Statute Book a Housing Act which may do for a generation of Housing what the Education Act of 1870 did for a generation of Education.

## FIRST STAGE

1838

### CHAPTER I

#### OLD STATUTES AND MODERN SLUMS

THE chapters in this stage treat of certain mediæval and later statutes and of administrative action dealing with the resort of the countryman to the town which is the beginning of the slum, the causes which led to it and the consequences of plague and pestilence which have flowed from it.

They are, for the most part, in the form of a duologue between the Author and an early nineteenth-century Moralist whose quaint musings are those of a wise and well-informed contemporary of the reforms in Poor Law administration which led to Health and then to Housing legislation.

The Slum is a heritage—a heritage which unfortunately has not been squandered. We can trace its pedigree. If genealogy has not much usefulness it has some interest, and for it a few pages may well be spared.

The Poor Law system suffered a sea-change in 1930 and is known by that name no more.

It is, we shall see, inextricably linked up with the slum.

When the poor are crowded together without regard to health and decency, slums come into being.

From many quaint statutes of the past can be deduced the forces that have caused this crowding.

Men love liberty and hate oppression ; they seek pleasure and fly from discomfort. In the past, liberty and pleasure were to be found in the town rather than in the country. Feudalism laid a heavier hand on the fields than on the



causeways. Serfs laboured in one while freemen trod the others. Men left their dwellings in the country to find shelter in the towns. The vacated dwellings were demolished. Land untilled from lack of labour was turned into pasture. While the country became barren the towns grew to be cesspools of dirt and disease. In generation after generation the problem was discerned and fruitless, futile remedies attempted. Spasmodic and inadequate, without co-ordination or control, one after another they failed, and it was not until the administration of the Poor Law became consolidated that a beginning was made in the cure of those ills of which the centuries had been the heirs.

It is worth while to glance at some of these old statutes. Though the language be quaint and unaccustomed there is a strongly familiar ring in some of the complaints that echo in their lines.

Here is one from the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Edward III which imposed a discipline on the countryman from which he might well seek escape in the town.

*The Statute.* "Whereas late against the malice of servants which were idle and not willing to serve after the pestilence without taking excessive wages, it was ordained that such servants, as well men as women, should be bound to serve receiving salary and wages accustomed. And now, forasmuch as it is given the king to understand in this present parliament, by petition of the commonalty, that the said servants, having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and singular covetise do withdraw themselves to serve great men and other, unless they have livery and wages to the double or treble of what they were wont to take before, to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all the said commonalty.

Wherefore it is ordained that carters, ploughmen, drivers of the plough, shepherds, swineherd and all other servants, shall take liveries and wages accustomed."

Not only were their wages fixed but their movements were restricted for the Act further provides that the said servants are to be sworn twice in the year "to hold to do these ordinances," and it directs "that none of them go out of



the town where he dwelleth in the winter, to serve the summer, if he may serve in the same town."

*The Moralist.* "The comparative freedom and many comforts enjoyed by persons residing in a town, would naturally excite a desire for similar enjoyments in the rural population, who were then in a state of servile dependence, and possessed scarcely any of the comforts and few of the conveniences of life.

If a villein succeeded in acquiring a little property he was driven to conceal it, as, if discovered, it would belong to his master ; and in order to preserve it, he would probably take the first opportunity of escaping to a town, where, if he could conceal himself from the pursuit of his lord for a year and a day, he would be thereafter free.

Whatever stock was accumulated by the most industrious and intelligent of the peasantry was naturally therefore transferred to the towns, where alone it could be securely enjoyed ; hence the increase, and in most cases the superior wealth and intelligence, of the urban population."

In 1488 Acts were passed for preventing the decay of population :

*The Statute.* "It is for the security of the king and realm that the Isle of Wight should be well inhabited for defence against our ancient enemies of France ; the which Isle is late decayed of people, by reason that many towns and villages have been let down, and the fields dyked and made pastures for beasts and cattle.

The king having singular pleasure above all things to avoid such enormities and mischiefs as be hurtful and prejudicial to the common weal, remembereth that great inconveniences daily doth increase by desolation and pulling down and wilful waste of houses and towns, and laying to pasture lands which customably have been used in tilth, whereby idleness, ground and beginning of all mischiefs, daily do increase : for where in some towns two hundred persons were occupied and lived by their lawful labours, now there be occupied two or three herdsmen, and the residue fall into idleness.

Husbandry, one of the greatest commodities of this realm,



is greatly decayed, churches destroyed, the services of God withdrawn, the bodies there buried not prayed for, the patrons and curates wronged, the defence of this land against our enemies feebled and impaired, to the great displeasure of God."

*The Author.* It is then directed that all towns, villages, hamlets, and other habitations so decayed, shall be re-edified within one year, and that all tillage-lands turned to pasturage shall be restored again to tillage.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TUDOR TILT AT THE MODERN SLUM

THESE changes in industry and agriculture were followed by an intensive period of building, but the remedy was as bad as the complaint, for the complaints against building are as great as those against demolition. An "Act against erecting and maintaining of Cottages" passed in the reign of Elizabeth declares that "great inconveniences are found by experience to grow by the erecting and building of great numbers and multitudes of cottages which are daily more and more increased in many parts of this realm."

It directs that no person shall build or erect any manner of cottage for habitation or dwelling, "nor convert any building or housing, made or hereafter to be made, to be used as a cottage for habitation or dwelling," unless four acres of land at the least be attached to the same, under a penalty of forfeiting £10, and paying a further forfeit of 40s. for every month any such cottage shall be upheld.

The Act concludes by prohibiting more than one family or household inhabiting any one cottage, under penalty on the owner and occupier of 10s. for every month it shall be so occupied.

*The Moralist.* "A most wholesome provision showing a praiseworthy care for the health, comfort, and morality of the people, and so essentially conducive to these ends as to warrant such an interference with the rights of property for enforcing it."

*The Author.* The above Act applies to rural villages and more than hints at the origin of our village slums, as does the Act 35 Elizabeth. cap. 6, to those of our towns. This runs :

*The Statute.* "Great mischiefs and inconveniences daily



grow and increase by reason of the pestering of houses with divers families, harbouring of inmates, and converting of great houses into several tenements or dwellings, and erecting of new buildings within the cities of London and Westminster, and places near adjoining, whereby great infection of sickness and dearth of victuals and fuel hath grown and ensued, and many idle, vagrant and wicked persons have harboured there."

*The Author.* It is then ordered that no new buildings shall be erected in London or Westminster, or within three miles thereof, unless they be fit for the habitation of persons assessed at £5 in goods or £3 in lands, upon pain of forfeiting £5 quarterly for every such building; houses are prohibited from being converted into several dwellings, under a penalty of £5 per month on the landlord, and a like penalty on the occupier or other person permitting the house to be so divided.

*The Moralist.* "Such Acts were no doubt intended for the promotion of health, comfort, and morality, by preventing the erection or the use of insufficient habitations, and the overcrowding and the filthy and immoral habits thence arising, which were the chief causes of those fearful outbreaks of pestilence by which England had been so frequently visited."



### CHAPTER III

#### PLAGUE AND PESTILENCE

ANOTHER Act requires notice, 1 James I, cap. 31, "for the charitable relief and ordering of persons infected with plague."

It recites that the inhabitants of divers places visited with the plague are unable to relieve the poor sort of people, and that divers persons infected with that disease, and others inhabiting houses infected, when commanded to keep in their houses, "do notwithstanding very dangerously misdemean themselves."

Therefore Mayors, Justices of Peace and other head officers in cities and towns were empowered to assess the inhabitants for the relief of the infected persons, and the inhabitants of the county within five miles of the place infected may also be assessed in aid of any city or town, should it be found requisite.

It concludes with these penalties :

*The Statute.* "If any infected person commanded to keep house shall, contrary to such commandment, wilfully go abroad and converse in company, having any infectious sore upon him uncured, then such person shall be deemed a felon, and suffer death as in case of felony ; but if such person shall not have any such sore found about him, then he is for his offence to be punished as a vagabond in all respects as is provided by the statute 39 Elizabeth."

*The Moralist.* The severity of these punishments shows the fearful nature of the evil, and the dread its visitations inspired. The population of London, and of the towns generally, had gone on increasing with the growing wealth of the country, and this at a ratio exceeding the increase of habitations. Hence the lower and working classes in London



and other great towns were crowded into insufficient and unhealthy dwellings, so that whenever disease or a tendency to disease from any cause occurred, it found objects prepared for its reception, and fitted to cherish and disseminate the pestilence in its most virulent form.

The 35 Elizabeth, cap. 6, is especially directed against this evil of overcrowding, although the restriction it imposes on the erection of new buildings does not seem calculated to prevent the crowding of the old ; but like this Act of James, it shows that the labouring population were pressing upon the towns, and that disease, pestilence, and want were the consequences. Hence, probably, may also have arisen the dread which prevailed about this time of dispeopling the country districts, and the admonitions which James was in the habit of addressing to the gentry and others frequenting the Metropolis, "to go reside on their estates, and attend to their farming."

## CHAPTER IV

### WAGES AND BREAD

*The Author.* Some ideas die hard ; that of the fixation of wages at a level to suit the employer was long lived.

George II, cap. 19, is an Act " for the better adjusting and more easy recovery of the wages of certain servants ; and for the better regulation of such servants, and of certain apprentices."

The laws in being were first declared insufficient and defective, and it was then directed that all differences between masters and mistresses, and servants in husbandry hired for one year or longer, or between masters and mistresses and artificers, handicraftsmen, miners, colliers, keelmen, pitmen, glassmen, potters and other labourers employed for a certain time, should be heard and determined by one or more justices of the county or place where such masters or mistresses reside.

In pursuing these ancient edicts we may appear to be wandering far from the history of our subject, but it is not really so. The path is circuitous but it is winding its way to where we want to be.

The fixation of wages led to the Speenhamland Scale. The Speenhamland Scale to the Reform of the Poor Law : the Reform of the Poor Law to the appointment of the Poor Law Commissioners : their action led to the setting up of the Poor Law Board, replaced in 1871 by the Local Government Board—displaced in its turn in 1919 by the Ministry of Health.

With the Poor Law Commissioners, health became a matter of legislative concern, later to be linked with Housing. This concern found itself in the enactment of statutes



that differed from their predecessors in this, that they were the precursors of real reform.

A short account of the framing of the Speenhamland Scale is therefore worth the while.

In 1795 a meeting of the Berkshire Justices and "other discreet persons," assembled by public advertisement, for the purpose of rating husbandry wages, and declared it to be their unanimous opinion that the state of the poor required further assistance than had been generally given them.

The magistrates then present accordingly resolved—

"that they will in their several divisions make the following calculations and allowances for the relief of all poor and industrious men and their families who, to the satisfaction of the justices of their parish, shall endeavour (as far as they can) for their own support and maintenance, that is to say—

"When the gallon loaf of second flour weighing 8 lb. 11 oz. shall cost 1s. then every poor and industrious man shall have for his own support 3s. weekly, either produced by his own or his family's labour or an allowance from the poor-rates, and for the support of his wife and every other of his family 1s. 6d.

"When the gallon loaf shall cost 1s. 4d. then every poor and industrious man shall have 4s. weekly for his own, and 1s. 10d. for the support of every other of his family.

"And so on in proportion as the price of bread rises or falls (that is to say) 3d. to the man and 1d. to every other of the family, on every penny which the loaf rises above the shilling."

This was the famous Berkshire bread-scale, locally known as the "Speenhamland Act of Parliament," and it was extensively adopted in other counties.

While the scale was working and before it produced those fruits that led to the Reform of the Poor Law, the question of housing again came to the fore.

The Act of Elizabeth against building cottages is declared by 15 George III, cap. 32, to have "laid the industrious poor under great difficulties to procure habitations, and tends to lessen population, and in other respects has been found inconvenient to the labouring class of the nation," and it is accordingly repealed.

*The Moralist.* The restrictions imposed by Elizabeth's



Act would no doubt be found inconvenient if not impracticable as the people increased in numbers and civilization; but the prohibition of more than one family inhabiting the same dwelling was wise and beneficent and it would have been well if this had been retained when the other restrictions were abolished.

*The Author.* Meantime, the Speenhamland Scale was producing its results. Poor rates were going up by leaps and bounds; practically the whole of the agricultural population was paralysed. A Committee reporting in 1817 urged Parliament to deal with an evil growing rapidly and promising to get beyond cure. Parliament debated the problem—pamphlets explored it—Bills were introduced to deal with it, and the first stage of this history closes in the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the operation of the Poor Law, the initial report and result of which will form the subject of our Second Stage.



## SECOND STAGE

1838-1851

### CHAPTER V

#### THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS

ON the 1st of February, 1832, Lord Althorp, in answer to a question put to him, stated—

“ that the general question of the Poor Laws was a subject of great magnitude, and involved such a variety of important considerations, that any members of the government, or of that House, would not be justified in bringing forward a measure that would apply generally to the whole collective system of the Poor Laws of this country ; and that government was of opinion, that the best course to pursue was, by means of investigation and enquiry on the spot, to find out the effects of the different systems as they existed in different parishes ; and accordingly, that Commissioners would be appointed for the purpose of ascertaining how the different systems worked throughout the country. When the result of this enquiry was before ministers, they would then be able to determine whether they would propose any measure on the subject.”

The Commissioners appointed for this purpose in February 1832 were directed—

“ to make a diligent and full enquiry into the practical operation of the laws for the relief of the poor in England and Wales, and into the manner in which those laws are administered ; and to report whether any and what alterations, amendments, or improvements may be beneficially made in the said laws, or in the manner of administering them, and how the same may be best carried into effect.”

The Commissioners proceeded in their task with all ardour in every part of the country, and in 1834 presented



their report. It was preceded by a volume of extracts of which the Commissioners said :

“ The most important and certainly the most painful parts of its contents are—the proof that the mal-administration which was supposed to be principally confined to some of the agricultural districts, appears to have spread over almost every part of the country, and into the manufacturing towns ; the proof that actual intimidation, directed against those who are, or are supposed to be, unfavourable to profuse relief, is one of the most extensive sources of mal-administration ; and the proof that the evil, though checked in some places by extraordinary energy and talent is on the whole steadily and rapidly progressive.”

This volume of extracts was distributed throughout the country, and produced a very decided effect on public opinion, the information it contained being admirably selected for the purpose. It was followed on the 20th of February, 1834, by the full and very elaborate report of the Commissioners, with an abridged supplement appended, and also accompanied by an appendix, of which the Commissioners remark, “ The evidence contained in our appendix comes from every county and almost every town, and from a very large proportion of even the villages in England.”

It is not necessary to go into the details of this report, its connexion with our subject is that it resulted in the establishment of the Poor Law System as up to this year we knew it, and set up all over the country Boards of Guardians charged with the duty of the relief of the poor.

They could not be and were not long at their task without finding out the close connexion that exists between disease and poverty and the great part that insanitary conditions play in the promotion and spread of diseases.

Little wonder if, with that practical sense that characterises the race to which they belonged, they came to the conclusion that prevention was better than cure and that the best way to keep down the poor rate was to spend it in removing one of the prime causes of destitution.

They forgot, however, the district auditors who had recently come into existence and who were keeping, as they have ever done, a watchful eye on expenditure.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE DISTRICT AUDITOR

GOD'S blessing on district auditors ! A remote race working in solitude and silence, veritable enzymes of economy, producing cataclysmic changes in others while pursuing their own unaltered and unalterable way.

Uninfluenced by emotion, undisturbed by sentiment, they apply the unvarying letter of the law in circumstances the most varying.

The twentieth century has seen them working at Poplar, West Ham, and Chester-le-Street in the white glare of publicity, with what ultimate effect recent legislation has enabled us cloudily to surmise.

In the nineteenth century they were no less fateful.

Their action fired the mine and produced an explosion of public feeling and sentiment which should have blown the slums of England into the air, but unhappily did not.

It might be hyperbole to credit the district auditors of 1838 with the initiation of a public housing policy, but not more than would obtain in attributing the discharge of high explosives to the spark that produces it.

To tell a plain story shortly ; in the absence of any other means, the poor rate was found to be a convenient instrument for collection of monies to be expended on sanitary services by such authorities as received it.

It was therefore found necessary by those responsible to issue to the district auditors instructions to disallow such expenditure.

The district auditors faithfully followed their instructions with the result that many useful and necessary public services could not be rendered because there existed no power by which the cost of them could be recovered.



## CHAPTER VII

### FALSE ECONOMY

THE Poor Law Commissioners soon came to realise that the exercise of the powers of the district auditor was leading to a false economy ; that while relieving the poor rate of certain charges it was in consequence burdening them with charges infinitely greater.

They therefore in their fourth annual report pressed upon Lord John Russell the necessity of making provision by statute for meeting these charges, and they say :

“ The most prominent and pressing of the first class of charges for which some provision appears to be required, are for the means of averting the charges on the poor-rates which are caused by nuisances by which contagion is generated and persons are reduced to destitution.

“ In general, all epidemics and all infectious diseases are attended with charges, immediate and ultimate, on the poor-rates. Labourers are suddenly thrown, by infectious disease, into a state of destitution, for which immediate relief must be given. In the case of death, the widow and the children are thrown as paupers on the parish.

“ The amount of burdens thus produced is frequently so great as to render it good economy on the part of the administrators of the poor-laws to incur the charges for preventing the evils, where they are ascribable to physical causes, which there are no other means of removing. The more frequent course has been, where the causes of disease are nuisances, for the Parish Officers to indict the parties for nuisance, and to defray the expenses from the poor-rates.

“ With reference to the claims for relief on the ground of sickness, in the metropolis we have directed special enquiries to be made of the medical officers of the new Unions. We have also directed local examinations to be made in parts of the metropolis where fever was stated to be the most prevalent.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIRST LONDON ENQUIRY

FOLLOWING on these local examinations, in 1838 a report was made which gives a graphic account of the sanitary conditions of the labouring classes in the Metropolis.

The perusal of it to-day serves on the one hand, to show how great indeed has been the improvement brought about in the last century and on the other hand to remind us that the first steps to good housing were made by way of streets and sewers.

Here are some extracts from the reports :

*" Lamb's Fields.* Of this space about 300 feet are constantly covered by stagnant water in winter and summer. An open filthy ditch encircles this place. Into this ditch the privies of all the houses of a street called North Street open : these privies are completely uncovered, and the soil from them is allowed to accumulate in the open ditch. Nothing can be conceived more disgusting than the appearance of this ditch, and the odour of the effluvia from it is at this moment most offensive.

*" Virginia Row.* In a direct line from Virginia Row to Shore-ditch, a mile in extent, all the lanes, courts and alleys in the neighbourhood pour their contents into the centre of the main street, where they stagnate and putrefy. Families live in the cellars and kitchens of these undrained houses, dark and extremely damp."

A report by two of the Medical Officers employed, Mr. Arnott and Dr. Kay, sets out an excellent summary of the means they thought necessary to meet the situation. They say :

" The means of removing completely the noxious vegetable matters brought to or produced in cities evidently are—

" 1. A perfect system of sufficiently sloping drains or sewers.



" 2. A plentiful supply of water to dilute and carry off such refuse.

" 3. An effective service of scavengers.

" 4. Free ventilation by wide streets, open alleys, and well constructed houses.

" 5. Keeping as distant as possible from the people the practice of all the arts and processes capable of producing malaria. Hence the situation of cattle markets, slaughterhouses, cow-houses, tripe shops, gas manufactories, burying grounds, etc., should be determined by competent authorities.

" 6. Preventing the great crowding of the lodging-houses of the poor."

These suggestions are worth a few moments reflection

Nos. 1 to 3 may fairly be said to have been adopted. No. 4 involves slum clearance and No. 5 town planning.

Far-sighted doctors Arnott and Kay—did they realise their programme would still be unfulfilled a hundred years after their report.

They enforced their views by giving illustrations of the bad sanitary conditions of various neighbourhoods in London. Here are some of them :

1. In a mews behind Bedford Square a stable had been let for a time to a butcher, and a heap of dung had been formed at the door, containing pigs' offal, pigeons' dung, etc. During the act of removing this heap, a coachman's wife and her three children, of an adjoining stable, sat for a time at an open window nearly over the place, until the insufferable stench drove them away ; two of the poor children died of the poison before 36 hours, and the mother and other child narrowly escaped.

2. Some body-snatchers having mistaken the grave they meant to open, two of them died of fever caused by the effluvia from a putrefied corpse.

They found, as they were prepared to find, wherever the fever had appeared, one or more of the causes now to be noticed :

1. Houses and courts or alleys, with only open surface-gutters, so ill-made that the fluid in many places was stagnant.

2. Large open ditches containing stagnant liquid filth.

3. Houses dirty beyond description, extremely crowded with inhabitants, who had no means of separation in case of disease arising amongst them.



4. Pigs kept in backyards, with masses of half putrid food for the pigs in receptacles around, in one instance in the back room of the house, with an open door to the front room, in which was lying a man in the last stage of fever.

London was not peculiar in this respect. Dr. Kay had seven years before made an inspection of 687 streets in Manchester and in 352 of them found heaps of refuse and stagnant pools.

He had gone further and there inspected 6,951 houses and found 2,221 of them wanting privies.

Dr. Southwood Smith, of whom we shall hear more, is as revealing in his report. The opening is memorable.

"Some of the severest evils at present incident to the condition of poverty, which have a large share in inducing its high rate of sickness and mortality, are the consequences of improvidence. Such evils are capable of being remedied only by bringing the poor under the influence of the inducements to forethought and prudence. But there are evils of another class, more general and powerful in their operation which can be avoided by no prudence, and removed by no exertion, on the part of the poor. Among the gravest and at the same time the most remediable of these latter evils is the exposure of certain noxious agents generated and accumulated in the localities in which the poor are obliged to take up their abode, and to the pernicious influence of which they are constantly and for the most part unconsciously subjected."

His damning indictment of the sanitary condition of the Metropolis proceeds :

"It appears that the streets, courts, alleys, and houses, in which fever first breaks out, and in which it becomes most prevalent and fatal are invariably those in the immediate neighbourhood of uncovered sewers, stagnant ditches and ponds, gutters always full of putrefying matter, night-men's yards, and privies, the soil of which lies openly exposed, and is seldom removed. It is not possible for any language to convey an adequate conception of the poisonous condition in which large portions of both these districts always remain, winter and summer, in dry and in rainy seasons, from the masses of putrefying matter which are allowed to accumulate. There is no strength of constitution, no conservative power in wealth, capable of resisting constant exposure to the exhalations which are always arising from these collections of filth."



It is interesting to note the budding forth of ideas regarding the duties of the landlord at this early stage that were to find fruition in legislation a hundred years after.

There was a Mr. Swainer of the Peckham District who saw to the root of the trouble and anticipated future legislation a long time before it came. He said :

“ I would suggest the idea of the landlords of many of these wretched, filthy tenements being held responsible for their being tenantable, healthy and cleanly, by declaring the tenants not bound to pay their rent, if the relieving officer or medical attendant should report them untenable or liable, from improper drainage, etc., to promote disease.”



## CHAPTER IX

### THE GERM OF TOWN PLANNING

AT this period are also to be found perceptions of the necessity of linking up the problem with that of general improvement.

The dawn of improvement schemes is more than hinted at in the following letter :

10, CHURCH STREET,  
SPITALFIELDS,  
5th May, 1838.

GENTLEMEN,

I consider that the greatest benefit to the district would result from the opening of one or more spacious and extended thoroughfares, and it is to be hoped that such a portion of the advantages to be anticipated from the labours of the Committee of the House of Commons, for effecting improvements in the metropolis, will fall to the share of our neighbourhood, that this great good will be effected. A line for such a thoroughfare has been recommended by the intelligent and excellent rector of our parish, and by others well acquainted with our local necessities which would sweep away by far the greatest part of a bad district I have described—bad morally as well as medically—and improve the character and value of property adjoining.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) SAMUEL BYLES.

Fifty years later Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham was to combine improvement schemes with slum clearance on a scale that would have satisfied even Mr. Byles.



## CHAPTER X

### MEN AND MEASURES

It will be convenient at this stage to say something about the men who stand behind the measures we are to meet in these pages.

The legislation bearing on the subject of this work has run in two distinct channels which may be usefully classified as Public Health and Housing legislation. With this legislation, as indeed with every phase of human activity, are associated powerful and compelling personalities. In the Judgment Book it is said our merits and demerits are to be found. I can imagine no more satisfactory record than that of those who, if they have not dreamed of a new heaven, have at least attempted to create a new earth. To be written down as one who loved his fellow men sufficiently to care how they were housed, and with what environment of health surrounded should be enough for most, and happily will be for many.

These few pages are insufficient to even name their names. We must content ourselves with outlining the work of a bare half-dozen—a group who admittedly stand in the van, the recognised leaders of the two great movements which have placed this country first in the twin matters of Health and Housing.

In Public Health legislation, amongst many eminent names, that of Edwin Chadwick is outstanding. A life that, in 1835, was devoted to the work of sanitation, and half a century later, in 1885, was still to be found striving to secure the betterment of Housing conditions, is worth more than the passing note given to it here, but it may direct to the fuller records that are there for those who care



to seek them. With him must always be named Dr. Southwood Smith.

In Housing there are three storeys to the structure : three great series of Acts which, consolidated, form the Magna Charta of Housing.

The Labouring Classes Lodging-Houses Acts, behind which stands the shining figure of the Earl of Shaftesbury ;

The Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Acts, the outcome of the labour of Mr. W. T. M. Torrens, and

The Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Acts due to the sympathy and humanity of Sir Richard Cross.

Side by side with these statesmen that were not only statesmen but philanthropists, are two figures whose reflex on legislation is not insignificant but whose activities were more concentrated on special phases of the problem of Housing and of Health : Mr. George Peabody and Miss Octavia Hill. The work of the first may be said almost to have ended ; that of the latter hardly to have begun. Taken together they present a striking pair, and the relationship arouses reflection.

It is said that public assistance is the enemy of private benevolence. It may be the coadjutor and co-operator. We have in this country always had a genius for the expression of individuality side by side with the collective action of the State. I do not believe it has departed. Philanthropy is the pioneer in the exploration of human needs and their satisfaction. Public assistance lays the road where philanthropy has blazed the trail, and until we reach the time when human need sighs " It is enough," there will still be pioneer work to do. The feeding and education of the people have long passed out of pious and philanthropic hands into those of the organised community : the housing of the people is taking the same course. In the latter, as in the former instance, there remains and will long remain opportunities for the outlet of those sympathies which, non-existent, would leave the human heart an arid plain.

To say something of the men and then of their measures be now my task.



## CHAPTER XI

### EDWIN CHADWICK

THE cleansing of England didn't just happen, it was a labour, a herculean labour. The Hercules was Edwin Chadwick : his weapon like that of his prototype, a club.

Born 1800, died in 1890 within a decade of being a centenarian, his work finished in 1854.

Cromwell and Lincoln came to their tasks in their fifties ; Chadwick finished his then.

He rode England as though it were a restive horse and in his fifties he was thrown.

It would be impossible to imagine his like to-day. Not a Minister, not even in Parliament. He was detested throughout the country ; he upset everybody, he disturbed everything.

I have read the most intimate things written about him, and the most human thing said of him is that he married and he was 39 before that happened.

One of his biographers likens him to the doctor, Edwin Thurnall, in *Two Years Ago*, and gives this extract from that book as a photograph of Chadwick's soul :

" Well, I do it because I like it. It's a sort of sporting with your true doctor. He blazes away at a disease where he sees one, as he would at a bear or a lion ; the very sight of it excites his organ of destructiveness. Don't you understand me ? You hate sin, you know. Well, I hate disease. Moral evil is your devil, and physical evil is mine. I hate it, little or big : I hate to see a fellow sick ; I hate to see a child rickety and pale ; I hate to see a woman's gown torn ; I hate to see her stockings down at heel ; I hate to see anything wasted, anything awry, anything going wrong ; I hate to see water-power wasted, pluck wasted, brains wasted ; I hate neglect, incapacity, idleness, ignorance and all the disease and misery which spring out of that. There's



my devil; and I can't help, for the life of me, going right at his throat, wheresoever I meet him."

There was no doubt about the throat; whenever Chadwick saw it he went for it there and then.

Every Board he was on he broke. He brought the Poor Law Commissioners to the ground in fourteen years with himself among the wreck.

In six years he made the Public Health Board anathema maranatha to the House that appointed it.

He was not precluded from affairs, he was excluded from them.

The press that supported him could find no prototype more like him than Milton's "Dark and Terrible Hero," while his opponents exhausted the vocabulary of abuse.

And yet if life is pleasant to-day, if there is anywhere health and cleanliness, it is more due to Edwin Chadwick than to any other man.

It is simply impossible to picture the England of his day. The ninety years since his work began have removed it as though to another planet. The impetus of that removal came from him. If ever there was a case of the hour and the man, it is here.

Looking back, the names of those whose humanitarian efforts mark those years are many, but one and all are seen to be derivative from him.

What he did we shall read, and if into the record we carry the impression of one who pounded Society as in a mortar, let us correct the impression with the recollection that it was a hard and flinty Society against which softer methods would have been without avail.

One or two extracts from his *Health of Nations* may, however, serve to soften the picture which perhaps I have drawn too harshly, and his own words may reveal more of human interest than has appeared, and show a glint of humour too.

He is talking of the advantages of Detached Dwellings and Garden Roofs:

"A magistrate's clerk of great experience in the City of



London once observed to me that in rebuilding a city, the architect should, for social reasons, be prevented making close courts or alleys with common pumps.

"When the rooms in close places overlooked the opposite rooms, the female occupiers were apt to put about offensive tales and criticism on what went on in each other's rooms, which ended in fierce quarrels and assaults.

"One or two common pumps almost kept two low attorneys, the sequence being this: A little girl going to fetch water was thrust aside by a big girl, and being saucy was beaten by the big girl; then the mother of the little girl came out and straightway attacked the mother of the big girl: then the husbands came forth to do battle for their wives and children, and then, usually with the Irish, sides were taken by the other occupiers of the court, and there was a 'battle royal.' Afterwards came prosecutions for assault before the magistrates, and the work for the attorneys."

"One owner of a close square of buildings told me that he found it necessary to make two entrances to it, so that people in feud might avoid meeting each other. Precautions are necessary to prevent people coming too close to each other, and jostling each other, for if they jostle each other they hate each other.

Where ground space is dear, as it is with the dwellings of the labouring classes in town, there is good reason for utilising the roof space. It serves as an additional drying-ground. In dry weather it may be used for the children to play on. One example has been set in London, where, in a densely crowded neighbourhood, there being no playground for a boys' school, they have made one for them on the flat roof.

If anyone will look over the *cité ouvrière* of Mulhouse, it will be seen what a large amount of roof space is lost; and yet the cost of a weathertight flat roof of concrete or hollow brick is nearly a third less in England than the timber slate, or tile roof.

Its greatest convenience or use, however, would be for self-contained dwellings; *on it the father of the family may sit in fine weather and have better aid and an extended prospect, and enjoy himself in the Oriental fashion!!!*"

These are his words; let us look at his works.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE PROVINCIAL ENQUIRY OF 1842

HARD things have been said against the House of Lords, and in many cases with much cause, but in this case let it be put to their credit that in 1839 they, having what the Friends call a "concern" about the condition of the labouring classes in other parts of England and Wales, as to whether it was the same as shown in the report in 1838 by the Poor Law Commissioners on the sanitary condition of the labouring classes in the Metropolis, humbly addressed Her Majesty on the subject.

The young Queen was barely on her throne and one likes to think of that long reign which was to see so real an advance in the national conditions of her people beginning with her gracious desire that an enquiry into the matter should be made.

The direction was conveyed to the Commissioners of Poor Law on the 21st August, 1839, by Lord John Russell. A year before, Parliament had completed its task of manumitting the slave, and it may be that some overflow of the wave of humanitarianism which had brought to shore that happy task, was reaching the further shore which bounded the hardly less unhappy lot of the labourer in Great Britain.

The enquiry was made under Chadwick's masterly guidance, and the report addressed to Sir John Graham, the then Home Secretary, on the 9th July, 1842.

The enquiry was thorough and comprehensive. Chadwick knew the importance of getting the facts—an importance not fully realised even to-day—and used the Assistant Commissioners in the several parts of England and Wales, supplementing their work by questions directed to the newly established Boards of Guardians.



In Scotland there were no Poor Law Commissioners, but the doctors rallied to the cause and on their local reports Chadwick built up his.

The local enquiries were governed, as far as that was possible, by a carefully drawn circular which directed attention :

1. To the kind of diseases prevalent.
  2. To the time when they appeared.
  3. To the extent of Cholera.
  4. To the drainage of land as affecting building.
  5. To the structure of houses as to—
    - (a) Drainage.
    - (b) Water supply.
    - (c) Ventilation.
    - (d) Receptacle for filth.
  6. The internal arrangements as to—
    - (a) Overcrowding and multiplication of families.
    - (b) Lodging-houses.
    - (c) Cleanliness of tenants.
    - (d) Keeping of pigs.
    - (e) Attitude towards hospitals.
  7. Effect of 4, 5 and 6 on diseases.
  8. Cost of erection and repair.
  9. Rents paid.
  10. Rents in proportion to wages.
  11. Common cost of lodgings.
  12. Measures required.
  13. Voluntary efforts to improve conditions.
- Nos. 1, 2 and 3 were the stimuli of the enquiry.

It seems incredible that century should have succeeded century with so little apprehension of the dangers consequent on defective sanitary conditions.

Echoes of complaint from time to time come down. Carmelite Friars of London die in 1290 because of a great stench, after a faithful endeavour to perform their religious duties, and their successors beseech Edward I and his Parliament to abate the nuisance.

In 1320 the Queen and her nobles in the Tower cannot



abide the insalubrity of the air in their neighbourhood and find it corrupted and infected.

Everywhere the ditches and the water and the wells are full of garbage, dung fuel and the entrails of cattle. The blacksmith forges in Fleet Street, the limeworkers of Southwark and the refuse near the Tower are all cause for complaint.

Street regulations of London enjoin that—

“no man shall cast any urine-boles into the street by day or night  *afore the hour of nine of the night* and also he shall not cast it out, but bring it down, and lay it in the channel, under the pain of three shillings and fourpence, and if he do cast it upon any person’s head, the party to have a lawful recompense if he have hurt thereby.”

And “lest he have hurt thereby” the citizens of Edinburgh in the same age will not cease the cry “*Gardez l’eau*” to make wary the perhaps incautious passer-by.

Little wonder Plagues of London and Black Deaths.

Streets fouled, water fouled, air fouled.

In 1288 the “good sea cole” had begun to infect and corrupt the air of London. The doctrine of the conveniences of trade was too strong for the anti-smokers despite the occasional over-ruling of it.

Chadwick had to deplore that in his less loyal time—

“some architects and medical gentlemen going to the top of Buckingham Palace to examine it preparatory to its occupation by her Majesty, there were assailed by a cloud of smoke from the chimney of a furnace of a neighbouring brewery, and the nuisance remains to the present time in full force notwithstanding the statutory provision against it.”

The smoke is still with us, and we have not yet been able to find a better remedy for it than a lockout or strike in the Coal Trade. God speed the Smoke Abatement Society.

Charles Lamb’s Chinaman may still find a rival here in those of us who cannot discover the way to a clear sky and a smokeless atmosphere unless we stay the consumption of coal altogether.

It is only then that we shall approach the state of the happy folk in the Isle of Man, of whom Chadwick enviously



reports that on that isle a shirt was cleaner at the end of a week's wear than at Manchester at the end of a day's.

Little wonder that to Chadwick the most pressing needs seemed to be the construction of drains and sewers, the paving of streets, the securing of a good water supply, the provision of mortuaries; and little wonder that in the conclusions with which he ends this colossal report there is no mention, or if any the most indirect, of housing.

It will hardly be believed that in the index to the parliamentary papers between 1801 and 1850 there is nothing indexed under the head of "Housing."

People had to get into the second half of the nineteenth century before parliamentary bibliographers found it necessary to extend their index by that word.

So it was, however, and the following words show what to Chadwick bulked biggest amongst public needs.

"As to the means by which the present sanitary conditions of the labouring classes may be improved. The primary and most important measures, and at the same time the most practicable and within the recognised province of public administration, are drainage, the removal of all refuse of habitation, streets and roads, and the improvement of the supplies of water."

That was his conclusion—this was his reason:

"The removal of bad physical circumstances, and the promotion of civic, household, and personal cleanliness, are necessary to the improvement of the moral conditions of the population, for that sound morality and refinement in manners and health are not long found co-existent with filthy habits amongst any class of the community."

How far he would have been listened to but for the recurring epidemics of his time, who can say.

It was the time, he was the man; the measures to which he looked have been adopted and the success he expected from them has been obtained.

To the whole population of this country he extended the persistence in research and exposition that John Howard had confined to the population of the prison.

Dr. Arnott of Edinburgh, no doubt struck by the fact that more attention had been paid to the health of people



who were in gaol than to the health of people who were not, speaking of Howard's appalling task, tells that—

“wherever he found a crowded prison there he found the gaol fever was frequent, and that the source usually was the felonious dungeons which still more than other parts were without ventilation, without drains, or other means of cleanliness, with little light, and which consequently remained in the most filthy condition.”

The disease often spread extensively in neighbourhoods carried thither by prisoners after their release, and in the first fleet which sailed from England in the French War, 2,000 people died of fever carried into ill-ventilated ships by persons taken as sailors from the prisons.

But perhaps the most striking of these occurrences was the “Black Assizes” of Oxford where prisoners from the dungeons, brought for trial into the crowded and ill-ventilated court-houses, so poisoned the atmosphere that all present were almost immediately affected, and before forty hours had elapsed, the Judge, the Sheriff and about 300 others were dead; and this was far from being a singular instance of the kind.

An appalling narration truly, but in the rest of the space we give in this chapter to the 1842 Report we shall extract from it particulars of the conditions of people, not prisoners, not pressed men, but ordinary citizens, that are hardly less appalling.

That England has no such abominations to-day is mainly due to the work of Edwin Chadwick, whose name still remains with us in that of the Society which continues his efforts.

Having followed John Howard, we cannot do better than follow Edwin Chadwick, and show, if we can, the England of the Forties in the narrow compass of this chapter.

Here is a picture of Liverpool:

“In consequence of finding that not less than 63 cases of fever had occurred in one year in Union Court, Banister Street (containing 12 houses), I visited the court in order to ascertain, if possible, their origin, and I found the whole court inundated with fluid filth which oozed through the walls from two adjoining



ash-pits or cesspools, and which had no means of escape in consequence of the court being below the level of the street, and having no drain."

Manchester had no reason to boast of any ascendancy in matters of health if we may judge from this :

"Many of the streets in which cases of fever are common are so deep in mire, or so full of hollows and heaps of refuse that the vehicle used for conveying the patients to the House of Recovery cannot be driven along them, and the patients are obliged to be carried to it from considerable distances."

If Lancashire was bad, Yorkshire was not better. Of Leeds it is written :

"Here there are stagnant water, and channels, so offensive that they have been declared to be unbearable, lie under the doorways of the uncomplaining poor : and privies so laden with ashes and excrementitious matter as to be unuseable prevail, till the streets themselves become offensive from deposits of this description ; in short, there is generally pervading these localities a want of the common conveniences of life."

Similar extracts could be given *ad nauseam*, but these may suffice. Everywhere it is the same story, ill-paved streets, absence of sewerage, shortage of water supply, almost absolute indifference to the collection of refuse.

In 1552 Shakespeare's father was fined for forming a dung-hill in Henley Street, Stratford. Three hundred years seemed to have made local authorities even less vigilant in the matter of sanitary reform.

In the forties the criminal had a better chance of life than the labourer ; prisons were healthier than houses, in fact Chadwick based one of his strongest arguments on the comparison of the health of the population in the Edinburgh wynds with that of men in prison, saying of the former :—

"that if such an amount of sickness as existed in them were known to prevail in a prison containing between 300 and 400 persons, the circumstances would excite public alarm and attention."

That these things are not true of England to-day is due first, if not last, to Edwin Chadwick.



## CHAPTER XIII

### DR. SOUTHWOOD SMITH

IF Edwin Chadwick was the brain of the movement that was to change the face of England, and Shaftesbury the voice, Dr. Southwood Smith, the physician of the London Fever Hospital, was the heart, the eye and the hand.

It is strange how in this story of the early nineteenth century one jostles so many of the figures who made that time notable. It would seem to have been a very narrow stage on which they moved. Whether at Kentish Town or Highgate, they came crowding in—poet, philosopher, novelist, philanthropist.

There is a charming picture of Southwood Smith in this society, preserved for us by his granddaughter, Miss Gertrude Hill, afterwards Mrs. Charles Lewes.

Robert Owen, Jeremy Bentham, Robert Browning, the Howitts and, no doubt most fascinating of all to the child to whom we owe the delightful picture of her grandfather, Hans Christian Andersen.

Spinners of fairy tales, all of them, the physician to the London Fever Hospital no less than the gentle Dane.

“What the moon saw.” Moonshine indeed to the mine-owner, the factory owner, the slum owner, who listened in the thirties to Dr. Southwood Smith—this insistent spirit with his demand that mines and factories should be emptied of women and children, that courts and alleys should be cleansed, lightened and brightened.

They did not know what some have learnt since, that the fairy tales of one generation are the facts of another.

Southwood Smith set out to save the souls of men and stayed to save their bodies. The boy who found Baptist theology too straight for him, found in preventive medicine



a means for the expression of his love for God and man.

We have written of some of the things that set his soul astir and brought him to scorn delights and live laborious days.

England was filthy England in his time. Epidemics followed upon epidemics, plague upon plague.

Southwood Smith in Bethnal Green came to the same conclusion as Ronald Ross in Panama—that plagues have their habitations and epidemics their home.

In the following analogy he set out the belief on which the public health legislation of this country came to be based.

“The room of a fever patient in a small and heated apartment of London with no movement of fresh air is perfectly analogous to a stagnant pool in Ethiopia full of bodies of dead locusts. The poison generated in both cases is the same, the difference is merely in the degree of its potency. Nature with her burning sun, her stilled and pent-up world, her stagnant and teeming marsh, manufactures plague on a large and fearful scale.

“Poverty in her hut, covered with her rags, surrounded by her filth, striving with all her might to keep out the pure air, and to increase the heat, imitates nature but too successfully; the process and the product are the same, the only difference is in the magnitude of the result.

“Poverty and ignorance can thus at any time and in any place, create a mortal plague.”

To relieve poverty and remove ignorance was his task, and for this no time, no energy, but was given; no prospect but was subordinated.

His opportunity was unique. In London, in an official position; with courage, will, ability, what he had to do was done under the observation of the leading people of his time.

It was a time of research and reform, of investigation and agitation. Following on the great European struggle, it was carried on in a society looking for advance in every direction.

Side by side with the immense material advance in prospect was the most profound dissatisfaction with the situation



and circumstances of what were then called the "industrious" classes.

If the struggle was severe the issue was sure ; and of it Smith, I think, never really doubted.

His granddaughter tells the story with an artless admiration of him and his efforts, born of the days when her waking eyes rested on his face bent in unceasing work over his study table.

He was a factory Commissioner, and she heard at first hand of the horrors that waited on less fortunate children than she ; hiding in the wool at the end of their work—too tired to crawl home—beaten into activity after eight or nine hours' work till their terrible tale of toil was told.

It is not easy to credit these things to-day, but it is just as well not to forget them altogether. There are children still who are cheated of their youth, and the early twentieth century has yet to complete the task the early nineteenth century began.

It was bad working in the factory ; it was worse in the mine, and never did a faerie prince fight wicked ogres with more success than did this grandfather.

Not much to do with housing ? We have seen that Health and Housing are inseparably linked. These labours of love were building up for Smith a position from which his voice could be heard when the chance came to make his great plea, that for sanitary reform.

It came in 1837. In that year fever ravaged London.

With epidemic came distress and destitution that reflected itself in the demands upon the poor rate. The rates rose. A barometer that always draws the public eye.

Chadwick saw his chance. Smith and two others little less concerned than he were commissioned to report on the sanitary conditions of the Metropolis.

Men of influence and power. To Shaftesbury, then Ashley, they were a magnet that drew him into the very heart of the misery of the Metropolis. The Home Secretary and the Bishop of London, Chiefs of Church and State were roused.

In 1839 Bishop Blomfield moved for an enquiry into the Health of Towns throughout the country, and the reports



of the Duke of Buccleuch's Commission crossed every "t" and dotted every "i" in the report made by Chadwick in 1838.

Charles Dickens lent his pen and the Press followed suit.

The country was aroused, but Parliament was slow to act. The Lords were more sensitive than the Commons. Bills were brought forward in 1841 and again in 1843, but failed to pass.

The Buccleuch Commission itself was made the reason for delay, and not till after another Commission dealing with London had reported in 1847 was anything done.

In 1848, however, the first Public Health Act was passed, and as a real earnest of intention a General Board of Health was set up with Lord Ashley as Chairman and Chadwick and Smith Commissioners.

From 1848 to 1854 this indefatigable trio strove to cleanse England, and though they were sacrificed at last to the prejudices they raised, they set the public health administration of England on a foundation wide enough and deep enough to carry the great structure the succeeding years have built.

Nearly seventy when Southwood Smith retired, in his house at Weybridge Heath in the evening of his life the old man could say to his loved grandchild:

"I have indeed succeeded. I have lived to see £7,000,000 of the public money expended on this great cause. If anyone had told me when I began that this would be, I should have counted it absolutely incredible."

He had indeed succeeded. To-day it is difficult for us to realise how much. For well-paved and well-lighted roads, and unlimited supplies of good water for drinking, cooking and washing, are the unregarded commonalities of our daily life, and we walk over a maze of sewers with as little offence as over a garden.

So we may leave these two great souls. Of Ashley we shall speak later, but first let us look again at the England they found so foul and left so fair.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FIRST ROYAL COMMISSION

THE work of the Poor Law Commissioners as we have seen was heavy, but it would be a mistake to believe that public opinion can really be moved to its depth by blue books or parliamentary papers, however logical they may be or with whatever skill they may be presented.

It was because Cholera stalked behind Chadwick and his colleagues that their word commanded attention.

Attention they did get, and their work was supplemented by the setting up of the first Royal Commission to turn its attention to the housing of the working classes.

It was presided over by the Duke of Buccleuch and sat in Gwydwr House. Gwydwr House still stands, and passers down Whitehall who read this account may view the portals of that great house with a little more interest.

Within those doors in the years 1844 and 1845 a group of earnest men, some of whose names still carry meaning with them, met to hear the story of town and country.

Lyon Playfair, Robert Stephenson, W. Cubitt were there, and what a story.

It is to be found in five stout closely printed volumes entitled: *The Health of Towns*.

It is just as well to be reminded that it was Health that directed attention to Housing. When housing ceases to matter to health I suppose housing will cease to matter as a public concern.

It is difficult to know where to begin and more difficult to know where to stop in these crowded pages.

Perhaps the opening paragraph of their first report is as good as anything. Here it is:



“ TO THE QUEEN’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

“ We, the undersigned Commissioners appointed by Your Majesty to enquire into the present state of large towns and populous districts in England and Wales.

“ We desire, in the first place to express the sense which we entertain of the importance of the subject committed to us, not only as involving general benefit to the public, but especially a gradual improvement in the moral and physical condition of large numbers of Your Majesty’s poorer subjects. We have entered upon these duties with an earnest hope of being able in due time to fulfil the benevolent intention of Your Majesty’s Commission.”

In such a spirit did they work.

There was much material already collected and in addition they addressed enquiries to fifty towns on drainage, scavenging and water supply.

The replies read at this time seem incredible. Out of fifty towns only eight were able to show to the Commissioners that they in any way approached the standard the Commissioners had in mind.

With monotonous reiteration town after town replies that there are no regulations or inadequate ones for dealing with the subjects of enquiry.

Where the main streets are cleansed, courts and yards in which the people mostly lived were left untouched.

Birmingham says :

“ Courts and alleys not within control, very filthy, no gratuitous supply of water to the poorer classes.”

Bolton :

“ The poorest people beg water.”

Chester :

“ Courts and alleys never cleaned by public scavengers. No supply of water for the poor, obtained by begging and from the river.”

Chorlton :

“ Unpaved streets and courts not cleansed, many dreadfully dirty. The poor badly supplied with water, they often either beg or steal it.”



Derby :

“ Courts and yards in a most filthy state. Refuse never removed.”

Portsmouth :

“ Courts and alleys neglected, refuse and filth collected by the lowest class for fuel. The poor beg water off their neighbours.”

So the dreary, dreadful tale goes on. Horror on horror ;  
filth on filth.



## CHAPTER XV

### HEALTH AND CHARACTER

HERE is Dr. Southwood Smith under examination :

*“ Question. Are you aware that the rate of mortality is actually found to be nearly double in some of the neglected districts in the east compared with what it is in the western part of London ?*

*Answer. I am ; and this interesting and important fact is dependent on several circumstances, and not on any one cause. The poorer classes, in their neglected localities and dwellings, are exposed to causes of disease and death which are peculiar to them ; the operation of these peculiar causes is steady, unceasing, sure, and the result is the same as if twenty or thirty thousand of these people were annually taken out of their wretched dwellings and put to death, the actual fact being that they are allowed to remain in them and die.”*

Here is a little picture from his own experience :

*“ Question. Is it not almost impracticable for a decent and respectable woman coming into such a district to maintain that propriety of demeanour and cleanliness to which she may have been accustomed in the country ?*

*Answer. It is quite impossible.*

A short time ago I was standing in one of the streets branching off from Rosemary Lane, called Blue Anchor Yard, looking at a stream of abomination that was flowing down from a court into the open gutter in the centre of this Blue Anchor Yard, the open gutter being the common receptacle for the filth from the houses.

This noisome stream was flowing close to a house at the door of which there stood a woman with ruddy cheeks, neatly clothed. ‘ Five times this very day sir,’ said she to me, ‘ have I swept this place as clean as I possibly could, but you see the state in which it is again. It is no use to try to keep it clean.’

Her whole appearance indicated that she was a new-comer ; in a few days she would naturally give up her hopeless attempt to keep the place clean, and if she remain there she must necessarily sink into the state of squalor and filth so general among her neighbours.”



## CHAPTER XVI

### CROWDED BEDS AND BROKEN RIBS

THOMAS SOUTHWOOD SMITH was followed by another honoured name—Joseph Toynbee—and of his evidence I will give one or two extracts, which horrible though they are, are not to be dismissed as belonging to the past.

Thousands of families in London still live in one room, and it is not easy to see that their condition can be much better than those of the families of which Dr. Toynbee speaks. Here is what he said :

“ In a statistical Report made by Mr. Weld, on a house-to-house visitation made at the instance of Lord Sandon to the Statistical Society in 1842, it is stated that there were in the parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, 1,465 families of the labouring classes who had for their residence only 2,175 rooms and 2,510 beds.

“ *Question.* How far does this state of the occupation of rooms accord with your own observation ?

“ *Answer.* In the class of patients to our dispensary, nearly all the families have but a single room each, and a very great number have only one bed to each family.”

“ The state of things in respect to morals, as well as health, I sometimes find to be terrible.

I am now attending one family, where the father, about 50, the mother about the same age, a grown-up son about 20, in consumption, and a daughter about 17, who has scrofulous affection of the jaw and throat, for which I am attending her, and a child, all sleep in the same bed in a room where the father and three or four other men work during the day as tailors, and they frequently work there late at night with candles.

As another exemplification of this state of things, I may mention the following instance rather extraordinary in its



facts, but an example of the overcrowding of some of these places.

In the course of the first months that I was attached to the dispensary, an aged Irish woman applied to me with a broken rib ; she declined going into a hospital ; the dispensary therefore supplied her with a flannel roller, and I promised to visit her and apply it.

On reaching her *home*, I found that it consisted of one corner of a room on the first floor of a house in Peter Street.

The landlady of this room, who herself occupied the central part, near the fireplace, had tenants in the other three corners, in one of which was a widow with three or four children.

I applied the bandage to my patient, who went on, to use her own words, very comfortably for four or five days, at the end of which time I found her in considerable pain from the following cause :

Not being able to go out as usual with her basket to sell fruit and vegetables, she could not pay her daily rent, and therefore, on the suggestion of the landlady, consented to under-let half of her bed ; but it happened unfortunately, that the new tenant being bulky in person, occupied more than her fair proportion of the joint tenancy, so as to press against the broken rib of my poor invalid, and displace it, thus producing a recurrence of the pain and suffering from which she had but just been freed !!!”



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE PIG AND THE STY

MUCH has been said on this topic.

Chadwick believed the sty had a good deal to do with the habits of the pig and gave publicity to the following contrast made by the Clerk to a Staffordshire Union :

“ If we follow the agricultural labourer into his miserable dwelling, we shall find it consisting of two rooms only ; the day-room, in addition to the family, contains the cooking utensils, the washing apparatus, agricultural implements, and dirty clothes, the windows broken, and stuffed full of rags.

“ In the sleeping apartment, the parents and their children, boys and girls, are indiscriminately mixed, and frequently a lodger sleeping in the same and the only room ; generally no window, the openings in the half-thatched roof admit light, and expose the family to every vicissitude of the weather ; the liability of the children so situated to contagious maladies frequently plunges the family into the greatest misery. The husband, enjoying but little comfort under his own roof, resorts to the beer-shop, neglects the cultivation of his garden, and impoverishes his family. The children are brought up without any regard to decency of behaviour, to habits of foresight, or self-restraint ; they make indifferent servants ; the girls become the mothers of bastards, and return home a burden to their parents, or to the parish, and fill the workhouse.

“ The boys spend their Christmas week's holiday and their years' wages, in the beer-shop, and enter upon their new situation in rags. Soon tired of the restraint imposed upon them under the roof of their master, they leave this service before the termination of the year's engagement, seek employment as day-labourers, not with a view of improving their condition, but with a desire to receive and spend their earnings weekly in the beer-shop ; associating with the worst of characters, they become the worst of labourers, resort to poaching, commit petty thefts, and add to the county rates by commitments and prosecutions.

“ On the contrary, on entering an improved cottage, consisting



on the ground floor of a room for the family, a wash-house and a pantry, and three sleeping-rooms over, with a neat and well-cultivated garden, in which the leisure hours of the husband being both pleasantly and profitably employed, he has no desire to frequent the beer-shop or spend his evenings from home. The children are trained to labour, to habits and feelings of independence, and taught to connect happiness with industry, and to shrink from idleness and immorality.

“The girls make good servants, obtain the confidence of their employers, and get promoted to the best situations. The boys at the termination of the year’s engagement, spend the Christmas week’s holiday comfortably under the roof of their parents; clothes suitable for the next year’s service are provided, and the residue of the wages is deposited in the savings bank; a system of frugality is engrafted with the first deposit, increasing with every addition to the fund: they are gradually employed in those departments of labour requiring greater skill and implying more confidence in their integrity and industry, and they attain a position in society of comparative independence.”



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MORE IT CHANGES, THE MORE IT IS THE SAME

IN this chapter is set out some evidence given in 1842 as to the need for the provision of separate conveniences for separate families.

"*Festina lente*" has certainly been the motto for legislation in this respect.

It was not till the Housing Act, 1919 was passed, that separate provision was required to be made by any landlord dividing a house amongst several tenants.

Even then the requirements could only be made effective after the local authority had embodied the provision in a bye-law.

The operation of this bye-law has been suspended and many tenants in London in 1930 are even now not far removed from the conditions that pervaded the evidence given in 1842, which is hereafter set out.

If the word "privy" be altered to "w.c." would this not hold good in many cases to-day :

*Question.* Are there any practical regulations applicable generally to the dwelling-houses of the humbler classes which in your opinion require to be enforced by the Legislature ?

*Answer.* Yes ; there are two regulations which appear to me to be of paramount importance and practical difficulty. The Legislature should prohibit, under adequate penalties, the letting of any house as a dwelling-house in which water is not laid on, and to which there is no privy sufficiently screened from view.

A good supply of water for domestic purposes and privies concealed from view, and so constructed as to admit of being easily kept clean, are absolutely essential to the preservation of the public health and morals.



Or this :

*Question.* Are there any further observations which you have to offer relating to the dwelling-houses of the poor ?

*Answer.* I wish particularly to draw attention to the importance of having a certain number of rooms in the dwelling-houses of the poor. It is right that the attention of the public and of the Legislature should be called to the physical deterioration, and the moral degradation which results from the want of proper room in the dwelling-houses of the poor.

Instances such as the following were given :

“ A mother and her son, being an adult, sleep in the same bed. Grown-up females and unmarried young men sleep in the same room. A man, his wife, and his wife's sister, the latter being an adult, sleep together in the same bed. I have myself seen a young man, twenty years of age, sleeping in the same bed with his sister, a young woman sixteen or seventeen years old. That incestuous intercourse takes place under these circumstances there is too much reason to believe ; and that when unmarried young men and women sleep together in the same room, the women become common to the men, is stated in evidence as a positive fact.”

We have single-room dwellings still with us !



## CHAPTER XIX

### WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE!!!

HERE I turn once more to the question of a deficient water supply, bearing in mind that there are many tenements in London to-day where, in many respects, the conditions revealed in the evidence given by Mr. J. Toynbee in 1842, still obtain.

This was the evidence he gave as to the state of household economy in this respect :

*Question.* Have you observed any effects apparent from water not being conveniently accessible or laid on in the rooms which form separate tenements ?

*Answer.* I have observed the same water, which is very filthy from having been used in washing some clothes, used again to wash others.

They have told me, indeed, that they have done this to avoid the inconvenience of fetching water from a distance, and from the inability to carry the water upstairs when the rooms inhabited have been on the upper floor.

My informants on this topic, it should be remembered, are patients, sickly people, weakened by sickness, and who cannot afford to pay for attendance.

To the mothers who are debilitated, the carrying upstairs is a very great exertion ; mothers not daring to leave a child in the room, have to carry the child in one arm and the vessel of water with the other.

I have had even sick children neglected and left dirty, and the excuse given has been the inability to fetch water.

*Question.* In these cases water is laid on in outer yards ?

*Answer.* Yes ; in outer yards principally.

A considerable obstruction to the proper cleanliness arises, not only from the inability to bring fresh water up, but from the inconvenience and inability, arising from the want of proper sinks, to take dirty water downstairs.

One source of dampness and smell I have frequently found is the vessels of dirty water retained in the room.



The common excuse for this retention is, "we are so knocked up with the day's work that the water must wait until to-morrow, when we shall be able to remove it."

*Question.* Then the tall houses, let off into separate rooms or flats, are in a worse condition than low separate cottage tenements in a row, without drainage or water laid on them, the labour of carrying water up or down two, three or four stories high being so much greater?

*Answer.* Certainly, and this has a great effect on their economy, their habits and their health.

I beg to state, however, that I frequently have occasion to admire the admirable spirit with which the poor bear up against the dreadful disadvantages under which they labour. When I see the working man and his wife living in a damp dark kitchen, or in a close attic, supplied with a deficient quantity of impure water, the odour throughout the house being most offensive, paying for this accommodation an exorbitant rent, I must confess that the wonder to me is, not that so many of the labouring classes crowd to the gin-shops, but that so many are to be found struggling to make their wretched abodes a home for their family.

A good fellow Mr. J. Toynbee.



## CHAPTER XX

### TIED HOUSES—A EULOGY

HERE and there a gleam of light showed. Public-spirited and enlightened landowners were busy with model cottages, and of their effort approval is spoken.

It is perhaps little realised that even to-day in the staple industries of agriculture and mining the large numbers of houses occupied by the workers therein are provided by the employers, and some of the passages of the report are so pertinent to issues frequently debated to-day that I cannot forbear their quotation. Here they are :

#### THE REPORT

“ Wherever it has been brought under observation the connexion of the labourer’s residence with his employment as part of the farm, or of the estate, or of the manufactory on which he is employed, and as part of the inducement to service, appears to be mutually advantageous to the employer and the employed.

“ We find everywhere (in contradiction to statements frequently made in popular declamations) that the labourer gains by his connexion with large capital : in the instances presented in the course of this enquiry of residences held from the employer.

“ We find that the labourer gains by the expenditure for the external appearance of that which is known to be a part of the property—an expenditure that is generally accompanied by corresponding internal comforts. He gains by all the surrounding advantages of good roads and drainage, and by more sustained and powerful care to maintain them. He gains by the closer proximity to his work attendant on such an arrangement, and he thus avoids all the attacks of disease, occasioned by exposure to wet and cold, and the additional fatigue in traversing long distances to and from his home to the place of work, in the damp of early morning or of night-fall. The exposure to weather, after leaving the place of work, is one prolific cause of disease, especially to the young.



"When the home is near the place of work, the labourer is enabled to take his dinner with his family instead of at the beer-shop.

"The wife and family generally gain by proximity to the employer or the employer's family, in motives to neatness and cleanliness by their being known and being under observation; as a general rule, the whole economy of the cottages in by-lanes and out-of-way places appears to be below those exposed to observation.

"In connexion with property or large capital, the labourer gains in the stability of employment, and the regularity of income incidental to operations on a large scale; there is a mutual benefit also in the wages for service being given in the shape of buildings or permanent and assured comforts; that is, in what would be the best application of wages, rather than wholly in money wages.

"In the manufacturing districts there is a mutual and large gain by the diminution of the labour of the collection of rents, the avoidance of the risks of non-payment, and also in the power of control for the prevention of disturbances, and the removal of tenants of bad character and conduct."

The following account received in answer to enquiries from Mr. Henry Ashworth, of Turton, near Bolton, with relation to the manufacturing population of that place, is characteristic of the progress of a population of more extensive districts, and of the means of their improvement:

"On the early introduction of the cotton manufacture, the parties who entered into it were men of limited capital, and anxious to invest the whole of it in mills and machinery, and therefore too much absorbed with the doubtful success of their own affairs to look after the necessities of their workpeople. Families were attracted from all parts for the benefit of employment, and obliged, as a temporary resort, to crowd together into such dwellings as the neighbourhood afforded: often two families into one house; others into cellars of very small dwellings: eventually, as the works became established, either the proprietor or some neighbour would probably see it advantageous to build a few cottages; these were often of the worst description; in such cases the prevailing consideration was not how to promote the health and comfort of the occupants, but how many cottages could be built upon the smallest space of ground and at the least possible cost. We find many built back to back, a most objectionable form, as precluding the possibility of any outlet behind. People brought together as these were for a living, had no alternative but to occupy such dwellings. Whatever the weekly income, the wife could never make such a house comfortable; she had only one room in which to do all her



work ; it may be readily supposed the husband would not always find the comfort he wished in such a home. The public-house would then be his only resort. But here the evil does not end ; the children brought up in such dwellings knew no better accommodation than such afforded, nor had they any opportunities of seeing better domestic management.

“ Few of the parents in these parts have ever lived as domestic servants, so that it becomes no matter of surprise that the major part should have so little knowledge of improving their social condition even when the pecuniary means are within their reach.

“ It must be allowed that the introduction of manufactures is not justly chargeable with producing the whole of this evil. About this time the old Poor Law was exercising a very pernicious influence upon the labouring classes, by means of inducing both the landowners and farmers to discourage cottage property for fear the inmates should gain parish settlements.

“ Cottages were forbidden to be built ; some pulled down when empty, and others fell to decay for want of repair ; poor people were banished as much as possible from the agricultural districts on account of the burden of parish settlements ; even in this county I saw the ruins of two cottages, which I was informed were the two last cottages in the parish.

“ Under such depressing causes it is not to be wondered at that we frequently received families into our employ who did not know how to conduct (with propriety) a decent cottage in such a manner as to conduce either to the health or comfort of the inmates.

“ About twelve years ago we had occasion to introduce a considerable number of families into some new houses ; in the course of a few months a most malignant fever broke out amongst them, and went from house to house, till we became seriously alarmed for the safety of the whole establishment. We instituted an enquiry into the state of the houses where the fever first appeared, and found that from the low habits of the occupants, and the ignorance of the proper decencies of life, the cottages were in so filthy a state that it was apparent we should not long be free from a recurrence of the same evil unless we took some active means to effect a change in the habits of these people.

“ Although we felt very unwilling to do anything which appeared to interfere with the domestic management of our workpeople, still the urgency of the case at the time seemed to warrant such a step.

“ We therefore ordered an examination of every cottage in our possession, both as regards cleanliness and ventilation, as well as bedding and furniture. The striking difference exhibited



in the state of these cottages, the neatness and cleanness of some, the gross neglect of others, appearing to have no relation to the amount of income, convinced us that an occasional repetition of these visits would be essential in order to effect any permanent improvement amongst them. These periodical visits have now been continued through a series of years; and as no invidious distinction or selection was ever made, do not appear to have been viewed in the light of an intrusion; a week or two of notice being mostly given, a laudable degree of emulation has been excited as to whose house, bedding and furniture should be found in the best order.

"My brother and myself had occasionally joined in these visits. By these means we were made acquainted with the wants and necessities of the various families in our employ. Having had such opportunity of observing the great inconvenience arising from small dwellings where the families were large, both as regards bedrooms and living-rooms, few cottages having more than two bedrooms, and where there were children or young persons of both sexes, the indelicacy of this arrangement was apparent, we therefore concluded to build larger cottages, and make them with three bedrooms in each.

"These houses were sought after with the greatest avidity, and families allowed to remove to them as an especial favour; the increased rent of 1s. to 1s. 6d. per week was a small consideration in regard to the additional comfort afforded to a family where the income was from 24s. to 50s. or 60s. per week, as is frequently the case with the families employed in manufactories."

The foregoing paragraphs are an account by a contemporary of the matters dealt with in the preceding chapters of this book, and may be taken as a confirmation and corroboration of them.



## CHAPTER XXI

### A JOLLY MONCK

ON the much-vexed question of repairs, a matter all-important to the maintenance of good housing conditions, here is an example of good humour and good sense taken from the report which deserves a more permanent record. It is a statement made by Mr. Monck of Coley House, Reading, who had bestowed much care upon the cottages on his own estate.

"The care taken of these cottages and gardens," said he, "afford an excellent criterion of the character of the labourers.

"Formerly the cottages were in bad order, their pavements and windows were broken; I had them all paved, and their windows glazed.

"I told the cottagers that I did not like to see shabby, broken windows, with patches of paper and things stuffed in, or broken pavements which they could not clean; and that I disliked Irish filth and all Irish habits of living.

"I engaged, after the cottages were thoroughly repaired, to pay £1 a year for repairing them. I undertook to make the repairs myself, and deduct the expense from this £1, but if no repairs were wanted, they were to have the whole £1 themselves.

"This course has, I find, formed habits of care; and their cottages are now so well taken care of that very little deduction is made annually from the £1.

"Formerly they used to chop wood carelessly on their pavements, and break them; now they abstain from the practice, or do it in a careful manner, to avoid losing the money.

"In the winter, I give them two score of faggots towards their fuel. I have found that by this means I save my hedges and fences, and am pecuniarily no loser, whilst pilfering habits are repressed.

"Since the enclosures have been made, I think some place should be provided for the exercise and recreation of the working classes, and especially for their children.



"I have set out four acres at Oldworth as a playground for the children, or whoever likes to play. They have now their cricket matches, their quoit-playing and their revels there.

"Sheep and cows feed on it, so that it is no great loss to me. I let it for £4 a year to a man on condition that he cuts the hedges and keeps it neat. I have surrounded it with a double avenue of trees. The sheep and cows do good to the ground as they keep the grass under, which allows the ball to run.

"I give prizes to the boys at school, which is maintained by the cottagers themselves and to which I contribute nothing but the prizes for reading, writing and knitting.

"Many persons accuse the poor of ingratitude, but I find them the most grateful people alive for these little attentions; and what do they all cost me? *Why, not more altogether than the keep of one fat coach-horse.*"

Truly a precursor of Octavia Hill.



## CHAPTER XXII

### ALLOTMENTS—A TIRADE

PERHAPS at a time when allotments are said to be dwindling in number, a reverend gentleman speaking—though so long ago—of village life and giving his opinion on allotments and pig-keeping, and the advantages of commons, may be listened to. His words have a not unfamiliar ring :

*Question.* What do you think of allotments ?

*Answer.* Many mistakes are prevalent with respect to the profits from keeping cows, sheep, geese, pigs, etc., for I do not believe that any of these are really profitable.

I am glad to see a pig as an appendage to a cottage (if the cottager's employer has no reason to be sorry), because the pig serves as a sort of savings bank to the labourer ; for if the labourer had not the animal, he would not put by, and out of his reach, from day to day, the money which the pig costs him in fattening ; yet it is notorious that a labouring man pays more dearly for his bacon than he would do if he purchased it ready prepared to his hand.

Nor would he be the better clothed or cheaper shod if he took the operation of the Manchester weaver or the Nottingham shoemaker into his own hands.

*Question.* But may not a labourer attend to the management of pigs or cows after the hours of work ?

*Answer.* I think not, because a good labourer usually works hard, and has done as much as his strength will allow when he returns home ; and because nothing is gained by feeding cattle upon commons, where the cattle have nothing else to depend upon.

The very worst master a poor man can work for is himself.

*Question.* Do you think allotments of land to the labourer beneficial ; and if so, what quantity may be usefully occupied by him ?

*Answer.* I do not think allotments of land to the poor beneficial.

I would rather see the allotments gathered into one large one,



a farm, and the labouring man employed at good wages, by a superintendent managing the whole at his own risk and for his own interest, in the share to which his undivided and greater attention and anxiety justly entitle him, that is by a thriving farmer.

*Question.* Do you think the enclosures of such parishes as Cookham beneficial to the poor?

*Answer.* Yes, I do, inasmuch as they extend the demand for the poor man's only marketable commodity—his labour.

The report adds that every position stated in this examination with relation to the practical operation of the theory of small farm allotments, and of the pig and cow theories, was corroborated by a large mass of evidence from every part of the country.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### COAL-WHIPPING AND BEER-SIPPING

To turn from country to town here is a picture from Stepney of the coal-whipper's life and dwelling, that might have inspired Hogarth to another famous scene, and illustrates how between drink and dwelling, one landlord may lose what the other gain.

*Question.* What is your occupation ?

*Answer.* Coal-whipper.

*Question.* Have the goodness to state to the Committee the manner in which coal-whippers are engaged and paid ?

*Answer.* I have been in the habit of obtaining a living by coal-whipping for the last ten years, and when I want employment (me and the likes of me of course) I have to go to the publican to get a job, to ask him for a job ; and he tells me to go and sit down and if I have 2*d.* in my pocket of course I am obliged to spend it, with a view to getting a job ; and probably, when two or three hours have elapsed, by that time there is about fifty or sixty people come on the same errand to the same person for a job.

He keeps us three or four hours there ; and then he comes out, and he looks round among us, and he knows those well that can drink the most, and those are the people that obtain employment first. Those that cannot drink a great deal and think more of their family than others do, cannot obtain any employment ; those that drink the most get the most employment.

*Question.* In the after part of the day, when your work was over, where did you go then ?

*Answer.* Then, when we have done our day's work, we came on shore, and we had to go into the house again ; and perhaps we might want a shilling or two to get our families a little support—the landlord would tell us to go and sit down in the tap-room, and he would give us some by and by, and he would keep us there until nine or ten at night ; first we would go for a pint or a pot or what not, to see whether he was getting ready, for we dare not go empty-handed, without a pot or a



pint, or to call for something by way of excuse ; after keeping us there until nine or ten at night, then he would give us 2s. 6d. or 3s.

The relieving officer of the same district gave the following evidence :

*Question.* In respect to those trammels which it is described the coal-whippers are in, what is the consequence as to their households? How do you find, when you visit those cases, that their houses are provided?

*Answer.* I would rather sleep in my coal-hole than in any of their hovels. I went into six houses yesterday; each house contains four rooms, and in some of those houses there were thirty souls. In the least house there were seventeen.

*Question.* What is the condition of the girls?

*Answer.* The girls, when infants of 7 years of age, are turned out into the streets with fruit and all sorts of things; when they arrive at the age of 14 they go to stay-stitching; then they sit indoors at home with their mother, and so on, until the age of 15 or 16, when they generally become prostitutes. I see it, because I am always amongst them. I have tried to get them to send those girls to service, when they say, "Mr. Sargeant, what am I to do? My husband earns but little, I am obliged to depend upon what my daughter can do and myself."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### CLEANLINESS AND GODLINESS

MODERN instances are but ancient saws. One of His Majesty's principal inspectors of factories recently gained publicity by his reference to the good looks of the girls in the factories he inspected. He had a predecessor.

Mr. Stuart, the Commissioner in a Factory Enquiry, speaking of the mills at Catrine in Ayrshire, told the Commission :

“ These mills were pointed out to our attention during the Factory Enquiry, by Mr. Stuart, the Commissioner, who observed that the workpeople, more especially the females, are not only apparently in the possession of good health, but many of them (quite as large a proportion as we have seen in any of the extensive well-regulated similar establishments in country districts) are blooming—as unlike as possible to the pale, languid-looking females too frequently to be found in similar works in great cities.”

Contrast this with what Mr. Kennedy, barrister-at-law, who had been enquiring into the labour of young people in mines, said :

Mr. John Kennedy, in the course of the examinations of some colliers in Lancashire, asked one of them—“ How often do the drawers (those employed in drawing coals) wash their bodies ? ”

*Answer.* None of the drawers ever wash their bodies. I never wash my body ; I let my shirt rub the dirt off ; my shirt will show that. I wash my neck and ears, and face, of course.

*Question.* Do you think it usual for the young women engaged in the colliery, to do the same as you do ?

*Answer.* I do not think it is usual for the lasses to wash their bodies, my sisters never wash themselves, and seeing is believing ; they wash their faces, necks and ears.

*Question.* When a collier is in full dress, he has white stockings, and very tall shirt necks, very stiffly starched, and ruffles ?



*Answer.* That is very sure, sir ; but they never wash their bodies underneath ; I know that ; and their legs and bodies are as black as your hat.

One labourer remembered that a particular event took place at Easter "because it was then he washed his feet"!



## CHAPTER XXV

### A PRETTY PICTURE

If the pit lads and lasses did not wash very often there were perhaps reasons.

Here is the picture of a pit village near Durham which seems to supply some.

" Fifty pitmen's houses were built in the year 1842, on less than an acre of ground; there were no necessities, no cesspools, no conduits nor drains, so that the filth accumulates in the front of the houses and the water thrown out of them is allowed either to sink into the ground or flow on the surface into the main street.

" There are neither pumps nor wells; and water for the use of the inhabitants is brought from the upper part of the village, generally on the heads of the women, whereas pipes might be laid down at trifling expense."

This was followed in the report by some general remarks on the Northern towns.

" Habitations for families, destitute alike of adequate accommodation for the separation of the sexes, and even of those conveniences which common decency requires, the absence of a sufficient and easily accessible supply of wholesome water, and the utter inefficiency of the means resorted to for cleansing, drainage and sewerage, are evils that press heavily upon a large number of the humbler classes in every one of these towns."

And again, and this is relevant to the present-day suggestion of smaller houses :

" Another circumstance which contributes much to reduce the comfort of the humblest habitations is the small number of apartments which they so often present.

" It has been again and again represented to me that if for a family consisting of several individuals, three or four separate



apartments could be provided, besides the ordinary living-room or kitchen, it would be a source of immense advantage in such dwellings, though the size of such cabins should not exceed that of the sleeping-berths ordinarily found in the living-rooms.

"They would permit that separation of the sexes, which under existing circumstances, cannot be attained."

Nearly ninety years since men so pleaded, and the same plea can be made the burden of this book to-day. How long? how long?



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE COMMON LODGING-HOUSE

A PART of the enquiry dealt with common lodging-houses of which much more will be said, owing to the fact that the first really successful housing legislation was directed to their improvement.

They were veritable plague spots. Though I go North for my examples, they are typical of the whole country.

The Medical Officer of Durham says :

“ One fruitful source of generating and propagating contagious diseases is to be found in those common lodging-houses where vagrants and mendicants, or anyone whatever, whether healthy or diseased, are for a trifling sum provided with lodgings. I have known forty persons half clothed, lodged in one of those wretched dwellings, three or four lying upon one bed upon straw, and only a single counterpane to cover them, which is never changed. Excrementitious matter was allowed to accumulate and be about the rooms in all directions, the stench being most revolting.”

Mr. Gilbert Ward, the Medical Officer of the Tynemouth Union, described the lodging-houses there as sources of disease, of which one example may suffice :

“ In a low, damp, dirty, ill-ventilated, miserable hovel, kept by the most filthy people I ever beheld, containing four beds, seldom changed, and which I have witnessed filled with beggars of the lowest description, there have been the following cases : A son and daughter died, another son and daughter had the disease, and the mother had two attacks, all within a period of 18 months.”

One of the Relieving Officers for Newcastle said :

“ I have frequently had occasion to complain to the magistrates against the lodging-houses taking in so many lodgers ;



but the law in this respect is so defective that they could render me no assistance.

"On a Sunday last July I went to see a man (a travelling musician) who was very ill of the small-pox and died a few days afterwards.

"The house contained four small rooms, and was situated in a backyard, in a very narrow confined dirty lane.

"There were forty people in the house, and they were not all in that lodged there."

Is it too much to say that slaves had hardly worse conditions than these? And this was England. Truly there were labours in front of the men and women who cared.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### “ EAT CAKE ”

FOR the purpose of letting a little humour into this rather dull subject, I cannot resist the inclusion of some good advice given in the year 1800 to the poor wretches who lived in cellars !!!

“ Avoid living in damp cellars ; they destroy your constitutions and shorten your lives. No temptation of low rents can counterbalance their ill-effects. You are apt to crowd into the cellars of new buildings, supposing them to be clean ; this is a fatal mistake ; a new house is always damp for two years, and the cellars which you inhabit under them are generally as moist as the bottom of a well. In such places you are liable to bad fevers, which often throw the patient into a decline, and you are apt to get rheumatic complaints, that continue for a long time and disable you from working.

“ If you cannot help taking a cellar, be attentive to have all the windows put into good repair before you venture into it, and, if possible, get it whitewashed. If you attempt to live in a cellar with broken windows, colds and fevers will be the certain consequences. In many parts of the town you sleep in back rooms behind the front cellar, which are dark and have no proper circulation of air. It would be much more healthy to sleep to the front ; at least when you have large families, which is often the case, you ought to divide them, and not to crowd the whole together in the back cellar.

“ Keep your houses and persons as clean as your employments will permit, and do not regret the loss of an hour’s wages when your time is occupied in attending to cleanliness. It is better to give a little time occasionally to keep your houses neat, than to see your whole family lying sick in consequence of working constantly without cleaning.

“ It would be of great service if you could contrive to air your bed and bed-clothes out of doors once or twice a week.

“ Always wash your children from head to foot with cold water before you send them to work in the morning. Take care to



keep them dry in their feet, and never allow them to go to work without giving them their breakfast, though you should have nothing to offer them but a crust of bread and a little water."

It reminds one of the advice given to the starving wretches of the French Revolution who were without bread—"EAT CAKE." No wonder the Commissioners enshrined it in their report and less wonder I preserve it here.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST ROYAL COMMISSION

It would become unutterably tedious to present excerpts of the evidence that was taken from all parts of the country, without exception bearing out the necessity for legislative action to remove ills that had so long existed.

The best picture that can be given as a whole will probably be found in the recommendations of the Commission.

In reading them and in comparing them with present-day conditions we may thank these forebears of ours for the fact that, if much remains to be done, so much has been done.

They dealt with—

- sewering and draining,
- street making and paving,
- removal of refuse,
- prevention of smoke nuisances,
- water supply, baths, and washhouses,
- street improvements,
- width of streets,
- construction of dwellings,
- ventilation of schools, etc.,
- power to remedy nuisances,
- regulation of lodging-houses,
- appointment of medical officers,
- provision of parks.

I suppose there is not a recommendation in the report to which effect has not been given, so potent on Health legislation was the effect of this first Royal Commission. We shall see that the second Royal Commission on Housing in 1885 was as potent in its effect on Housing legislation. What is wanted now is a third Royal Commission on Health



and Housing to crown and complete the work of its predecessors.

Beginning as I did with the opening paragraph of their first Report, I will close with the closing paragraph of their second and final Report :

“ In submitting to your Majesty the measures we recommend for ameliorating the physical condition of the population inhabiting large towns and popular districts by improvements in drainage, cleansing, ventilation, and the supply of water, we must again express our deep conviction of the extent, importance, and difficulty of the subject—a conviction strengthened by the continuance of our investigations. The most important evils affecting the public health throughout England and Wales are characterised by little variety, and it is only in the degree of their intensity that the towns exhibit the worst examples of such evils. Villages and clusters of houses inhabited by the poor are often under the influence of the same causes of disease, though their effect in such situations may be frequently rendered comparatively slight from the more free circulation of the external air. The vitiation of the atmosphere from overcrowding, and the absence of proper ventilation in individual apartments produces in the rural districts the same disease that arises from the same causes in a town population.”

So reports the first Royal Commission on Health and Housing.

The immediate result was the rout of the District Auditor and the inception of that series of legislative Acts which have at long-last almost purged the Augean stables of Great Britain.

Its first result is set out in the concluding chapter of this second stage.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ROUT OF THE DISTRICT AUDITOR

IF I seem to play on his discomfiture, let me not be thought ill-natured or improvident. He is a Robot operated by the Law, his mechanism may be adjusted, and was, in the matters of our concern.

The District Auditor no longer stood in the way of sanitation, for the 9 and 10 Victoria, cap. 96, provides that the guardians of the poor, upon the certificate of two duly qualified medical practitioners, of the unwholesome condition of any dwelling-house, or of the accumulation of offensive or noxious matter, or of the existence of any foul or offensive drain, privy or cesspool, shall cause the owner or occupier of the premises to be summoned before two justices of peace; and if the justices are satisfied of the existence of the nuisance, they are to make an order for cleansing, whitewashing, or purifying such dwelling-house, or the removal of such nuisance, failing in which the guardians may cause the premises to be cleansed and the nuisances to be abated, the cost of so doing to be recovered from the owner or occupier, unless the same be for special reasons excused; and if not so recovered, the expenses are to be defrayed out of the poor-rates of the parish in which they were incurred.

The Act was amended two years afterwards by 11 and 12 Victoria, cap. 123, and again in the following year by 12 and 13 Victoria, cap. 111, the powers for the removal of nuisances being enlarged, and their natures more fully described.

The surveyors of highways are moreover directed "to scour, cleanse, and keep clear all open ditches, gutters, drains, and watercourses adjoining thereto"; and any



person who suffers the draining of soil or offensive matter from any new building into an open ditch, is declared to be guilty of a misdemeanour.

The cholera made its appearance in the autumn of 1848, but it was for a time comparatively inactive.

In the summer of 1849, however, it broke forth with increased virulence, occasioning great mortality in many places. The poorest of the people were chiefly its victims wherever it appeared, but its ravages were partial, many rural districts being exempt from its visitation. Even in some of the populous manufacturing towns it scarcely showed itself, and very few cases occurred in the union workhouses. The regulations promulgated by the Board of Health, with a view to preventing or mitigating this fearful malady, were sent to the several Boards of Guardians for their guidance under the visitation, and were in general zealously executed, and in some instances anticipated—the Union machinery thus proving its efficiency for other objects than the administration of relief under the Poor Law.

So ends our second stage, with a public fully aroused to the necessity of Health legislation, with a set of recommendations that only awaited translation into statutes. This process started immediately and has continued without interruption till the present day with consolidating periods in 1875 and 1925.

The way was opening for legislation on Housing and the man was there to tread it.

The age of Chadwick was closing. The stage was prepared for Shaftesbury, and as he enters it let us survey the man and then turn to his work.



## THIRD STAGE

1851-1868

### CHAPTER XXX

#### THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

THERE have been three great Earls of Shaftesbury. The first Earl was a politician, the third Earl was a philosopher, the seventh Earl was a philanthropist. To the first Earl all men were pawns, to the third they were puzzles, to the seventh they were protégés.

All three callings are somewhat out of date to-day, but perhaps none more than that of philanthropy. Soup and blankets have gone strangely out of fashion.

The Victorian Age was certainly the age of philanthropy. There the quickening of social sympathies synchronised with conditions that presented a rare field for their exercise.

If the men were there the need certainly was.

There were causes to which men might devote their life, and there were men with lives to devote.

None more ready than Anthony Ashley Cooper, and none more devoted.

From the day on Harrow Hill when before his eyes a pauper's coffin fell from the shoulders of its drunken bearers to the day seventy long years later when his own coffin rested in Westminster Abbey he was the servant of the poor and the oppressed.

A political reactionary, a social revolutionary, he achieved his purposes in spite of both his friends and foes.

It is just as easy to belittle him as to belaud him.

No one was more impressed by physical suffering, or more impervious to mental struggle.



No one did more for the safety and welfare of the worker, no one trusted them less.

He voted against the Reform Bill of 1832. He spoke against the Reform Bill of 1867. The Education Act of 1870 he fought because it menaced the Ragged Schools. And yet, to this man and his efforts we largely owe an England in which cruelty is condemned, and from which many of the darkest shadows of social life have been driven away.

Nothing was too small for him to care for, nothing too great for him to attempt. The costermongers of London are disturbed in their trade, it is his business to help them and he does. It is a little matter, a letter to a London Vestry is enough, and it is written. Not thirty-five minutes on that perhaps, but thirty-five years are spent in ceaseless effort before he succeeds in blotting out the diabolic practice which set little children, boys and girls, climbing chimneys to their death.

I find it almost impossible of belief that while I was a child, children hardly older were so destroyed. In 1872, Christopher Drummond in Staffordshire was sent up the flue of a fernery and taken out dead in fifteen minutes.

Only yesterday I was through Washington in the County of Durham, where in 1873 a child seven and a half years old was killed in a flue. In 1875 the last victim of all, George Brewster, fourteen years of age, was suffocated in a flue at Cambridge. Is it credible?

In 1760, more than a century before, Jonas Hanway had pleaded for the "climbing boys" all in vain. In 1840 Shaftesbury had made the first attempt at their relief; it was not until 1875 that he was able to cease from his labours.

This is not the place to detail the work he did in the Factories and in the Mines; enough to say that when men in days however distant trace back the path along which relief has come, they will find his footmarks where that path is first defined.

He had little love for politics, and less for politicians. A study of the election account for the Dorchester election of 1801—£15,000—may furnish the clue!



Despite these heavy costs he realised that the centre of influence and power was Parliament and no man made better use of it.

His interest in housing was early in evidence. In 1839 he is in Scotland and writes in his diary :

*"September 7th.*—Started early for Inverness ; delighted with the scenery ; uncommonly wild and free, very unlike the other Highlands we had seen. Here we beheld, for the first time, true Gaelic life, the real abodes of the Celtic population ; every now and then a few black spots in the middle of the waste marked a highland hamlet. At a distance it looked like a Hottentot kraal ; when near, like a corporation of pig-stys ; yet the people in them seem well-clothed, and the children are stout and ruddy. This is the true taste of the Highlander ; we cannot judge of their condition by the appearance of the frequented parts of Perthshire. Landlords and landladies have learned the trick of setting up ' sweet cottages by the roadside '.

*"September 24th.*— . . . Joined Alison at the Registration Court, and walked with him through the ' dreadful ' part of this amazing city ; it is a small square plot intersected by small alleys, like gutters, crammed with houses, dunghills, and human beings ; hence arise, he tells me, nine-tenths of the disease, and nine-tenths of the crime in Glasgow ; and well it may."

In 1842 Chadwick's work was beginning to make its mark, and from such a work Shaftesbury could not be excluded.

In 1842 he had assisted in founding what was then known as the " Labourers' Friend Society," but was afterwards named the " Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes."

The object of this Society was not to accommodate the people on a large scale—such an undertaking would have been far beyond the power of a simple Committee—but to ventilate the whole question and to keep in view the erection of Model Dwellings for all the varieties and grades of industrial life, and to show, in the buildings it would raise, what was necessary for the comfort and health and decency of the inmates, and also the lowest cost at which the structures could be provided and the rents imposed, consistently with a moderate though fair return of interest on the capital expended.



It had also another object in view ; it wished to prove that in such amelioration "the moral were almost equal to the physical benefits," and that, although numbers would decline or abuse the boon extended to them, many would accept it joyfully and turn it to good account.

In 1844 the first public meeting of the Society for the Improvement of the Labouring Classes was held at Willis's Rooms, and an influential company supported Lord Ashley in the chair. He vigorously exposed the lamentable state of affairs, in regard to the shameful dwellings in which the poor were compelled to live, and urged that if the Society thus inaugurated only did the work that lay before it, it might, by strong representations to the Government, produce most beneficial results.

"Unite all your efforts," he said, "for this one great object ; give it a fair trial ; be not discouraged by arguments, however specious, and failure is impossible. Soon you will see dawn great moral, social and political blessings for those who are the noblest material God ever gave a nation—the working classes of this country."

This appeal went far and wide, and one of the first to respond to it was the Prince Consort, who, in the following July, was graciously pleased to accept the office of President of the Society.

Ashley found, in a large number of instances, it was not extreme poverty that had driven the inhabitants into these dreadful dens—as they were earning what, with proper management, might be called a decent living—but the exorbitant prices charged for that accommodation.

"There were few house-rents so extravagantly high as those paid by the veriest outcasts of our streets. The tenant of a mansion paid a lower nightly rent, in proportion to the space he occupied, and the cubic feet of air he breathed, than did the miserable urchin who spent his two or three pence for permission to stow himself under a bed of a low lodging-house filled to suffocation by the most abandoned of all ages—one of the twenty or thirty inmates of a space not large enough for the accommodation of more than two or three."

One finds him at a Meeting of the "Society for Improving



the Condition of the Working Classes," held at the Hanover Square Rooms, bringing the subject before an influential audience as vividly as it could be brought. He startled his audience by some of the revelations he made, of rooms "so foul and so dark that they were exposed to every physical mischief that can beset the human frame"—so foul that when a physician habituated to enter such places, visited them, he was obliged to write his prescription outside the door.

Lord Ashley there announced that it was the intention of the Society, if funds were forthcoming, to erect in the heart of the parish of St. Giles a Model Lodging-House—a house where a young man coming up from the country for the first time, or others who wish to live in a place where some, at least, of the decencies of life were observed, might find a place of retirement and shelter at a moderate rent. This was the germ of the great Model Lodging-House system, brought to such a pitch of excellence by the London County Council.

In 1848, while Europe was seething with revolution, Shaftesbury succeeded in spite of the opposition of Lord John Russell in securing the presence of the Prince Consort at a meeting of the Society of which he was president. The following particulars relating to it are taken from Hodder's *Life*, being part of a Memorandum by the Earl.

"The Queen sent for me to Osborne; the *Fairy* was ready for me at Gosport, and I went. The Queen was greatly alarmed, and so was the Prince, by the Revolution in France and the exile of Louis Philippe. They feared the continuance of the commotions in England, and were desirous to know how they could exercise their influence to soothe the people.

"The Queen, on my arrival, expressed this sentiment very warmly, and added at dinner, 'The Prince will talk to you to-morrow. We have sent for you to have your opinion on what we should do in view of the state of affairs to show our interest in the working classes, and you are the only man who can advise us in the matter.'

"On the following morning, during a long walk in the gardens, lasting for over an hour and a half, I discussed with the Prince the condition of affairs and the state of the nation. He asked



me my advice, and how he could best assist towards the common weal.

" 'Now, sir,' I said to him, 'I have to ask your Royal Highness whether I am to speak out freely, or to observe Court form?'

" 'For God's sake,' he answered, 'speak out freely.'

" 'Then, sir, I would say that at this juncture you hold a position in which you can render to the country far greater assistance than if you were its King. You can speak as a King, represent a King, without the necessary and inevitable restrictions of a King. Your presence, though formally different, is virtually the presence of the Queen. My earnest advice to you is, that you should put yourself at the head of all social movements in art and science, and especially of those movements as they bear upon the poor, and thus show the interest felt by Royalty in the happiness of the kingdom.'

" 'What can I do?' the Prince asked eagerly.

" 'On the 18th of May next, the anniversary of the Labourers' Friendly Society will be held, and if your Royal Highness will accompany me, first to see some of the dwellings of the poor, and afterwards to preside at the Meeting, I am satisfied it will have a good effect. You should come in three carriages, and have the footmen in red liveries—even these things are not without their influence.'

'The Prince at once fell in with the suggestion, and arrangements for carrying it out were discussed. But when Lord John Russell heard it he was frantic, and brought to bear every possible opposition, as he often did with regard to other schemes which he did not originate himself.

"The result was very happy.

"On the appointed day the Prince arrived with a brilliant cortège, and accompanied by Lord Ashley, went to George Street, St. Giles, and other streets in that neighbourhood, entered house after house to examine the actual state of affairs, and was received everywhere with the utmost enthusiasm.

"Later on the Prince took the chair at the public meeting, and, as Sir Theodore Martin truly says, 'made it the occasion for the speech which first fairly showed to the country what he was.' "

On the passage of the Public Health Act of 1848 Shaftesbury became directly associated with Dr. Southwood Smith and Edwin Chadwick, and with them fought the Cholera in London in 1849. Throughout the year, in fact, from October in 1848, the country had been in a state of growing alarm on account of the outbreaks of cholera, and Lord



Ashley, as Chairman of the Board of Health, was involved in the most harassing and unceasing labours.

It was found that foul drains, overflowing cesspools, foetid waters, overcrowded lodging-houses, damp cellars, and ill-ventilated rooms, attracted the pestilence, which then spread to the houses of the better classes, and to the mansions of the rich.

His work on Housing legislation and therefore the first work on that matter began in 1851.

On April the 8th he introduced into the House of Commons a Bill to "Encourage the Establishment of Lodging-Houses for the Working Classes."

In this Bill it was proposed that towns or parishes having a population of 10,000 or over, should be enabled to build model lodging-houses, and raise money and defray expense from the rates.

In moving for leave to bring in the Bill Lord Ashley drew upon his long experience and graphically described the overcrowded state of lodging-houses both in London and in certain other large towns.

Of the benefits of model lodging-houses he could speak from personal experience, and he told the House of the cheerful punctuality with which the rents were paid; the general freedom from disease; the accommodation that made it possible for men to enjoy staying at home instead of passing their leisure hours in the beer-shops; the ample space for children to play instead of running wild in the streets; the lower rents for comforts and cleanliness than had previously been paid for filth and wretchedness.

It was impossible, however, that private speculation could ever effect the end in view, as the temptation to make inordinate profits had always proved irresistible.

He was certain that he spoke the truth—and a truth which would be confirmed by the testimony of all experienced persons, clergy, medical men, all who were conversant with the working classes—that, until their domiciliary conditions were Christianised (he could use no less forcible a term), all hope of moral or social improvement was utterly vain.



A few days afterwards Lord Ashley introduced a Bill for the Regulation and Inspection of Common Lodging-Houses—houses where individuals, or families, were received for the night.

It was accepted without any preliminary remarks, it being generally known and acknowledged that the state of them, both morally and physically, was most pernicious.

Of these two Bills much is said in these pages. They were the Alpha of Housing legislation, the Omega has yet to be written.

With this year comes the death of his father and his own translation into the House of Lords.

His movement to the Lords gave him a unique opportunity.

He made his first speech in the House of Lords on moving the second reading of the Bill for the "Inspection and Registration of Lodging-Houses." He spoke in a low tone of voice and with brevity, and took occasion to explain that it was the deep interest he felt in the objects of this Bill, and the urgency there was for legislation on the subject, "that had induced him to address their lordships so early after his call to their lordships' House."

In the course of the very brief debate that ensued, the Marquis of Lansdowne, in supporting the motion, "complimented the noble Earl upon the success of his exertions to ameliorate the condition of the poor and destitute," and expressed a hope that he might pursue in the House of Lords the career he had followed in the House of Commons.

It was an almost, if not an altogether unprecedented occurrence for one member to carry a measure through all its stages in the House of Commons, and for that same member to carry the measure through all its stages in the House of Lords. This was, however, accomplished by Lord Shaftesbury, and his Bill became law.

It has been acted upon throughout the kingdom, and police authorities, magistrates, medical men, City Missionaries, and all whom it concerned, have been unanimous in their testimony as to its beneficial results. "It is the best law," said Charles Dickens to Lord Shaftesbury, some years



afterwards, "that was ever passed by an English Parliament."

The second measure—the Bill for "Permitting the erection by Local Authorities of Model Lodging-Houses"—came before the Lords for the second reading on July 8, when Lord Shaftesbury, in the course of his speech, gave many details of a similar character to those he had given before the other house.

This Bill also became law, but from various causes, and principally because it was much mutilated in its passage through the House of Commons, it was only to a very limited extent put into practice, and ultimately became a dead letter.

His activities attracted the most various of men. Dickens meditated a book on factories. Old Sam Rogers encouraged him in his anti-slavery labours in 1852.

One of the earliest things to be noticed by those interested in Housing was the destruction of Houses by Railway Companies, and of this he speedily took notice.

In 1853 the first of the new enterprises of the year is thus referred to in the diary:

"*March 19th.*—Last night movement in House of Lords to obtain a 'standing order' for the protection of the multitudes to be displaced by 'Improvement Companies.' Obtained a Committee of Enquiry. Felt dull, incompetent and confused in my speech. The locality and the audience are one cause, and my own infirmity the other. It dispirits me, for, old as I am, I am full of projects. With me 'the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.'"

Lord Shaftesbury's motion was to the effect that any Bill, sanctioning or involving the pulling down of houses inhabited by the labouring classes, should make provision for the erection, within a convenient distance, of dwelling-houses sufficient for the accommodation of at least as many persons as should be dispossessed.

The question was surrounded with difficulties, even as yet far from being disposed of, which were fully pointed out in the debate that ensued. The matter was at length referred to a Select Committee, who reported in the following



May. It was then resolved that, in future, the promoters of Improvement Bills should report the number of houses inhabited by the labouring classes to be pulled down (if more than thirty in number), and state whether any, and what, provision was made for remedying the inconvenience likely to arise.

Although this was only a step, it was a step in advance, and Lord Shaftesbury was gratified, more especially as, from letters he received from Mr. Cubitt, the great contractor, and others, he felt satisfied that the relations between capital and labour would, by this resolution, be much improved.

His second great effort on behalf of the poor this year was taking charge, in the House of Lords, of another Common Lodging-Houses Bill.

The previous Act had been "the first successful effort that had been made to reach the very dregs of society—the first to penetrate to the deepest dens of vice, filth and misery."

It was necessary, however, that further beneficial provisions should be made, especially as regards inspection, and that other provisions which had hitherto been optional, should be rendered compulsory.

In moving the second reading of the new Bill, on May the 13th, Lord Shaftesbury was able to report, not only from the evidence of others, but from his own personal inspection that the previous Act was working well.

The houses had been cleaned, the walls and ceilings whitewashed, the ventilation improved, the bedding was better in quality, quantity and cleanliness, the number of persons to be admitted had been carefully regulated, and the liability to fever and other contagious diseases considerably lessened.

It was shown, also, that in the common lodging-houses there were, according to the latest returns, no fewer than 80,000 inhabitants who, as well as the keepers of the houses, had materially benefited by the Act.

The principal object of the present Bill was to give fuller power to punish offences under the previous Act, to abate



certain nuisances not hitherto specified, to provide for the removal of the sick to hospitals, and to arrange for reports as to the lodging of beggars and vagrants.

The Bill did not reach the Commons till the 6th of June ; it passed the three readings, however, without debate, and received the Royal assent on August the 4th. The advantages of the measure were so obvious, that a Bill to extend its provisions to Ireland, introduced into Parliament in 1860, passed through both houses without debate, and received the Royal assent a few weeks after its introduction.

Sanitary reform in the Metropolis had become in every sense of the term, a vital question, and the years 1852 and 1853 were marked by several measures of great utility.

Among them were : the "Metropolis Water Act," by which it was provided that no water supplied for domestic use should be taken from any part of the Thames below Teddington Lock ; the "Act to amend the Laws concerning the Burial of the Dead in the Metropolis," giving authority to the Secretary of State to order, for the protection of the public health, that any particular burial-ground should be closed and that any parish should have power to take simple steps for procuring a cemetery ; the Compulsory Vaccination Act ; the Smoke Abatement Nuisance Act ; and others.

In the same year the Board of Health perished.

Here is a poignant note from his diary on this event :

"*December 31st.*—So Sir W. Molesworth is to be our new Master at the Board of Health ? What mortifications I have undergone in this service ! And will this endurance be blessed at last, or will our enemies succeed in destroying the only institution that stands for the physical and social improvement of the people ; it would vex me beyond expression to see Chadwick and Southwood Smith sent to the right-about, and the Board, which, under God, has done and has conceived so many good things, broken up."

The "unpardonable activity" of the Board had, in fact, brought it into unavoidable collision with every interest of magnitude. Referring to this, Lord Shaftesbury says :

"*August 9th, 1853.*—Is it not wonderful, though sad, when



we remember the interests that it has been our duty to approach and handle. We roused all the Dissenters by our Burial Bill, which, after all, failed.

"The parliamentary agents are our sworn enemies, because we have reduced expenses, and consequently their fees, within reasonable limits.

"The Civil Engineers also, because we have selected able men who have carried into effect new principles, and at a less salary.

"The College of Physicians, and all its dependencies, because of our independent action and singular success in dealing with the cholera, when we maintained and proved that many a Poor Law medical officer knew more than all the flash and fashionable doctors of London.

"All the Boards of Guardians: for we exposed their selfishness, their cruelty, their reluctance to meet and to relieve the suffering poor, in the days of the epidemic.

"The Treasury besides (for the subalterns there hated Chadwick; it was an ancient grudge, and paid when occasion served).

"Then come the water companies, whom we laid bare, and devised a method of supply, which altogether superseded them.

"The Commissioners of Sewers, for our plans and principles were the reverse of theirs; they hated us with a perfect hatred."

Then came the end:

"*August 12th.*—On Thursday last Board Bill received the Royal assent, and the old Board was extinguished. We have left no arrears of business; our successor will have all before him; he will not be required to give five minutes to arrears on our period of office. Thus have closed six years of very hard and gratuitous service. I may say, with old George III on the admission of American Independence, 'It may possibly turn out well for the country, but as a gentleman I can never forget it.'"

He had more sympathy with revolution abroad than at home.

He was a friend of Garibaldi and Cavour—he applauded the struggle for independence.

A note in his diary:

"Never left G. in 1864 except when he would go to the opera."

Shaftesbury had no time for amusement and no need for it.

1861 saw him interested in the subject of railway clearances and cheap trains.

On the 28th February, 1861, the Earl of Derby brought under the notice of the House of Lords the subject of the



displacement of labourers in consequence of great metropolitan works and improvements.

Lord Shaftesbury welcomed the consideration of the subject and referring to his efforts in 1853 said, that the attempt to place the responsibility on the parties undertaking these great works had failed, the mere reports ordered to be made having proved utterly useless.

There were at that moment seven bills before Parliament, which, if carried, would authorise 1,145 houses to be demolished, and this would displace 5,422 persons, while the 200 Improvement Bills promised for this session would cause ravages "as great as if a foreign army had invaded the country, plundered the inhabitants, and dispersed them in all directions."

He drew a lively picture of the panic resulting, in poor districts, from sudden notice to quit, of the loss of time in seeking for new homes, and of the inevitable rush at the last moment into already overcrowded localities.

As to the proposal to establish suburban villages for the poor, he contended that it was absolutely necessary that the labouring man should be near the scene of his work, and the woman, too, who earned small sums to supplement the husband's wages.

A short debate ensued, but no conclusion was arrived at, except that the petitions referring to the matter would be ordered to lie on the table.

On March 21, however, Lord Shaftesbury returned to the charge, and moved an addition to the Standing Orders, for the purpose of providing that the report, made by the promoters of railway and other Bills, of the number of houses and inhabitants displaced, should be referred to the Select Committee on each Bill, who should enquire into and report on the same.

In supporting this proposal he pointed out that unless something was speedily done, great moral, financial and even political mischief would ensue.

From personal inspection he could say, that the proposed improvements would displace a quiet, orderly, decent population, and inflict absolute ruin on many.



To arrange for cheap trains for workmen was giving a stone when they asked for bread.

The proposed suburban villages did not meet the present immediate need, however beneficial they might be in the future.

After some discussion Lord Shaftesbury's proposal was (with a slight modification) adopted. A fortnight afterwards he addressed the Lords on the subject of cheap trains for workmen and advocated these, not as solving the difficulty, but as tending to mitigate the evils caused by the demolition of labourers' homes in the Metropolis. It was stated by Lord Redesdale in reply, that, in consequence of the alteration in the Standing Orders on March 21, clauses arranging for such trains to be run had been inserted in the Railways Bills now before the House, and would serve as guides for the future.

He used strong language, and his excuse for it is worth noting :

"I have not that faculty for mild speech which distinguishes some persons in this country. A story was told me by the late Earl Grey relating to himself and Mr. Burke. Lord Grey told me that on one occasion when in the House of Commons, as Mr. Grey, he had been speaking with considerable force of language and greater vehemence of tone than some persons might have thought seemly. On resuming his seat he said to Mr. Burke, 'I hope I have not shown much temper.' 'Temper!' replied Mr. Burke. 'Temper, sir, is the state of mind suited to the occasion.'"

In his note on the Cross Bill there is a ring of melancholy.

"*January 11th, 1875.*—Sanitary questions, of which I saw the dawn, and had all the early labours, are passed into 'Imperial' subjects. Boards are everywhere, laws have been enacted, public attention roused, and Ministers have declared themselves willing to bring to bear on them the whole force of Government. Not only am I not wanted, but my interference would be superfluous and an incumbrance. Social questions are in the same position. They have advanced into the regions of 'Imperialism.' All questions of labour are decided by combinations or by statute. The working classes have become patrons instead of clients; and they both can and do fight their own battles.

"It was not so forty years ago, when I began the struggle.



The matter of their dwellings is still one of interest, but here, again, the movement has passed from individuals, to companies, speculators, Acts of Parliaments, and now at last, so Mr. Cross has promised, to the hands of the Secretary of State. How completely my aid is of little esteem at present may be seen in the fact that neither on the Factory Bill nor on the forthcoming measure for Industrial Dwellings have I been consulted to the extent of a single enquiry.

"Have often called myself 'The Great Pis-Aller,' and so events have proved it. People took me because they could get no other. There is nothing to complain of. I saw it all along, and I conformed, because I saw a duty in submission."

It was as he had stated. The important questions of the Housing of the Poor, and the improvement of Artisans' Dwellings, on which Lord Shaftesbury had been engaged ever since 1843, were growing in urgency every year. Metropolitan improvements were being made in all directions; the poor were being displaced in greater numbers than ever; population was increasing with gigantic strides; and little or no provision was being made for the reasonable accommodation of the labouring classes.

In 1872 he had laid the first memorial stone of a workmen's city, called by his own name, the "Shaftesbury Park," and situated at Lavender Hill in the Wandsworth Road. It introduced a new era in the progress of working men. It was a town, on all the modern principles of sanitary arrangements, with recreation grounds, clubs, schools, libraries, baths, and no public-houses. Shops, too, were to be ignored, and the whole to proceed on the co-operative system. His comment, in the diary on the day he laid the stone, was this:

"*August 5th, 1872.*—It is a great experiment and doubtful one. Yet, after thirty years of thought and trial, see no other mode of improving on a large scale, the domiciliary condition of the people. Charity cannot do it. The capitalists will not do it. The people themselves must do it, and here they have attempted it. . . ."

The scheme was undertaken by the Artisans' Labourers' and General Dwellings Company (Limited)—an organisation which took its rise in 1867 in consequence of the extensive demolition of houses caused by various metropolitan



improvements. Although Lord Shaftesbury was only nominally associated with the scheme, he took a deep interest in its working, and lent what aid was in his power to advance its prosperity.

On the 11th of May, 1875, when the Government brought in the Artisans' Dwellings Bill, Lord Shaftesbury supported it in an able speech, in which he pointed out the overwhelming difficulties to be overcome in finding suitable accommodation for populations displaced by improvements. In his opening sentence he said : " The Government have done their best to master the difficulty ; but they have not mastered it, nor will they do so, until after wide and protracted experience."

The prophecy was true ; and it was not until ten years later, when the Royal Commission, with the Prince of Wales as its most active member, was appointed, that the problem drew near its solution.

A busy life.

The year that had opened with the regret that he was stranded while the stream of life rushed past, found him towards its close in the full rush and roar of the torrent. " Intense correspondence of all sorts, on every subject under the sun " : on Church matters ; on the revival of Rubrics ; on Ragged Schools ; a public correspondence in *The Times* with the Chairman of the Metropolitan School Board ; on trade ; the adulteration of British goods for the Colonial markets ; and on dwellings for the poor. In addition to which he was " much harassed by letters and business on Artisans' Dwellings Co."

Towards the close of 1883 the subject of the Housing of the Poor became the question of the hour. Lord Shaftesbury was urged to take part in the discussion ; his wide experience, ranging over upwards of forty years, placing him as one of the first authorities on the subject. He contributed an article to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and another to the *Nineteenth Century*.

Here is his note :

" *November 5th.*—A few days after my promise to do so, a letter from my old friend, Edwin Arnold, editor of the *Daily*



*Telegraph*, to same effect ; sorry to be obliged to answer that ' I was engaged.' Forty-one years ago I started the question, and my small Society built my model houses ; but all that is now forgotten. Others have come forward and have effaced the memory of the first movers. But this is the natural and necessary issue of all such efforts ; the last who come are the first served."

In these articles, in reviewing what had been done in the past, and the difficulties that beset the question in the present, he expressed his hope of a satisfactory issue, and his belief that it was a question capable of solution.

In the following year the Housing of the Poor was still the leading social subject, and a Royal Commission was appointed, on which the Prince of Wales was one of the most active members. The investigations of the Commissioners culminated in Lord Salisbury's Act of 1885—the "Housing of the Working Classes Act."

When Lord Salisbury brought forward his motion on the 22nd of February, 1885, for the appointment of a Commission, Lord Shaftesbury supported it in an able speech, which, as he records, was "received with singular attention, much cheering, and abundant congratulations."

When the Commission sat, he was the first witness examined, and although at his time of life and in his state of health he "dreaded being summoned before such a tribunal," lest his memory should fail in points of detail, and he should be unable to do justice to the cause he had so much at heart, his evidence was a masterpiece of exhaustive argument, enriched by the experience of sixty years' earnest consideration of the subject.

His death came in 1888.

The tributes paid to him may well be entered here :

"My Lords," said the Duke of Argyle in a memorable speech in 1885 upon the political situation, "the social reforms of the last century have not been mainly due to the Liberal Party. They have been due mainly to the influence, character and perseverance of one man—Lord Shaftesbury."—"That," said Lord Salisbury, in endorsing this eloquent tribute, "is, I believe, a very true representation of the facts."

Having learned to know the man, let us look at some of his work and the results that followed upon it.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE LODGING-HOUSE ACTS

SHAFTESBURY was responsible for two Acts dealing with lodging-houses. The first was an "Act to Encourage the Establishment of Lodging-Houses for the Working Classes," and the second was an "Act for the Regulation and Inspection of Common Lodging-Houses." These Acts are not to be confused.

The first fell dead as far as its operation was concerned ; only one town, Huddersfield, providing lodging-houses under it between the years 1851 and 1875. Despite this it was the more important of the two in that it was the fount from which flowed the main stream of Housing, namely, that part of it which provides new houses.

The Act for the Regulation and Inspection of Common Lodging-Houses, though it has produced no such important results, was immediately successful and produced a great reform in the conditions of the wretched places that served in those years for common lodging-houses. We have already seen something of what their condition was.

As I write I have before me a series of faded Parliamentary Papers in beautiful type bearing dates from 1853 to 1859 which reveal the interest taken by some Members of Parliament in the matter.

Mr. Brotherton called for a return in March, 1853, and insatiable, asked for a supplementary return in May of the same year. He was supplied with the reports made to the Home Secretary, one of which, as if to deprecate criticism, is marked on the back "under 4 ozs." These reports continue to 1859. Concurrent with them are reports from Medical Officers of Health to the General Board of Health on Common Lodging-Houses.



Interesting old reports, they serve to give proper perspective to housing. During these years Balaclava and Lucknow took on new meanings to their names. The Lady of the Lamp was bearing the flame that was to flicker so long in the shaded rooms of her London home. Russia and India were taking their toll of British life. It is something to learn that these did not cover the whole ambit of political interest, and that some time and some attention could be given to another conflict that raged not in the Courts of Kings, but in the courts of crime, disease and destitution.

Interesting names in them. One of them made to the Rt. Hon. Spencer H. Walpole, Home Secretary; did it turn him a moment I wonder from the studies that were to find their outcome in his *History*? Another made at the instance of Viscount Palmerston directing a return to be made as to the number of children below the age of puberty found at large by the police as mendicants and thieves. Was it his own concern that prompted the enquiry? One would like to think that the exponent of a vigorous foreign policy, could contemplate a home policy of at least some vigour. Or was it merely a departmental interest? Palmerston was Home Secretary in 1854 and was still seeking the *métier* in which he made name and fame. There is a return which bears the shining name of Shaftesbury, made pursuant to an address of the House of Lords dated 25th February, 1859. It was concerned with the condition of single rooms occupied by families in the Metropolis. That was in 1859: in 1931, over seventy years have passed and there are still thousands of families occupying single rooms in the Metropolis. Shade of Shaftesbury, canst thou rest!!



## CHAPTER XXXII

### MR. POLICE COMMISSIONER HAY

So much for the superfices and superscription of these old papers. What of their contents? Let us take them in their order.

The first one is written by a humane man—one Captain Hay, a Commissioner of Metropolitan Police. He begins :

“ With a sincere desire to ameliorate the wretched condition of the lodgings of the poorer classes, I cheerfully received directions from the Secretary of State to take under my charge the common lodging-houses as a new branch of police duties.

“ I was the more readily induced to undertake this onerous duty from the strong representation made by the General Board of Health of the miserable state of these dwellings, which that Board described as the great source of contagious and loathsome diseases.

“ This inducement was strengthened by the Report of the Constabulary Commissioners, representing these houses as hot-beds of crime and moral depravity amongst that class of the population which is obliged to resort to them.

“ In the Metropolis the common lodging-houses are sources of streams of mendicants to all parts of the country ; they are a refuge for them, and in many cases are in fact most infamous brothels ; yet in these places are to be found industrious emigrant labourers, with their wives and children, driven into them for want of other suitable shelter.”

Here the opportunity may be taken of correcting an impression that might otherwise be formed. The term “ lodging-house ” is to-day associated with the casual labourer, the searcher for work, those who share a common bed or have at most a cubicle. It is not associated by us with family life of even the poorest kind.

In its original signification it did include this ; so much



so that the series of legislative Acts, of which the Act of 1851 was the forerunner, was until their consolidation with the Torrens and Cross Acts, the series that provided for new and additional accommodation for working-class families, and to that extent were the precursor of the Acts from 1909 to the present date which have set in motion the vast housing machinery now operating.

This will be plain from my next extract from Commissioner Hay's report.

"Summonses have principally been issued in respect of houses in those districts in which Irish have located themselves, in which houses families of Irish are commonly found occupying one room. Such tenancy and occupation have rendered it extremely difficult to reach the person really responsible as 'keeper' for the condition of the house ; for there is, first, the owner ; secondly, his tenant for the whole house ; thirdly, the sub-tenant for a room ; and fourthly, five or six persons or families occupying one room as lodgers. Each grade of tenants endeavours to obtain as large a profit as possible for the wretched accommodation afforded."

The poor Irish ! Here and in Liverpool they are marked as responsible for conditions of which they are at once the cause and the victims.

Excellent man, he cannot refrain from moralising, as indeed no more can I, but it is such excellent moralising it could ill be spared.

"These fruitful sources of crime, disease, moral depravity, and distress cannot be too closely investigated, nor too speedily remedied.

"The efforts of parties well inclined to promote the well-being of society will be of little avail whilst there are such causes in operation, sufficient to counteract all the exertions made to this end.

"Churches, schools, free libraries, and mechanics' institutes, all excellent in themselves, will be found to have but small results, whilst large masses of the population grow up so immersed in ignorance and vice as to look on it with complacency, and to live in it without disgust.

"Our knowledge of the sources of fever and other diseases will have been acquired in vain unless the prescribed remedial measures for prevention are promptly and efficiently applied.

"If a complete eradication of these moral and physical evils,



which have to be much deplored, cannot be at once effected, such means at least as are within our power we are called on to use."

Here are scenes from his pen that might furnish still more pictures for a Hogarth :

" In a house in a low part of Westminster, a man bloated with debauchery has under his control from twelve to twenty young women, whose only means of subsistence are the earnings of an abandoned life. These women are lodged and fed by this keeper, and are always in his debt and therefore in his power. The depraved words and looks addressed by this monster to these inmates, in the presence even of the officers (as they visited room by room), were such as to show how completely these poor wretches are under his savage dominion.

" If the amount of gain brought to him by these unfortunate young females be not such as he expects (as stated by those who have witnessed the practices in these abodes of misery), it is no unusual thing with him, as a mark of his displeasure, to fell them to the ground with a blow.

" Thieves and vagabonds of every description are found haunting and occupying these places ; gaming and card-playing, eagerly pursued, seemed their favourite amusement. A bed in which women were sitting up, undressed, was used as a card table, surrounded by these men absorbed in play.

" In one house the officers found in a large room from twenty to thirty men and women congregated (nearly all Irish), some drinking, others swearing and quarrelling, another set laughing and joking in a most obscene way ; and amidst all this was lying on a wretched dirty bed of straw an old man apparently unable to move from age and decrepitude.

" In another house, similarly occupied, an old woman was sitting on a bed, undressed, smoking her pipe, surrounded in a similar manner, apparently little disturbed by the scene around her.

" In another instance, where death was present, the scene was divested of its solemnity by the corpse being gaily dressed with ribbons, while the feelings of the persons present were greatly excited by a supply of drink, and one woman, stupidly drunk, was lying on the floor partly under the table on which the corpse was laid.

" As the result of extreme poverty, death was exhibited in a different aspect in a small room in Bermondsey, measuring 14 ft. by 9 ft. The door opened immediately on the court in which the house was situated, and on a table was lying the



corpse of a woman so close to the entrance as to be necessarily exposed to the view of all passing.

"The windows had scarcely a pane of glass, and the boards of the floor being all destroyed and gone, the damp ground formed the floor, and the ceiling was falling down. A miserable staircase, so small and broken as to make it difficult to ascend, led from one corner of this room to the one over. On the top of these stairs had formerly been a partition and door, but nearly the whole of the partition was destroyed and the door was off its hinges. This room, like the one beneath, was dilapidated and wretched, the glass gone and the whole filthy in the extreme."

The good man is cheered, however, by the sight of better things at hand. He says :

"Contrasted with the foregoing statements, the beneficial results arising from the erection of model lodging-houses stand out in cheering character. In the model house each family is provided with rooms so arranged as to partake of the character of a private lodging, with such necessary sanitary appliances as are comprised in a good supply of water, a separate closet for each family, efficient drainage, and a due removal of dust, ashes, etc., all of which tend to promote bodily health and strength, love of home, and attention to moral and social duties, which are so essential to the best interests of the people."

A fine sight surely, "rooms so arranged as to partake of the character of a private dwelling! a good supply of water!! a separate closet for each family!!!"

Could the good man, as he penned these words in December, 1852, have had the gift of vision he would have seen more than seventy years after people gravely considering bye-laws designed to bring about these conditions, and deciding with equal gravity that their operation should be postponed till there were no more Rent Restriction Acts.

Who shall say the Gods have no cause for laughter? Hopeful Captain Hay, may his mantle yet descend upon his successors.

No passing enthusiasm his, no spasmodic energy.

Continuing and unceasing he tells Lord Palmerston all about it in April, 1854. In the two years he has had a rare battle, first with the tenants over whom alone he had compulsory powers, now he has the landlords in at least



a partial grip, and he tells his story with hardly less zest and verve.

Reading between the lines one can see he has troubles with the Magistrates. Mr. Justice Shallow is a great stickler for the Law. Like Omar, Captain Hay heard:

Great Argument  
About it and about.

The Act said a nuisance "in or about"; but what did "about" mean, did it mean "on" or did it mean "near"? A very practical difference as the following story told by Captain Hay shows.

"In Fox's Lane, parish of Saint John of Wapping, there is an open dust-yard, containing about a thousand loads of refuse of a most offensive nature, forming one side of the street, to the length of seven houses, which were on the opposite side. This reeking mass of filth had accumulated to the height of the first-floor windows. As might be expected, the occupants complained very loudly and very justly of the stench. The nuisance was so great that the inmates of these houses were compelled to keep the doors and windows closed as much as possible, to shut out the poisonous effluvia which was constantly being emitted from this accumulation of filth; and they complained also of their health being affected as a natural consequence.

"It being doubtful whether the police could interfere under the Common Lodging-Houses Act, the Parish Authorities commenced proceedings against the owner of the yard, and obtained a decision from the magistrates at the Thames Police Court for the nuisance to be abated. The owner then commenced slowly to remove the refuse; but it was found, on observation by the police, that a larger quantity was brought to the yard than was taken away; consequently there was an increase rather than a diminution of the nuisance.

"There being two registered lodging-houses near, and affected by this yard, I directed that a summons should be taken out against the owner, to ascertain if the Common Lodging-Houses Act would meet the case.

"The question was heard at the Thames Police Court; the lodging-house keepers attended and gave evidence of the great annoyance and injury themselves and lodgers were exposed to. The owner urged on his part the necessity of having such depots to receive the filth which he as a parish contractor was obliged to collect. The magistrate expressed his belief that the time was quite arrived when such noxious accumulations must be



deposited where the public health would not suffer or be endangered from its proximity ; he should therefore make an order for abating the nuisance.

"The owner stated he would use all diligence in effecting the entire removal of the nuisance ; but a little further observation on the part of the police enabled them to see that the evil continued, and that the same course was being pursued as was done in the case of the order obtained by the parish.

"I therefore directed an application to be made for an order, to enable the police to remove it, and charge the cost on the owner. Before granting it the magistrate (as the expense incurred would be large) reviewed his decision, and declined making the order, being doubtful whether the nuisance was sufficiently connected with a common lodging-house to enable the commissioner to act. The offensive dust-yard remains."

The Law officers of the Crown bearing the great names of Cockburn and Bethell concurred that "proximity" was not enough and there must be connexion so as to be "about" the lodging-house.

There were owners in those days whose descendants still remain. Hear Captain Hay.

"At No. 5 Glasshouse Street, Saint Mary, Whitechapel, a privy used in common with four houses, was found over a cesspool overflowing and running into a room occupied by a family as a sleeping apartment.

"One child died in this room on the 22nd August, and at the time of inspection another was lying ill. The drain in the yard was stopped, causing the yard to be covered with filthy water in which excrement was floating. The butt that contained the water drunk by the inmates of the house was placed in the midst of this filth."

In this case a summons to abate the nuisance was obtained, the result of which was correctly reported in the newspapers of October 3, and is as follows :

"The owner of the premises said he was willing to do all in his power to abate the nuisance, which he attributed to a defective drain-pipe. He thought he ought not to be dictated to, as to the way his property was to be managed. He had given orders for the cesspool to be emptied, and it was about to be done, and there was no occasion for these proceedings."

In this case, an error being made in the summons (the occupier being named instead of the owner), the magis-



trate's order to abate the nuisance could not be executed in consequence of the poverty of the tenant.

The owner, who was in the court at the time the case was heard, would consequently take no steps in the matter, availing himself of the error to escape the legal power of the magistrate's order; and it was not until after serving a fresh notice, and another hearing at the police court, that the nuisance was removed by him; thus showing, to quote Captain Hay yet again, "that there are owners of property whom nothing but the strong arm of the law can move."



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### ONE FAMILY—ONE ROOM!

WITH his report Captain Hay passes, and the reports that follow are by Sub-Commissioners and in more official vein. They all testify to the fearful conditions prevailing before the Act and the improvement effected by it.

One curious case is reported in 1857, squalid enough and yet not without its comic side, showing the Law in Gilbertian aspect.

The keeper of a lodging-house was proceeded against, but as he was able to show that the house was not only a lodging-house but a brothel, he escaped; the learned magistrate dismissing the summons with the words:

"If I took the literal sense of the Common Lodging-Houses Act, I should say houses of this description come within the meaning of the law; but I do not consider the legislation intended it to apply to brothels, or some clause would have said so in express terms, and upon these grounds I dismiss the summons."

On which the Sub-Commissioner respectfully remarks:

"If keepers of common lodging-houses, by thus letting part of their house as a brothel become exempt from the operation of the Act, it may fairly be anticipated that very many will adopt such a course to evade the law."

In 1857 a return was made to the House of Commons giving the opinion gathered from Metropolitan Districts and from Provincial Districts which had adopted the powers of the Public Health Acts 1848, and been constituted Health districts.

It was without exception a chorus of praise of the 1851 Act and must have been gratifying reading to the noble author of that Act.



Perhaps the most interesting of all, and the most pertinent to the present day, is the report of the enquiry into the "Condition of single rooms occupied by families in the Metropolis" called for by the Earl of Shaftesbury himself.

It is made to a Secretary of State for Home Affairs, whose name brings no recollections to my mind, the Rt. Hon. Thomas Sothorn Estcourt, M.P.

It is an uninterrupted narrative of squalor, filth, immorality and disease.

Of Shoreditch and Clerkenwell, of Limehouse and Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Halbury, Greenwich and St. George's in the East, the melancholy tale is told—men, women and children herded like swine. Foul and offensive privies, untrapped drains, no wash-houses, insufficient water supply. The children stunted in their growth, squalid and unhealthy in their appearance. Cesspool plentiful, water scarce. Little wonder that Maurice and Kingsley and Hughes grew hot and indignant and intolerant of those whom they thought responsible. Kingsley's verses show that the evil was not a town evil but extended to the countryside.

I wonder if some member of Parliament would think it worth his while to supplement this enquiry of 1859 by asking the Ministry of Health to-day to report on the "condition of single rooms occupied by families in the Sanitary Districts of England and Wales." It might not be much pleasanter reading.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUSE

PROPHETS may be without honour in their own country, but worthy Commissioner Hay occasionally received encouragement. Thomas Hopley of 57, Gower Street—and I shall look for the number when next I pass that way—wrote to him conveying his thanks for the opportunity of seeing the operation of the Act. He must have been himself at least a minor prophet, for he wrote these words ; an intelligent anticipation of the view that was to hold the field seventy years ahead of his day :

“ There is another point of deep moment, but which is, I fear, beyond your control.

“ If the erection of model lodging-houses and of places of refuge for the destitute do not go hand in hand with the working of this Act, it is impossible not to see that the legislature is giving a direct encouragement for cold-hearted speculators to continue raising up tenements of that unwholesome kind, which needs must bring disease, expense, and disgrace upon the nation.

“ These outcasts *must* find shelter somewhere.

“ If the legislature do not insist upon healthy homes being built for them, huts and hovels will be everywhere erected on a principle which will render health impossible.

“ Every parish should be made to find a shelter for those ejected from its overcrowded lodging-houses.

“ When some such arrangement becomes the law of the land, and the Lodging-Houses Act be somewhat amended, and the Health of Towns Act be made compulsory, and the hands of the Board of Health greatly strengthened, we shall have a better opportunity than of seeing what diseases (if any) are natural to man, and what are occasioned by disobedience to the laws of the Creator.”

While much was undoubtedly done to improve the condition of existing lodging-houses, in only one town was the



aspiration of Mr. Hopley realised. In a return made to the House of Commons, 455 of 1875, it was stated that Huddersfield was the only town which had provided lodging-houses under the Labouring Classes Lodging-Houses Act, 1851. The provision was for 150 persons. The mountain had produced a mouse!

Yet what English Authorities failed to do an American citizen was to attempt.

Let us look at him. George Peabody.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### GEORGE PEABODY

I DO not know if George Peabody saw the pedigree furnished for him by C. M. Endicott, Esq., of Salem, Mass., but here it is :

#### ANCESTRAL RECORD OF THE PEABODY FAMILY

The Peabody family may well be called old, since it has already attained a growth of nearly two thousand years.

Boadie, it seems was the primeval name. He was a gallant British chieftain, who came to the rescue of his queen, Boadicea, when bleeding from Roman rods, from the disastrous battle in which she lost her crown and her life. He then fled to the Cambrian Mountains. There his posterity lived, and became the terror of the inhabitants of the Lowlands. Thus it was that the term Pea, which means "Mountain," was prefixed to Boadie, which means "man."

There was a Peabody, it seems, among the Knights of the Round Table, for the name was first given with due heraldic honours by command of King Arthur himself.

Whether so or not, there was something of the qualities of the Round Table in the man himself.

The closing years of the seventeenth century saw him arrive in the South Parish of Danvers, Mass., on the 18th February, 1795, and his last breath passed in London on the 4th November, 1869.

These seventy-six years began not quite three months before the Berkshire Justices and other discreet persons at Speenhamland proved themselves a century too soon in relating wages to the cost of living and so hastened to its



end the parochial administration of the Poor Law which began with the statute of Elizabeth.

Sir George Nicholls, one of the first Poor Law Commissioners, tells with pride how in Southwell he brought to an end the system of allowances in aid of rent.

A generation later George Peabody was to startle two hemispheres by a great donation to be used in supplying housing accommodation at a rent yielding only half the normal rent of capital, and barely a century later local authorities whom Nicholls never knew were to be unanimous in pressing for such an allowance to be continued.

A merry-go-round the world, and one has only to wait to see history repeat itself.

The years saw many things and the small boy of Danvers, Mass., filled them very full.

He was diligent in business, and had the Biblical reward.

His donations totalled at the end ten million dollars, which began with a dollar earned by selling sweets and cake on the market-place of Danvers.

He enjoyed the rare combination of money and imagination, and saw in every need an opportunity. It might be by rescuing the American section of the 1851 Exhibition from the ridicule to which his country left it, or by equipping a rescue expedition to search for Franklin.

He showered his gifts with equal impartiality on the city of his birth and the city of his adoption.

What wakened his interest in the poor of London I do not know, but his great gifts, commencing with £150,000 in 1862, ultimately reaching half a million pounds, placed him at a bound in the premier position of philanthropy.

It was a drama that took the town by storm.

An American citizen caring for London's poor to the tune of half a million!

A veritable spectacle.

Well might the city yield a double admiration, first to the man who could amass such wealth, and then to him who could so dispense it.

What imagination it stirred, what hopes it roused!

At his centenary celebrations in 1895 his eulogists pre-



dicted "that in fifty years time the Peabody tenement houses will supplant the entire tenement house system that has disgraced the city of London so long."

A fond hope as time has shown, but an excusable one. If private charity could satisfy human needs, Peabody's was big and broad enough to do it, but thank God, it never has and never will.

Blake was not so mad when he said—

"I heard a Devil curse  
Over the heath and the furse.  
Mercy could be no more  
If there were nobody poor.  
And pity no more could be  
If all were happy as ye.  
And mutual fear brings peace  
Misery's increase  
All mercy pity peace.  
.  
At his curse the sun went down  
And the heavens gave a frown."  
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While human beings live and love, suffer and sorrow, there will always be a field for human sympathy to irrigate, but the age in which the material and mental needs of society as a whole could be satisfied by charity, if indeed it ever existed, is passing and happily so.

Collective provision for human needs out of a fund to which all contribute in a measure perhaps not to be accurately estimated is taking its place, and though in this period of transition the new method may stand out rather starkly against the old, the day will come when to the self-respecting participants in organised human activity the old method will appear as incredible as the alleged miracles of the Middle Ages.

Yet as the faint ineffable fragrance of far-off and saintly life lingers in the literature of those days, so some meaning of those things which brought rich and poor together round the silent form in Westminster Abbey in the fall of 1869 will stir men in the future with something of that thrill which comes to us in these days when we read of experiences



through which other men have passed, but which will never come to us.

In his town of Danvers, proud of its prosperity, its commerce, its development, there is nothing of which they are more proud than of a letter from a Massachusetts boy to his little sister, and of a letter signed Victoria written to the same boy grown a man. These, to citizens of Danvers, symbolise at once his origin and his destiny.

If the river he struck from the rock is flowing away into the sands, it has fertilised many a field, and brought to harvest many a crop of human hopes and aspirations that but for him would never have seen the sun.

He died as the fourth stage of our history begins and perhaps not unsuitably so, for it marks the entrance on to the stage of housing activity of the State in a rôle not before taken—a rôle which tends to monopolise the whole stage.

As one of the great house builders, we may leave Peabody to his sleep and, in the next chapter, trace the particular movement to which he gave the most powerful impetus of his time, up to the date on which modern housing legislation begins.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### PRE-WAR PHILANTHROPY

THE sum of money given by Mr. Peabody in 1862 for the purposes of his fund was £150,000 ; in 1866 £100,000 ; in 1868 £100,000 ; received by bequest from him in 1873, £150,000 ; making a total of £500,000 ; to which has been added £27,887 7s. 4d., the bequest of the late Henry Fox, Esq., and money received as net income £1,307,146 13s. 1d., making the total fund on the 31st December, 1913, £1,835,034 os. 5d.

The fund, with its accumulations since the year 1873, when Mr. Peabody's bequest brought his total gift to £500,000, shows an average increase per annum at compound interest of just under 3 per cent.

A useful addition to the foregoing account of the Peabody Fund, are the following extracts from the Minutes of Proceedings of the London County Council on 23rd July and 15th October, 1918, and 3rd June, 1919.

#### HOUSING TRUSTS

There are four important philanthropic trusts for providing dwellings for persons of the working-class in London and the neighbourhood, namely :

The Peabody Donation Fund (founded 1862).

The Guinness Trust (founded 1889).

The Sutton Trust (founded 1900).

The Lewis Trust (founded 1906).

The activities of the Sutton and Lewis Trusts are not limited to the metropolitan area, and the former has schemes in hand in Birmingham and Newcastle. The accommodation provided in London and the neighbourhood by the four trusts is 25,781 rooms.

The capital of the trusts is £1,751,168.



The trusts have the following schemes in hand :

*Peabody Trust.*—This trust has acquired or arranged for the purchase of a site in Fulham Palace Road in the neighbourhood of Hammersmith Broadway, consisting of about  $6\frac{3}{4}$  acres.

*Guinness Trust.*—This trust has recently acquired a site of about 2 acres in Kennington Park Road, on which it is proposed to erect block dwellings containing about 220 tenements with 550 rooms.

*Sutton Trust.*—This trust has at present no scheme in hand in London, but it is negotiating the purchase of a site in Islington.

*Lewis Trust.*—This trust has a scheme partly completed in Walmer Road near Camberwell Green. It was proposed to erect 15 blocks of dwellings containing about 340 tenements with 800 rooms on this site, of which four blocks have been completed, but these are at present in the occupation of the War Department.

The above-mentioned schemes would probably provide a total accommodation of nearly 2,500 rooms.

In addition to the trusts dealt with in the foregoing extracts, the Minutes before referred to make the following references to other forms of housing activities.

#### HOUSING SOCIETIES

The only public utility society registered under the Act of 1893 which has provided any considerable number of working-class dwellings in London is the London Housing Society, Ltd., which has in recent years provided about 1,900 rooms in St. Marylebone and St. Pancras.

#### LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES

A substantial but not a large amount of housing has been provided by limited liability companies in London. Particulars with regard to sixteen of the principal of these companies which are available show that their combined capital expenditure amounts to over £7,000,000 and the accommodation provided by them consists of about 83,000 rooms.

Most of the companies were established many years ago, and their operations in recent years have not been extensive.



## PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

While in the past such a very large proportion of the houses have been provided by private enterprise, there are distinct limitations upon the work which private enterprise claims to be able to undertake. There are several organisations apparently entitled to be considered as representing the views of those best able to speak on behalf of private enterprise, but the general conclusion to be drawn from what has been made public on the subject is perhaps best summarised in the following paragraph from a report of the Organising Committee of the National Conference on Housing after the War :

*" Housing of the Poor.—*There is, however, one phase of the housing problem which would appear naturally to fall within the scope of many local authorities, namely, the housing of the poorest classes whose wage-earning capacity is not sufficient to enable them to pay adequate rents. Clearly private enterprise cannot deal with this need and it is equally clear that it will have to be met. In the opinion of the Conference this duty alone will tax to the uttermost the energies and resources of local authorities."

The two largest bodies—the Peabody Trust and the Artisans, Labourers and General Dwellings Company, were founded in 1867. It is significant that the first effective Housing Act was passed in 1868. Since that time though, as has been shown, other semi-philanthropic bodies have engaged in housing, there has never been any suggestion that these activities could be of anything but the most limited character.

During the last few years there have been spasmodic efforts to revive philanthropic interest in this matter which have met with more or less success, but it is to be imagined that an even narrower field is assigned to their efforts than opened before the eyes of Peabody and his emulators.

1867 marked for all practical purposes the passing of Philanthropy from the field of service, and 1868 was to mark the effective entry of the State. Its flag-bearer was William Thomas McCullagh Torrens. With his Act began our fourth stage, and he himself is worth a note.



## FOURTH STAGE

1868-1875

### CHAPTER XXXVII

#### WILLIAM THOMAS McCULLAGH TORRENS

WILLIAM THOMAS McCULLAGH TORRENS came of a fighting race and did not disgrace them. An Irish stock out of a Swedish soldier of fortune who fought at the Battle of Boyne, they were a race of soldiers, churchmen and statesmen.

They fought in every part of the world—the West Indies under Abercombie, in Egypt under Baird, in Portugal under Wellesley.

Sir Henry Torrens who lies so quiet in Welwyn Church (what does he think of the Garden City) saw service in both hemispheres. He held the forests of St. Vincent against the Indians, carried an Egyptian bullet to his grave, and came with credit out of the ill-fated Buenos Aires expedition which sent Whitelock to a court-martial, and gave a modern novelist the motif for one of his best tales.

The friend of Wellington, he found his wife at St. Helena and became the father of another soldier, Sir Arthur Wellesley Torrens, almost as distinguished as himself. Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman were to afford display for the Torrens ability equally with Vimiera, St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

Not only soldiers these Torrens, but capable administrators, the father revised the "Regulations for the Exercise and Field Movements of the Infantry of the Army," while the son administered the Isle of St. Lucia with such excellent



sanitary provisions that Wellington published them in orders for the imitation of the whole Army.

Yet another branch found time not only to fight at Walcheren but to write on economics with such skill as to win the praise of the public economists of the day. Robert Torrens, half-pay colonel, was the first economist to attribute the production of wealth to the three factors, land, labour and capital, and to draw attention to the law of diminishing returns.

Not content with settling the laws of the old world he sought to establish a new in Australia. There Lake Torrens bears his name and Adelaide sits on a river also known by it. His son was the first Premier of South Australia, and if England was to have a Torrens Act they have one in Australia as well.

The English Act deals with buildings, the Australian with land. The latter substituted throughout the whole of that great commonwealth, title by registration for the clumsy and expensive title by conveyance.

Of such a stock did Torrens come. His father was James McCullagh, his mother a Torrens. The new strain brought literary connexions to the military ties that bound him. Round about his father's house clung recollections of Swift and Parnell the poet, and to Ireland his first work was given.

Like Chadwick, he found his feet in the service of the Poor Law, and was concerned in that expedition to Ireland hardly less ill-fated than the Walcheren one, giving her the workhouse system at an expenditure of over £1,000,000, which the Irish of that day with their hereditary aptitude were able in the long run to extract from the Sassenach.

A Liberal and a Free Trader, a member of Parliament for many years, his mind turned rather to social questions than political ones. Less romantic in his experiences than his cousins he showed himself no less determined.

A duller field than the field of War, the House of Commons may be the scene of victories scarcely less renowned. Apart from the constructive work that brings him into the



purview of these pages, a man who could draft and secure the passage of amendments that got the Lodger franchise from Disraeli and the School Board for London from Foster, was no mean fighter.

There are other things too. If pauper children have shared a happier home life than can be found inside institutional walls, they owe it to William T. Torrens, and if the poor have been largely relieved of the burden of the cost of an adequate water supply by the method of charging its cost as a percentage of rateable value, they owe that too to Torrens.

But what brings him here is his 1868 Bill with its policy of repair, its singling out of the unfit house as a subject of remedial treatment.

That the policy of the Torrens Act was a permanent contribution to the problem with which we are dealing, we shall see, and if behind it at first appears but a somewhat cold abstraction of *laissez-faire* economics, it is an illusion.

Nothing but a warm heart full of human sympathy could have maintained so persistent an effort for human happiness as that in which William McCullagh Torrens expended himself.

In the succeeding chapters devoted to this stage we shall endeavour to set out clearly the place of his particular contribution to the solution of the Slum problem.

For many years his Act was treated with apathy by the local authorities, but there are signs to-day that he is coming into his own, and that the re-conditioning of existing houses is to be a prominent feature in the new housing operations.

In its application to private agencies we shall in this stage meet a great figure—Miss Octavia Hill—who shares with Shaftesbury, Torrens and Cross the honours of Housing Reform.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE LEGISLATIVE TANGLE

WE have noted the beginning of Housing Legislation in Shaftesbury's Act of 1851. We are now at the stage when the Torrens Act of 1868 took its place in the series, and if the Housing Acts as we know them are to be historically understood something must be said here to make clear their origin.

There is nothing more tiresome than a tangle and nothing more necessary than disentanglement. The necessity of one must justify the risk of the other, and be my excuse for attempting to unravel in this chapter the tangled skein of housing legislation.

At the outset in the belief that all successful effort must be related to fact, let us see what the main facts of housing are. They may be put into three groups :

1. { That houses decay.  
That decay may be arrested by repair.  
That the standards of housing are changing ; what is acceptable to one generation is not to another.  
That by alterations, additions and improvements single houses or small numbers of houses of one generation may be brought up to the standard of another.
2. { That by reason of original planning and construction houses are brought into such condition that no effort can repair or improve them ; that they must be demolished and the areas on which they stood replanned.
3. { That the growth and change in distribution of population, taken together with the last stated fact, make it necessary to provide new houses.

Having these facts clearly in mind we discover, with something of the astonishment that filled the Frenchman



who found out that great rivers flow beside great cities, that housing legislation corresponds with them.

Curiously enough the third group was the first to which Parliament addressed itself in the Shaftesbury Act of 1851 ; afterwards to the first in the Torrens Act of 1868, and last of all to the second in the Cross Act of 1875.

The legislation that originated with the Earl of Shaftesbury in the Act passed in 1851 for the establishment of lodging-houses for the working classes was, as we have seen, the first of a series of Acts known as the " Labouring Classes Lodging-Houses Acts," or popularly the " Shaftesbury Acts," dealing with the provision of new dwellings and directly leading up to the main feature in the Housing Acts of 1919, 1923, 1924, 1925, and 1930.

The use of the term " lodging-houses " in the earlier Acts led to some obscurity and misunderstanding which was removed by a clause in the 1885 Housing Acts specially defining the " lodging-houses " of the Shaftesbury Act as including separate dwellings.

The legislation dealing with the first group of facts originated with Mr. W. T. McCullagh Torrens, in the Act passed in 1868, an Act for the improvement or demolition of existing buildings. This was the first of a series of Acts known as the " Artisans and Labourers Dwellings Acts," or popularly as the Torrens Acts, the principles of which are now embodied and embedded in the Housing Acts.

The legislation dealing with the second group of facts originated with Sir Richard Assheton Cross in the Act passed in 1875 for the improvement of large insanitary areas by demolition and reconstruction. This was the first of a series of Acts known as the " Labourers Dwellings Improvements Acts " or popularly as the Cross Acts.

These are the three main streams of housing legislation and they correspond with the three main groups of housing facts. They are alike in imposing upon local authorities duties in respect of housing ; they differ only in the duties imposed and the powers given for their discharge.

Side by side with them runs a thin stream of legislation embodied in the Labourers Dwelling-Houses Acts, 1866



and 1867, preceded by an Act of 1855 facilitating the formation of companies for the erection of dwellings, which aim at encouraging private enterprise to participate in the housing of the working classes, by the granting of loans to companies or individuals; this principle is embodied later in the Small Dwellings Acquisition Acts, and finds its last expression in the subsidy to private enterprise in the Housing Acts passed since the War.

The three main types of housing legislation began to merge in 1885 and ceased to pursue separate courses as legislative enactments after 1890 when they were consolidated in an Act passed in that year entitled "The Housing of the Working Classes Act." From this date these three types of legislation are identified not as separate Acts but as parts of Housing Acts and up to 1925 as parts of the Housing Act 1890.

The Cross Acts became Part I of the 1890 Act. The Torrens Acts, Part II, and the Shaftesbury Acts, Part III.

It will be noticed that the time order of the Acts has not been observed in allotting them their parts in the 1890 Act, and it is to be presumed that the order in which they appear is regarded as being the more logical.

However that may be, in the 1925 Act, the order is changed. The Torrens Acts become Part I, the Cross Acts Part II, the Shaftesbury Acts remain Part III. Some little interweaving of the Torrens and Cross Acts has taken place, but substantially the position is as stated. In the Housing Act, 1930, the order again changes, the Cross Acts becoming Part I, the Torrens Acts Part II, and the Shaftesbury Acts Part III.

The pedigree of housing legislation may therefore be traced through these three lines of descent.

The Labouring Classes Lodging-Houses Acts, the Artisans and Labourers Dwellings Acts, and the Artisans and Labourers Dwellings Improvements Acts all united in the Housing of the Working Classes Acts, the first of which dates from 1890. To this united family was later added the patronymic of Town Planning, so becoming the Housing and Town Planning Acts of 1909 and 1919.



It is hoped that the explanation of this family tree has not been too tedious and may enable the reader to pursue the fortunes of various members of the family with greater ease.

There is a collateral branch which has died out, but is of sufficient importance to receive some attention, not only because it dealt with matters still germane to the question of housing, but because the tale of its early years throws a flood of light on the conditions out of which came the impulse and impetus to housing legislation of all kinds ; that tale is told in a preceding chapter, and if excuse is needed for repetition it is the reason herein given.

It is the Common Lodging-Houses Act also passed in 1851 and also one of Lord Shaftesbury's measures. Its provisions were amended and extended by subsequent Acts and finally emerged in the Public Health Act of 1875.

Though no longer enjoying a separate existence and not even part of the Housing Acts, these provisions are of great importance and provide for a phase of housing needs to which considerable attention will have to be paid in the future ; namely that of single men and women whose requirements do not justify the expense of the provision of separate dwellings complete with separate conveniences.

It will be convenient at this point to note the powers that have been conferred by these Acts on authorities who are charged with duties in respect of housing and this will be done in the next chapter, though at the risk of dealing with some of them out of their order in this story of the Slums' Progress.



## CHAPTER XXXIX

### HOUSING POWERS

THE exercising of Housing and Health powers by the authorities has, in certain quarters, always been looked upon as an infringement of private right. The Englishman's house is his castle. A man has a right to do what he will with his own. Trespassers will be prosecuted. These sentences crystallise a body of thought, law and custom that had to be met and fought with outright before the health and housing powers now exercised by local authorities came into their hands.

In the last chapter it was said that, to succeed, effort must correspond with fact, and what follows is an illustration of this thesis.

The first fact is that before defective sanitary conditions can be abolished they must be discovered, and if concealed must be exposed, which means that if anything is to be done someone must be set upon an enquiry and given power to pursue it.

The second fact is that the condition being discovered it cannot be remedied until someone undertakes the task ; if no one will voluntarily undertake it, someone must be compelled to do so ; whoever is compelled must be given power to perform the task, including access to the insanitary property.

The third fact is that remedying the condition will involve expenditure ; expenditure can only be met out of funds, either public or private funds, and they must be available for the purpose required.

*Put briefly, there must be :*

1. The right to inspect.
2. The right to perform, or compel the performance of, the necessary work of improvement.



3. The right to charge the expenditure incurred on private or public funds with all the contingent powers required to exercise these rights.

It will be seen how much the exercise of these rights by a local authority cuts across the divine right of property, and it will be understood with what difficulty they were obtained from, and with what reluctance they were granted by, Parliament. Let us take them in their order and trace with what clearness we can their gradual acquisition.

*The Definition of Defective Conditions.*—This has grown in clearness and strength, and now practically covers every defect which may arise in connexion with the construction of roads, sewers and drains, the external defects of a building, its stability and the condition of such of its finishings as relate to water supply, drainage, light, ventilation and air space.

*The Right to Inspect.*

Whenever this was first granted it was clearly established in the Nuisance Removal Act of 1855, when local authorities were given power to obtain entry by an order from a justice of the peace. In 1860, the power was extended to any householder of the parish or place. By the Torrens Act of 1868, the Medical Officer of Health was given power without any complaint to investigate on his own initiative. Finally the Housing Act, 1925, Sec. 127, gives Borough Councils power to authorise their agent to enter any house or building in order to determine whether any powers under the Act should be exercised.

*The Right to Perform or Compel the Performance of the Necessary Work of Improvement.*

In the Nuisances Removal Act, 1855, the justices were given power to order the abatement of a nuisance, but no power appears to have been given to the authorities to act in default.

This first appears in the Act of 1866 when in respect of whitewashing, cleaning or purifying, the local authority in default of the owner could execute the work ordered by the justices.



Under the Torrens Act of 1868, this power was combined and extended beyond repair to demolition if that were required, and in subsequent Acts has been extended and confirmed.

*The Right to Charge the Expenditure Incurred on Private or Public Funds.*

This appears to have begun in an Act of 1866 under which the local authorities in default of an order to white-wash, cleanse or purify the whole or part of a house could execute the works ordered by a justice of the peace and summarily recover the expenses.

This was extended under the Torrens Act of 1868, so that the local authority had power in default of any order in respect of that Act, including the demolition of the property, to act, charging all expenses with interest at 4 per cent. per annum upon the premises.

On the other hand, if the owner did the work, he might obtain from the local authority as a charge upon the premises, an annuity of six pounds per centum, payable for a term of thirty years upon the expenditure incurred as compensation for his expense.

In 1879 the owner was given the power to require the local authority to purchase any property upon which they secured an order for improvement or demolition. This power was taken away in 1885.

In the 1879 Act the principle of betterment appears to a slight extent, for the Arbitrator, if the matter went to him, was to take into account any increased value given to other premises of the same owner.

The introduction of the Cross Act, with the power to make improvement schemes, widened the whole business of acquisition and consequently of compensation.

It was obvious, if property was not to be demolished, but the site put to other purposes, some of which might entail its division, or addition to other sites, that it must be acquired by the local authority and paid for at a fair price.

The history of acquisition from that time to the present cannot be dealt with in this chapter, but it is sufficient



to say here that it is a record of changes, the general effect of which has been to reduce the price that would otherwise have been paid for land acquired for improvement schemes by local authorities.

Leaving, for the moment, this consideration of the question as a whole, let us return to the particular work of Torrens.



## CHAPTER XL

### APATHY

IN an earlier chapter it was said that the local authorities displayed little enthusiasm in the application of the Torrens Acts.

We need not be surprised. After all, the repair of property is a business, and local authorities have long been averse to engaging in business.

To compel others to repair their property was a tiresome and tedious affair and involved a good deal of interference with people who mattered—how much we shall see when we come to the Clerkenwell comedy.

A drop in the bucket would not be an unfair description of what authorities did in this matter compared to what was required to be done.

If it be true that Corporations, private and public, have neither souls to be damned, nor bodies to be kicked, it is, I suppose, equally true that they have not hearts to be moved by the sight of need.

For whatever reason it may be, however, the fact is that for the great application of Torrens' idea of reconditioning the single house we have to turn to no body of men but to a single woman who, within the range of that idea, has given it greatest exposition and left behind her a body of thought and practice that is only just beginning to play what is destined to be, and that at no distant date, a very great part in the solution of the slum. Her name was Octavia Hill.



## CHAPTER XLI

### OCTAVIA HILL

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE is known to thousands who have never heard of Octavia Hill.

The Crimea was a larger stage than the Courts of Marylebone, and a fiercer light beat upon it. Yet one need not strain fancy to find parallels among the antitheses of these two lives.

One found herself in war ; the other in peace.

To the one the hospital ; to the other the home.

But in common, great purpose, great determination, great concentration : indomitable.

Neither marry ; great affections neither darken nor lighten their lives, but great friendships are inseparably linked with them. Sydney Herbert and John Ruskin strangely complete the parallel : each woman at the end alone with but a memory of the man with whom her work began.

I do not know if they ever met, these two women, but they touch each others lives here and there : the older woman an inspiration to the younger.

As a girl of twenty, Octavia Hill writes of Florence Nightingale " if ever there was an example fitted to stir up heroism it was hers," and thirty years after she says of the matter only second to Housing in her heart, that " of all the people who have spoken or written on Open Spaces, Florence Nightingale has got most to the heart of the matter."

Some day perhaps they will stand nearer together in public interest, and when in some far future men once again symbolise in one image, War and Peace, it might well bear on its dual head the features of Florence Nightingale and Octavia Hill.



Her life may be learnt from her letters and a full and vivid life it was. Sixty years of strenuous work from the June in 1852, when a girl, barely fifteen, writes to her sister, "I wish, oh, I so long to do something and I cannot. Andy! Do you think I shall ever be able to do anything useful?" to the day in August, 1912, when on her flower-covered grave there lay the words, "In deepest admiration and esteem for one who devoted her whole life and energy to the advancement and welfare of her fellow countrymen."

My concern here is with Housing, but who can separate work from life.

If Octavia Hill left an impression not only on her own land but in many another it was because the quality of her life passed into her work.

Housing was to her not a mere matter of bricks and mortar, cubic space and floor area. To her the house was the home, and the home but the vesture of the spirits that dwelt within it.

She responded to light and colour, to nature and to art, and with extraordinary completeness, combined with it the power to balance books, and drive bargains and pay dividends.

The girl that could write of a flower-glass:

"It is so still! A garnet coloured glass is on the table full of bright golden buttercups, and grass; now the door is open they tremble in the wind, carrying one back to slopes of long grass full of buttercups and sorrel, as the evening wind sweeps over it,"

and of a day in the country:

"You know there are acres and acres and acres of beech woods, valleys and hills clothed and covered with them, and there are rounded hills with most beautiful slopes; and from little cleared spaces in the woods one catches a glimpse of far off purple hills and nearer hills covered with wood, and farm-houses with their great barns golden roofed with lichen lying in a sheltered hollow; and the great bare head of some uncovered hill, cut with her clear outline against the sky; and then perhaps we plunged into the depths of the woods again, where the sunlight fell between the fanlike branches of the beeches and through their leaves like a green mist, on to the



silver stems, and on to the ground, russet with last year's fallen leaves, perhaps upon the crest of some tall fern, or upon a sheet of blue speedwells, or on some little wood sorrel plant, or a grey tree stump, touched with golden lichen, or gold green moss. And then the larks, cuckoos, and nightingales seemed hardly to stop by night or day, but kept up a glad sweet chorus,"

could also write this to the mother of one of the children employed in toy-making under her management :

" I regret to have to tell Harriet not to return to work until Thursday next, as I have said that those children who do not earn five shillings in a week should lose three day's work. I am sorry to be obliged to say this, but I hope it, or a sense of the necessity of being industrious, will soon render any such law unnecessary.

" I shall be as pleased as proud when the day arrives, when I see all the children steady, earnest, and eager to do all they can to help those near and dear to them.

" I am sure their idleness results more from want of thought than anything else ; but they must try to overcome this ; and if they fail to do this because it is right to do so, they must be taught to do so by other means.

" However, I ought to say that Harriet has improved very much indeed lately ; she has been so much more gentle and steady, and more earnest about her lessons.

" It is therefore with much pleasure that I give her Mr. Neale's invitation to spend a day at his house, and hope she may grow more and more good, gentle, generous and earnest, working for you, herself and all whom she can benefit, not only willingly but unceasingly ; and I am sure she will find in quiet earnest work a happiness and peace which are far more joyous than giddiness."

These extracts from letters written before she was twenty show the guiding principles of her life.

A love of beauty and a sense of human responsibility.  
To such a child Ruskin came almost like a God.

She is reading him before she is fourteen and defending him against the criticisms of *The Times* before she is fifteen.

On her fifteenth birthday she meets him, and " All went as well as I could possibly wish." The acquaintance grows. The day comes when she is to visit him at his house, there is a prospect that he will begin to teach her and employ her as a copyist for his work. She writes :



"You will have seen, by this time, what a wonderful event is about to take place in my life, and will, no doubt, have realised what it will be to me. But however wonderfully you may all enter into my feelings or even discover them I do not think any of you can really understand what this is to me, unless you could have looked into my heart continually for three years, and seen how at first he was only a friend of Mr. Furnivall's; then how his books were everything, and he nothing. Then how his name suggested a vision of vague beauty, and distant and indefinite glory. Still he was distant, almost unreal. He might be in Italy, or Palestine, or he might be passing me at that moment. Perhaps in a year or two hence I may tell you what my thoughts were, and are at this period;—but, all this time I was learning to admire him more and more."

Many a year after, a woman turned fifty, she tells some of her thoughts to another correspondent:

"I return the valuable letter with many thanks to Olive and to you for letting me see it. I had not done so before.

"I think he is right about the forgiveness; and I think it is hard that any of you should expect a man, who had the place in the world that he had when he knew me as a girl of fifteen years, should ask forgiveness.

"Not for a moment do I myself wish it, unless in any way it took away from him the sadness of the memory of what he did.

"I tell you, most distinctly, I do not think there is very much in the whole affair; that is, when the imperfections of earth and speech are taken away, I do not think that there will be very much to clear up between Mr. Ruskin and me.

"Till that time, touched as I am by your chivalrous kindness about it, I do seriously assure you I think a merciful silence is at once the best and the most dignified course, for him and me.

"What has the world to do with it, if we both feel silence all that is needed.

"There are things that nothing will ever put right in this world; and yet they don't really touch what is right for all worlds.

"I say this for your sake, that you may feel at peace about it all; else nothing would make me say anything. Be at peace about it, I am. I hope Mr. Ruskin is. He may be. The thing is past, let us bury it; that which the earth will not cover, which is not of it, lives in the Eternal Kingdom; and in the thought of it earthly imperfection or mistakes seem very small things."



Ten years later on Ruskin's death she wrote :

" The earth seems indeed sadder and poorer that such a man lives on it no more.

" That penetrating sympathy, that marvellous imagination, that wonderful power of expression, that high ideal of life have not only blessed his friends, but have left their mark on England.

" To me personally the loss is irreparable. I have cared to think of the master and friend of my youth, in his lovely home, and to feel that he was among us still. He has passed to the great beyond. All his noblest aspirations are opening before him, the incompleteness passed away, the companionship of the mighty dead around him ; the work accomplished, the love fulfilled, the peace complete, the blessings of thousands upon him."

Much water flowed under the bridges before this was written.

The girl whose feet Ruskin had set upon paths of art had turned like him into other fields.

The turning-point came in 1864. How far she had got in one direction the following extract may tell :

" Every moment of light time has been occupied by a drawing for the Society of Antiquaries ; and the dark has been little enough for teaching, accounts and all my various extra work. This drawing I should like you to see ; it is a copy of the earliest dated portrait of an Englishman—1446.

" It is of an ancestor of Lord Verulam ; one of the Grimstones ; such a quiet, stedfast face, looking out from under a perfectly black hat, with a quiet thoughtful eye, like a person who went slowly and steadily on his way, without either hurry or doubt. I should never have done, were I to tell you of all the importance attached to his shield and chain and necklace, and all the accessories of the picture ; how the antiquaries glory in each detail, and understand from them each, who and what he was.

" To me his quiet face comments in its silence on our hurry and uncertainty ; and, as I sit drawing him, I hope to gather reproach enough from his still eyes to teach me to live quietly.

" It is rather a grand piece of work ; and it is to be kept in the gallery of the Society, after being sent to Germany, to be chromo-lithographed for publication in their *Archæologia*.

" The Secretary of the National Gallery had noticed my work, and recommended me to the Secretary of the National Portrait Gallery, to do the work. It is expected by them, and by the Director of Antiquaries, to lead to much more, and would really



make me rich, in spite of myself ; but there is small chance of time to do it in. I have also two portraits waiting to be done, miniatures ; but happily I do them at home at odd half-hours."

Even then she had taken those first steps that were to lead her so far away from her Art work and indeed from Ruskin himself.

The letter that follows marks the beginning of what was to be her real life's work :

" I write expecting your warm sympathy in a much beloved plan that now Ruskin promises to help me to carry out.

" We are to have a house near here (with a little ground to make a playground and drying ground), and this house is to be put to rights, for letting to my poor friends among the working class women. We are to begin very quietly, and go on gradually ; but I see such bright things that may (that almost must) grow out of it.

" I hope much from the power the association of several families will give us of teaching and help. The large circle of helpful friends around us will be invaluable. I am so happy that I can hardly walk on the ground."

But the real beginning lay much further back.

She came of a reforming stock. Her father spent his substance on social and educational work. A man of strong sympathies, it is noted that he rode fifty miles to seek a pardon for the last man to be sentenced to death in this country for sheep stealing.

Her mother was the daughter of Dr. Southwood Smith, and as a child she copied for her grandfather his reports.

Her earliest work was the training of poor children to useful occupation and to them she gave not only her attention but her love.

Listen to a description of a visit to the home of one of them :

" I spent an hour last Tuesday evening at the house of one of my pupils (W.M. College pupils). Her mother begged that I would go.

" They live at the very top of a house near one of the London markets, rather a wretched neighbourhood.

" Sarah, my pupil, a quiet girl of fourteen, walked with me.

" Her mother, prettily dressed, opened the door, carrying in



her arms the baby, dressed in its little white frock, and coral fastening its little shoes.

"I had never been there before; and I was conducted up the dark staircase to the attics. Here I saw by the furniture that they had seen 'better days.' One tiny room was their sitting-room, comfortably furnished; a bright clean fire, tea set, and the children's grandmother sitting primly attired to receive me.

"All this I saw, and it made me understand something more of the people at once. It would have done anyone's heart good to see the self-forgetfulness of these people; the five tiny little girls, the eldest only seven, each delighted to give place to one another; and as to Sarah, who is their half-sister, it was lovely to see how quietly she served everyone.

"They are earnest High-Church people; the baby is called Amy Herbert, after Miss Sewell's heroine, and also because Mrs. — is so fond of George Herbert's poems. The tiny children all sang some hymns, 'O, let us be joyful,' and others.

"Sarah comes to my drawing-class, and we had much talk about her lessons. Her mother means to read aloud to her these winter evenings, while she draws; and then she will read while her mother works. It is a brave faithful little home, and such as one loves to see."

For those and such as those she began her work.

She brought to Housing an insight that saw more than the walls that were erected and the roof that covered them.

She saw that the people for whom she lived need light and air, well-drained and ventilated houses. These she was out to give them but she saw they needed more, and it was this more and the giving of it that distinguished her work.

No one can express what she was after better than she could herself, and I give you her words. She is writing to Miss Davenport Hill who has been unable to meet some demand that has been made upon her, and she says:

"You need never think that I should ever suspect you or your sister of shrinking from effort, or of being anything but brave and generous; but one has to be brave in refusing as well as in accepting; and considerate towards those whose lives God has bound up with our own most nearly; as well as to the many pathetically forlorn of the great world family who cross our path.

"Each case can but be decided on its own merits.



"I quite see how in this one there may be many difficulties. If I did not, as I say, I should feel quite sure you had decided it as rightly as you could, and quite unselfishly. Do you not often feel (I do) as if people were often selfish in yielding to feeling instead of ruling it.

"This brings me to the most interesting question about gifts, to which you allude.

"It is to me a puzzling one, not so much as regards the poor (there I can see my way some distance, I think and have written a few words on the subject, which I hope some day to print). I think that when gifts are given and received by the same person, they are ennobling. It is the greediness of the recipient that is the awful result at present ; and the helpless indolence of expectant selfishness.

"Call the man out of himself by letting him know the joy of receiving and giving, and you may pour your gifts upon him, even lavishly, and not corrupt him.

"Besides this, let us give better things : sympathy, friendship, intercourse ; let us be friends, and then we can give with comparative impunity. For the hearts of people always feel the spiritual gift to be greater if it be genuine at all.

"Where a material gift comes as a witness of real love, it is the love that is the all-absorbing thought, not the gift, be it ever so much indeed.

"All presents too, should depend to some degree on character ; we do not to one another select those calculated to deepen any tendency we disapprove, rather to awake fresh admiration of what is noble.

"I cry out to myself in the courts every day, 'What a frightful confusion of chances we have here as to how or whether there is to be food or not.'

"A man accepts underpaid work ; a little is scraped up by one child, a little begged by another ; a gigantic machinery of complicated charities relieves a man of half his responsibilities, not once and for all clearly and definitely, but, probably or possibly, he gets help here or there.

"There is no certainty, no quiet, no order in his way of subsisting. And he has an innate sense that his most natural wants ought to be supplied if he works ; so he takes our gifts thanklessly ; and then we blame him or despise him for his alternate servility and ingratitude ; and we dare not use his large desires to urge him to effort ; and, if he will make none let him suffer ; but please God one day we shall arrange to be ready with work for every man, and give him nothing if he will not work ; we cannot do the latter without the former, I believe.

"Then, at last, will come the day when we shall be able to give at least to our friends among them as we give to one another,



and not confuse still more hopelessly the complication of chances about the means of support, nor have any doubt the giver is more than the gift, and be sure that he who gladly receives to-day will to-morrow give more gladly.

"It is not often that I turn away from the very engrossing detail of work here, to think much about general questions; and I am afraid I have expressed myself badly, and that you will hardly make out what I mean.

"It is with me here almost as with the poor themselves, a kind of fight for mere existence,—references, notices, rents, repairs, the dry necessary matters of business, take up almost all time and thought; only, as after all, we are human beings, and not machines, the people round, and all we see and hear leave a kind of mark on us, an impression of awe, or pity and wonder, or sometimes love; and when we do pause, the manifold impressions start into life, and teach us so much, and all the business has to be arranged in reference to these various people and how hard it is to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly."

This little outburst is very human:

"Oh, Florence, the court is so improved. I think you would be so pleased. We have broken out windows on all the staircases, and cleaned all the rooms, and put in a large clean cistern; and oh, it is so fresh and neat compared with what it was.

"I have asked Miranda to send you a copy of *All the Year Round*, in which there is a short article on the Playground. It seems Ruskin read an extract from it at the lecture, of which I am not a little proud."

That is the woman. We shall meet her again later in these pages. Her work increased, the three houses that Ruskin bought in a court in Marylebone to start her work were augmented in 1866 by six more. Her method is summed up in a little letter to Ruskin:

"This place may be considered as fairly started on a remunerative plan. I daresay you will be as pleased as I that this is so.

"I told the tenants how difficult I found it to pay for all the use of the money—an expense that they never realise; and explained how the less they broke the more they would have.

"I told them what sum I set apart for repairs; and that they were freely welcome to the whole, and might have safes and washing stools and copper lids, if the money would buy them, since which time not one thing has been broken in any house."



Four more are added the following year, and year by year the number grew.

Round about her gathered friends willing to give both money and service. Workers she trained and in time devolved some of her work upon them.

Some of them remain to carry on her work, and the Association of Women House Managers is based upon her principles.

Her life and activities glow like an oasis in the desert.

That a mind so vigorous and capacious could find a field wide enough for its exercise in such a work is at once an encouragement and a call.

In it nothing narrowed her. At the end as at the beginning her interest is everywhere.

In the fifties she is reading as they appear *Yeast* and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and has something to say about them both.

Fifty years later she is still reading and giving her impressions of Tolstoi's *Resurrection* as freely as of those other books half a century before.

Her letters are like a procession in a pageant—all the figures are there. Kingsley, Holman Hunt and Maurice. She meets them all and all have something to say to her, or of her.

John Ruskin sits with Thomas Carlyle in the kitchen at Cheyne Row and the theme is praise (that rare thing for Carlyle) of Octavia Hill, and the reporter of it—John Ruskin.

H. R. Haweis helps her with her fight for open spaces, John Burns is interested in her scheme for keeping the River Wandle unpolluted, De Morgan works for her, and there is a passage in one of her letters so delightfully characteristic that I must give it.

She is determined to put on the houses that Ruskin bought in Freshwater Place the inscription "Every house is builded by someone, but he that built all things is God," and De Morgan is to make the inscription in tiles, and this is how she writes of the colour that the tiles are to be :



"The more I thought out the question, the more I saw of the tiles, the more I felt as if blue, and blue only, would look best.

"I cannot see how we can get a look of unity in the inscription if we introduce other colour. I dislike a distinction between capitals and other letters in colour, when one has no difference in height.

"I dislike the idea of a line round the inscription; besides, it would decrease the size.

"I therefore strongly urged blue only, but graduated blue, such as I saw there. I know in his heart, Mr. De Morgan agreed with me. He has, however, a lovely copper lustre which gleams like a fish's back, and tells now as light, now as dark, like gold, according to how the rays fall on it; and he sorely wants to see this; also he has a deep crimsony red which he is fond of.

"I never wavered, however, in my adherence to the blue, except in sight of one plate—green blue and purple shot like a peacock's tail, but in a lighter key.

"I really decided nothing; first, because I had not the money, but I might have decided provisionally, and let a post-card finish the business with the one word 'now,' when all the tiles are promised; but Mr. De Morgan, like a true artist, pressed so hard for leave to try different colours and designs, on his own responsibility, and for his own pleasure, that I agreed at last that he should do a few letters in the next kiln.

"Of course it is all gain to us; and I was most decided that none of the money subscribed should go in experiments."

So I must leave her with her colour sense and her common sense, only adding one extract more to describe her work.

She is taking over a great housing estate to manage:

"It was a huge undertaking, and needed much care and labour to start it well, and naturally we were all keen to help. It was a great day when we took over the place. Our seconds in command took charge manfully for a fortnight of all our old courts; and fourteen of us, including all my own responsible workers, and one lady who had gained experience in Edinburgh.

"We met on Monday, October 5th, to take over the estate, and collect from 500 or 600 tenants wholly unknown to us. We organised it all thoughtfully; we had fifteen collecting books, and all the tenants' books prepared; had opened a bank account, had found a room as office, and divided the area among our workers.

"Our first duty was to get the tenants to recognise our authority and pay us. I think we were very successful; we got every tenant on the estate to pay us without any legal process, except one, who was a regular scamp.



"We collected some £250, most of it in silver and got it safely to the bank.

"Then came the question of repairs; there were written in the first few weeks 1,000 orders for these, although, as the whole area is to be rebuilt, we were doing really urgent repairs and no substantial ones. All these had to be overlooked and reported on and paid for.

"Next came pouring in the claims for borough and water rates. We had ascertained the assessment of every house, the facts as to whether landlord or tenant was responsible, whether the rates were compounded for or not, what allowance was to be claimed for empty rooms.

"There were two water companies supplying the area, and we had to learn which supplied each house.

"The whole place was to be rebuilt, and even the streets re-arranged and widened; and I had promised the Commissioners I would advise them as to the future plans. These had to be prepared at the earliest date possible; the more so as the sanitary authorities were pressing, and sent 100 orders in the first few days we were there.

"It is needless to say with what speed, capacity and zeal the representatives of the Commissioners carried on their part of these preparations; and they rapidly decided on the streets which should be first rebuilt, and what should be erected there.

"But this only implied more to be done, for we had to empty the streets swiftly, and that meant doing up all possible empty houses in other streets and getting the tenants into them. Fortunately, there were several houses empty, the falling in of the lease having scared away tenants.

"The Commissioners had decided to close all the public-houses on the estate, and we let one to a girl's club, and had to put repairs in hand to fit it for its changed destination.

"Meantime, my skilled workers had to be withdrawn, though Miss Lumsden's staff was new to the work; and I do not know how the business could have been done but for her immense power, devotion and zeal, and the extreme kindness of friends in offering special help. The matter now stands thus: we have got through the first quarter; have collected £2,672—mostly in silver. Plans have been prepared for rebuilding and re-arrangement of the whole estate, and these are now before the Commissioners for consideration.

"They provide a site for rebuilding the parish school, and area of about an acre as a public recreation ground; they substitute four wide for three narrow streets, and afford accommodation for 700 families in four-roomed and six-roomed cottages, cottage flats, and flats of three and two-roomed tenements in houses in no case higher than three storeys."



She was no lover of block dwellings as we shall learn.

One extract more in which she plainly states her hope for the future.

"In one way, this Notting Hill area is the most satisfactory to me of any we have. It is so steadily improving, and the people with it. It is meeting so much the needs of those who find it hardest to get on. The group of ladies who manage it are eminently fitted to help on any who can be helped, whether it be by introducing the young people to better work, by recommending widows for charring, by giving the labourer an odd job of rough work, by immediately calling attention to cases of illness of extreme want, by bringing a little healthy amusement into somewhat monotonous hard-working lives, and in many other ways. The work is much more like that which I was able to do in earlier years than any which is possible in most new buildings.

"We have had a great alarm about the work in South London. When I wrote to you last it was still doubtful whether the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would decide to undertake the responsibility of rebuilding, and retaining in their own hands, the whole of the area which was to be devoted to dwellings for the working classes. It was still undecided whether they would not lease a part to builders or companies.

"They have resolved to retain the whole in their own hands, and to manage it by their own agents, of whom Miss Lumsden is the first. The advantages of this plan are obvious. The Commissioners will be directly responsible for good arrangements and government, instead of being powerless to interfere for eighty or ninety years; they will be freer than any lessees can be to modify, should change be needed, owing to development of science, or alteration or requirements as time goes on; they can determine conditions of life in a large area occupied by working people, which may have as deep an influence as the churches and schools, which up to now, they have felt it their duty to supply.

"All this they have felt it possible to do, because they realise that there is growing up a certain number of ladies capable of representing them, and possessing special knowledge.

"So that in the years to come, they will have managers to supervise in detail the comfort and health of their tenants, so far as these depend on proper conditions in the houses in which they live; managers who will be interested in the people, and will have time to see thoroughly to the numerous details involved in management of such areas."

I have given some mental picture of her; what of her physical appearance?



There is a drawing of her in her *Life* as a child ; it might have been drawn by Greuze. At sixty Sargent painted her and she was still comely.

Here is a little note by her sister :

" She saw Ruskin yesterday. She went to Dulwich and took her work from there to Denmark Hill.

" Ruskin had said in his letter that he had only a quarter of an hour to spare ; so of course she was careful to go away after a quarter of an hour ; but although her visit was so very short, it seems to have been very nice. Ruskin was very pleased with all her work.

" The Veronese which O. had been doing at home, Ruskin was delighted with. He said he wanted to keep it, to show some people what girls could do.

" You may think what a state of excitement dear Ockey was in yesterday with seeing Ruskin and with the thought of the journey. . . . Her costume looked so pretty and suitable. Gertrude made her a present of such a beautiful black silk dress, so nicely made that it has disclosed to me, what I did not know before, that Ockey has an extremely pretty figure."

In any survey of slum treatment it is soon seen that the solution is not arrived at when the buildings, whether they be block dwellings or otherwise, are ready for occupation ; it continues after occupation and is not ended till the occupiers themselves have learnt how properly to occupy.

Till that time the problem of management remains. It is to the solution of that problem that Octavia Hill has made the most remarkable contribution, and to her methods influenced by her spirit that we must look for guidance if we are to successfully apply the powers that were first given in the Act which marks the beginning of this stage and bears the name of Torrens.

We shall meet her again at the Second great Royal Commission in 1885. Twenty-one years of work are to pass since her first enterprise in the Marylebone court. Much is to be done both in the way of legislation and administration—the vestry is to go, the Board of Works is to draw near its end—but all through the period which forms the next stage of Housing work she is to be building up not only dwellings but a power and reputation which still endures.



## FIFTH STAGE

1875-1890

### CHAPTER XLII

#### PEERS AND PARLOURS

EVERYWHERE in the records of the period, evidence is to be found that the Torrens Acts were little used by the authorities.

The reasons are not far to seek. In the first place the vestries and corporations of the period were largely manned by people whose interests in many cases ran counter to the operations of the Acts.

The position can perhaps be most fairly stated by saying that while the majority of these members were not much interested in working these Acts, there was a sufficiently influential minority who were deeply interested in seeing that they should not work.

Where there was a disposition to work them, they were found to involve much delay and expense ; much of what was possible under them could be done through the Public Health Acts, with the working of which the authorities were more familiar, or through local Acts which had been passed to meet local conditions.

Finally, many of those who were really in earnest about the matter had come to the conclusion that they were too piecemeal in their operation and that the problem must be tackled on a bigger scale.

To the power in the original Torrens Act of dealing with individual houses or small groups of houses, on the grounds of their insanitary condition, had been added the power to deal with houses not in themselves unfit, but because of



their position, obstructive ; that is to say, hindering the free access of light and air and sun to other buildings.

Even this addition, it was found, did not meet the needs.

As might have been expected, on tackling the problem there were found to be some areas so bad that no amount of repair to individual houses or removal of obstructive houses, could produce a satisfactory result.

What was wanted in these cases was a wholesale clearance with a reconstruction of the area.

This was sufficiently recognised to induce representations to be made to Parliament on the subject.

In some cases these took the form of memorials ; one being a memorial from certain philanthropic bodies, and the other from the Royal College of Physicians.

These no doubt helped to prepare the Parliamentary soil for the reception of the first of the Cross Acts, the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875.

I may perhaps quote here the description of the principles of the Cross Acts given in the report of the Royal Commission 1885—ten years after the first one had been passed.

“ They contemplate dealing with whole areas where the houses are so structurally defective as to be incapable of repair, and so ill placed with reference to each other as to require to bring them up to a proper sanitary standard nothing short of demolition and reconstruction. Accordingly, in this case, the local authority, armed with compulsory powers, at once entered as a purchaser and on completion of the purchase proceeds forthwith to a scheme of reconstruction.”

The Acts apply only to the Metropolis, and urban sanitary districts with a population of not less than 25,000.

The original Act took its place in the Statute book in the same year, 1875, in which the Public Health Act consolidated the provisions of the General Health Acts of preceding years.

Its author, Sir Richard Assheton Cross, being a Minister, as distinguished from Mr. W. T. M. Torrens, who was merely a private member, his offspring received a good deal of attention in its tender years. While its author was in office Sir Ughtred Kay Shuttleworth displayed a kindly interest



in its welfare and for his benefit returns were made to the House of Commons in 1878 and 1879.

After the fall of the Government in which Cross was a Minister, another member interested himself in the matter and to him we are indebted for a return made in 1881.

In 1883 and 1885 the author, concerned no doubt for the child of former years, rendered us the same services, and a perusal of these returns are illuminating both of Departmental methods and of the ill-concealed antagonism between the central authority and those charged with the administration of the Act.

In the main the returns concern themselves with London, after all the great field for this work, though the provinces had their own meagre contribution to add.

The Commissioners of Sewers for the City of London first sail into sight with a magnificent cargo of 442,369 sq. ft. in the City of London, which, between the 16th November, 1875, and the 24th October, 1876, they had decided to "improve."

The last of these returns dated 20th May, 1885, shows that the area had been increased by the addition of 16,601 sq. ft. in Gunpowder Alley on the 24th June, 1879, in respect of which improvement the note is made "in abeyance."

"In abeyance"!!! what stayed the destructive hand of the Commissioners of Sewers for those six years?

Was it the fluttering shade of Anthony Wood with his reminder "that in the year sixteen hundred fifty and eight, Richard Lovelace died in a very mean lodging in Gunpowder Alley near Shoe Lane."

It would have been a better excuse than the real one which is not given.

Happy Lovelace:

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an heritage."

"Minds innocent and quiet"—might even find content



to have such lodgings as the Commissioners of Sewers had undertaken to replace.

This is one of them, a note of which has come down to us :

" One room was 7 feet 5 by 6 feet 3.

" How many people lived there ?

" Only one !!!

" The woman has lived twenty-two years in it. She was for many years a Bible woman, and is now 90 years of age. The room up two stairs was the worst that we saw, the floor was giving way, coming right away from the wall, and you could put your hand in the space that was left ; it seemed not safe."

But what of that ?

" If I have freedom in my love  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone, that soar above,  
Enjoy such liberty."

Lucky Commissioners ! They got off in the end by covering 81,055 feet in Petticoat Lane, the remainder of the slums disappearing before the needs of Railway and Dock Companies, or being pulled down by their owners.

Next comes the Metropolitan Board of Works who, by the 22nd February, 1878, have tabled 30 schemes to which by the 5th June, 1885, they have added 12 more, making 42 in all.

The history of these 42 schemes covering the first ten years of the life of the Act is perhaps explanatory of the demise of the Metropolitan Board of Works which was so soon to follow.

Of the 42 schemes, 18 were dismissed by the Board, and no action was taken by them, and 4 were still under consideration.

Of the remaining 20 schemes, 2 were awaiting confirmation by Parliament.

Of the remaining 18 schemes, 2 were awaiting the arbitrator's award, and in two other cases the arbitrator's award had just been given.

Of the remaining 14 schemes, in 9 cases the sites had been sold to the Peabody Trustees who had erected build-



ings on them. These 9 sites involved the demolition of about 1,386 houses.

Of the remaining 5 schemes involving the demolition of 1,263 houses, a part of the land had been sold for artisans' dwellings, part for commercial buildings and part was in hand.

2,649 insanitary dwellings demolished in the ten years from 1875 to 1885, and their places occupied by Peabody and similar dwellings of which it was to be admitted later that they did not provide accommodation for the displaced dwellers.

Little wonder that *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* was to herald in the Royal Commission of 1885.

The return for the Provinces do not indicate much more progress.

By the 31st May, 1878, three years after the passing of the Act, nine local authorities had taken action under it, twelve authorities were considering it and sixty-two had taken no action under it at all. By the 5th August, 1885, ten years after the passing of the Act, the following were the results.

Provisional orders for carrying out schemes had been issued to nine authorities of the twelve authorities who had been brooding over the Act; one had passed beyond that stage, to action, and a provisional order had been obtained; five had stopped considering it and six were still thinking; and ninety-four authorities who came within the scope of the Act had done nothing.

The total area covered by the scheme of the ten prudent authorities was about 90 acres.

Less than 3,000 houses in London and less than 100 acres in the Provinces was the sum total of the activities of those charged with the administration of the Cross Acts.

And this despite a whip-up circular sent out by the Local Government Board in 1883 as a result of the Select Committee of 1881-2.

Mr. Secretary Cross was getting a little cross in the fall of 1878 and his secretary wrote the Commissioner of Sewers of the City of London about the good work, and asked what



about it. They were quite pleased both with what they had done, and their reasons for what they had not done, and must have been rather hurt to get a rejoinder from Mr. Secretary Cross to the effect that they were not showing sufficient activity in the matter.

On the same day a letter went to the Metropolitan Board of Works, who gave excellent reasons for not doing quite a lot of work, almost as many reasons as the work not done, for their communication takes up twenty-four pages of the return.

There was a certain lack of variety in the Secretary's letters, but he made it quite clear that he was not satisfied.

The Metropolitan Board of Works, however, was no tame body and replied with spirit and at length, quite respectfully, however, to the effect that they were getting tenders in for the sale of the land they had cleared, from persons who would build houses on it.

It was a correspondence that could not be extended with dignity and Mr. Secretary Cross contented himself with a cold request for information when the tenders *did* come in and the land *was* sold.

It was not only the Metropolitan that was prodded up. The eagle eye of the Local Government Board was on the Provinces and in its soaring survey lighted on Dover. Unfortunately the eye had blinked, for when a letter was sent on the 22nd August, 1878, asking the Town Clerk for a copy of a representation from the Medical Officer alleged not to have been acted on by the Council, the Clerk had the immense satisfaction of replying that it had been sent on the 29th March, 1877. On the same day the Local Government Board drew the covers at Brighton with a little more success, eliciting a promise of progress.

It was a hard job in those days for the occupants of Whitehall to get a move on amongst the local authorities, and whatever troubles their successors may have, they may be thankful they live in later times.

To get the full flavour of these eventless years we must come back to a correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Commissioner of Sewers regarding the im-



provement scheme they had made for Golden Lane and Petticoat Square, in 1875.

What names!

That improvement schemes should be needed there!

Well, if

“Golden lads and lasses must  
Like chimney sweepers turn to dust,”

even Golden Lanes must be subject, I suppose, to decay.

Anyhow, this was the one ewe lamb of the Commissioners; all their other opportunities for going down in history as housing zealots had been snatched from them by Aggrandising Dock and Railway Companies, and by the cupidity of the owners of mean lodgings.

This was their only chance, and it was imperilled by the fact that no one would buy it if they could only erect artisans' dwellings on it. So, on the 15th December, 1882, the Commissioners, cap in hand, humbly sued the Secretary of State to be allowed to use the ground floors and basements of the blocks of buildings for shops and commercial purposes, reminding him that they had made the request in July, 1880, and it had been refused.

If Mr. Topham Forest, the Architect to the London County Council, reads these words, he will see that housing repeats itself and that Ossulton Square is but Golden Lane writ large.

The letter went to the Squire of Malwood, then Home Secretary, who apparently asked Lord Rosebery to deputise for him, as is shown by a letter from the Commissioners who refer to some objection to their plans taken by Lord Rosebery on the 31st January, 1883, and contains this sentence:

“I have now the honour to submit a plan showing how it is proposed to meet these objections, and I return the original plan *with your own pencil marks upon it* that you may more readily note the defects and cure.”

Precious plan! Where is it now?

Sound objections they were too. The commissioners forsooth, proposed to have shops with parlours that had



no communications with other conveniences, and no access from the entrances leading to the other storeys ; but Lord Rosebery's intervention was apparently effectual in preventing such happenings.

A new light this to those who in these later Parliamentary days see Ministers as being always immersed in high policy.

On that 31st January, 1883, Lord Granville was writing to Gladstone on behalf of the Queen offering him a peerage ; reconstruction was in the air, and no doubt in the mind of every Minister, and I like to see the man who in three years was to be Foreign Secretary, and in nine years Prime Minister, busy with his pencil on the shops in Golden Lane.

The Commissioners got their way and their shops, but they must have left the Secretary of State a little doubtful whether they even then meant business, for he asks for and gets their assurance on the 22nd June, 1883, that they will really get on, and have given instructions for plans to be prepared.

November 16th, 1875, to 22nd June 1883, before a plan is prepared!! *Festina lente*, with a vengeance.

And yet the procedure was perhaps more at fault than the Administration. It was amended from time to time, but still remains cumbrous and slow.

Not to single out the Commissioners of Sewers for special obloquy, the next chapter gives further details that illustrate the same qualities displayed under the administration of the Board of Works.



## CHAPTER XLIII

### LONDON—THE BOARD OF WORKS

THE Modern Housing History of London has been admirably told in the series of publications by the London County Council ; and if such publications had been in existence in respect of the other municipalities a very complete history of this matter would have been possible.

It is a good deal, however, to have it for London, and, on the whole, it may be safely assumed that the record of London is at least a good average record, if not a rather better one than would be found in the majority of provincial municipalities.

It is a record of continuous improvements in the instrument of London government, arising out of a gradual realisation of the inadequacy of the existing authority.

Shaftesbury's *Diary*, it will be recalled, shows the discontent he felt in the first half of the last century with the Commissioners of Sewers.

This ancient body, dating its origin from Tudor days, was the subject of much criticism before the Duke of Buccleuch's Commission ; and apparently deservedly so.

The criticism which was circulated through the medium of that report had a somewhat stimulating effect, and the Commissioners put their hands to a scheme for sewerage London, which was of a considerable magnitude, but it was too late.

The parochial government of London, which had come in for its share of castigation, had to be remodelled, and the Commissioners were felt to be insufficient as a central authority for the reformed London.

London was determined to try a new broom to sweep away its nuisances, and the newly constituted vestries had,



therefore, superimposed on them the Metropolitan Board of Works.

This body, an elective one, made substantial contributions to the amenities of the Metropolis. Great sewage and embankment schemes were put through, and permanently raised the standard of health. As might be expected on the principle of first things first, the new Board devoted itself mainly to what has been termed the removal of organic filth, and in that direction did a great work.

The Act which brought the Board of Works into existence, very fittingly called the Metropolis Management Act, was immediately followed by the Nuisances Removal Act, the former being Chapter 120 and the latter Chapter 121 of the legislation in the year 1855.

This direct linking-up of these two Acts undoubtedly determined the Board's outlook on its work and its view of its special character, and it is therefore not surprising that when the interest in housing developed the Board were found to be rather cool in its outlook on this matter.

True, at first its powers were not great; the Shaftesbury Act of 1851 and the Torrens Act of 1868 imposed duties on the vestries and not on the Board, and as far as their duties to London were concerned sufficient to them was the sewerage thereof.

In 1875 the task of dealing with insanitary areas was put on them, and they were definitely involved in the policy of slum clearance.

Here, again, however, they had their limitation. They could de-house, but they could not directly re-house; for that they had to find some other instrument than themselves. Not that they were much distressed by the restriction. Men's minds in those days were far from being attuned to municipal action. In so far as that was encouraged it was directed to matters in which no profit could be found, and that there could be profit in re-housing the poor remained to be demonstrated.

The division of duties between the Vestries and the Board led to a game of shuttlecock, the story of which would be amusing if the subject of it was not so serious.



The initiative in the matter of insanitary areas lay with the Medical Officers to the Vestries, and they got going with commendable celerity.

The Cross Act received the Royal Assent in 1875, and on the 27th July, 1875, Dr. John Liddle—let his name be written in letters of gold—made the first representations to the Board in respect of the Whitechapel and Limehouse Improvement Scheme. There seemed grounds for it. While in London less than 24 persons per 1,000 died annually between 1865 and 1875, they died at the rate of 54 per 1,000 in this Whitechapel area, and of 50 per 1,000 in the Limehouse area. The scheme took more than 15 years to complete, and in connexion with it, 3,600 persons were housed as against 3,669 persons displaced under the original scheme.

Other schemes followed, Dr. Liddle again to the fore, being No. 3 as well as No. 1. In connexion with this scheme his name appears in the forefront, but in the background, modestly obscured by anonymity, are seventeen good men and true, Guardians of the Whitechapel Union, on whose complaint Dr. Liddle acted.

I should like to have recorded their names for the inspiration of citizens of to-day; few of whom know that to them is given the same power to set in motion the machinery by which new houses for old may be brought into being.

So the record goes on; and when the tale is told during the fourteen years of life left to the Board of Works after the passage of the Cross Act, the Board was responsible for carrying through 16 schemes, displacing 22,868 persons, providing accommodation for 27,780; round about 2,000 persons per year. This may not appear to have been a very rapid rate of progress, and it certainly did not satisfy housing reformers of that day.

It is of interest to note that of the 16 schemes carried out the dates of representation were as follows:—

1875	.	.	.	.	.	7	representations.
1876	.	.	.	.	.	6	„
1877	.	.	.	.	.	2	„
1883	.	.	.	.	.	1	„
<hr/>							
Total	.	.	.	.	.	<u>16</u>	„



There were, in addition, 6 schemes started by the Board and completed by the L.C.C. Similar particulars in respect of these are :—

1875	.	.	.	.	1	representation made.
1876	.	.	.	.	1	" "
1877	.	.	.	.	2	" "
1883	.	.	.	.	2	" "
						—
Total	.	.	.	.	6	" "

Of these 22 schemes it will be seen that representations were made in respect of 19 within three years of the passage of the Cross Act, that an interval of six years then passed without further representation, and that then 3 only were made. If this is considered in connexion with the fact that in 1911 Sir Shirley Murphy, the Medical Officer to the L.C.C., located 1900 insanitary areas containing 26,000 houses occupied by 196,000 persons, it can hardly be considered that the problem had been adequately tackled.

There were difficulties no doubt, and it would be unfair to underestimate them.

The whole thing was new, such wholesale acquisition, familiar no doubt to Railway Companies, was novel to a local authority. In a memorandum made to the Secretary of State for Home Office in 1879 they set out some of their difficulties.

In addition to finance the Board were, of course, at once up against the peculiar difficulties that arise in the case of the built-up London Borough. "Where," they said, "are we to re-house the people we de-house; there is no vacant land available within the Borough, we must pull down the old houses before we can build the new. We must therefore scatter the existing population. They don't come back to the new dwellings and the people we do house might as well be housed in the suburbs at a fraction of the cost that is involved in housing them in the reconstructed areas."

All the records show a continuous effort on the part of the Board to be relieved of their housing obligations, and allowed to dispose of the land they had acquired, for convenient purposes.



It was little joy to the Board to be compelled to continue operations which, at the long last, left them with a loss of nearly £58 a head for every person they re-housed.

There must be found a place on the credit side for something else than £ s. d. before such a balance sheet will satisfy any executive body.

Then the lengthy procedure under the Act was a difficulty, as they pointed out in one case and as tables that follow confirm. A scheme commenced in 1876 was incomplete in 1883!!

From 1875 the Board were under a peculiar strain. If they dealt with an area under the Cross Act the whole charge fell on the Metropolitan fund; if they could force the Vestry to deal with it, under the Torrens Act, the cost fell on the parish. Neither side wanted to hold the baby, and so the slum areas remained for Sir Shirley Murphy to find them practically untouched.

Before 1875 the Board pressed for them to be dealt with by the Vestries as single houses; after 1875 as small areas, in either case the cost falling on the area administered by the Vestry.

So things went on till the "Bitter Cry" awakened London in the eighties, and the Royal Commission of 1885 listened to the story.

It is not assumed that the sole cause of the supersession of the Board by the London County Council rose out of their Housing deficiencies, but it played a part.

Something had to be done; the time was not ripe for replacing the London Vestries. Local Government throughout the country was under revision. County Boroughs and County Councils were being set up. The new broom brought in in 1855 had seen a generation of wear, and was suspected of being very much worn down.

London should be given another. The Commissioners of Sewers had received their *cong  *. Now it was the turn of the Board. An Amurath an Amurath succeeds. The King was dead, long live the King! Exit the Board of Works, enter the London County Council. What was their housing record to be?



## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

THE London County Council took over six unfinished schemes of its predecessor, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and brought them to completion. *It took eight years to do so, and provided for 2,947 persons, or an average of 369 a year.* To this must be added the results of the Council's own initiative. The details of these are as follows :

It has been recorded that the schemes carried out by the Board, with the exception of three, were initiated in the three years 1875-7. There was a stay then, and representation was not resumed till 1883 after a six years' interval.

The advent of the London County Council in 1888 was marked by a resuscitation of interest, not, however, of any great strength.

One scheme was made in 1890, within two years of the establishment of the Council, two in 1895 and then no more till 1899, when five schemes were made.

Two years elapsed, another scheme appeared in 1901 and then there was inertia till 1910, when the Council approved the Tabard Street Scheme. The war intervened, and the scheme was postponed, to be carried out after the war was over. The eight schemes carried out provided accommodation for 13,324, which if added to the number before given makes a total of 15,371 persons provided for by the L.C.C. in the quarter of a century from its establishment to the outbreak of war. An average of 615 persons a year against the 2,000 a year provided for under the regime of the Board.

The motto of the London County Council in this matter might well have been "*Festina Lente.*"

It must, of course, be remembered that the Council



directly re-housed, while the Board only de-housed; re-housing in their day being undertaken by private agencies.

In addition, the Council has carried out re-housing under Part II of the 1890 Act and under improvement schemes, and has also provided new houses under Part III of the same.

Against this, in any comparison, it must be remembered that the Council had the advantage of the 1890 Act, which was not enjoyed by their predecessors, which not only gave them power to build, but also provided them with a simplified procedure, and a more favourable basis of compensation.

To fairly estimate their work up to the war it is to be noted that the L.C.C. provided under Part II, in connexion with general improvement schemes for 12,504 persons, accommodation for 2,216 persons; and under Part III for 23,159 more, making a grand total of 53,250 persons, or an average of 2,132 persons per annum over a period of 25 years, or 132 persons per annum more than the number provided for by the joint agency of the Board of Works and private agencies.

A disappointing result. To be explained partly by the fact that the impetus of the movement of the eighties had ceased, and partly to a growing feeling that slum clearances while it removed evils in one area only increased them in others, and that what was more urgent was the provision of new houses.

It will be of interest to date the activities under each head.

Part I, large slum schemes, practically ceased to be made after 1899. Part II, small slum schemes, ceased to be made about the same time.

The first action taken by the Council under Part III arose in connexion with slum clearances in improvement schemes. They resulted in the erection of three lodging-houses between the years 1893 to 1906, which provided cubicles for 1,856 persons, and in the erection of dwellings, to meet obligations arising out of slum clearance schemes. This was followed at the beginning of the twentieth century by a development in policy which lay in purchasing land on the outskirts of



the Administrative County and developing them by the erection of working-class houses. This led in the year 1902 to the purchase of four estates of a total average of about 340 acres. The activities of the Council prior to the war may therefore be summarised as follows :

In the years 1888 to 1900 they were either completing the slum clearance schemes of their predecessors or those initiated by themselves, while from 1900 to 1914 they were engaged in the development of new estates, their slum clearance activities being practically entirely suspended.

That this was not due to the necessity for such clearances having disappeared may be gathered from this fact :—

In 1911 Sir Shirley Murphy, the Medical Officer to the London County Council, reported that there then existed about 1,900 groups of three or more houses which were either insanitary or so congested, badly arranged or badly situated that they required to be dealt with. The number of dwellings in these groups was 25,734, occupied, it was estimated, by about 190,000 persons. In 1919 it was reported that 1,564 of these houses had been demolished, but that they had been replaced by only 217 dwellings. The forty-five years' effort of the Board, Council and the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs had resulted in re-housing 48,525 persons, or about one-fourth of those still requiring to be re-housed.

In addition, it was reported that there existed another section of unhealthy houses, undesirable on account of age, defective construction, decay, dampness or dilapidated and verminous condition, of which no detailed particulars were in the possession of the Council, but the number of which was believed to be considerable.

Such was the position at the outbreak of war.

War made building impossible while piling up the conditions that made building imperative, so that the Council at the conclusion of war faced a problem of which the foregoing barely states the term.



## CHAPTER XLV

### PRINCE AND PRELATE

THE old writer who observed that "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him," was as shrewd as he was pithy.

Out of what a tangle of human motives great actions come. If this is true anywhere it is true of the Royal Commission of 1885.

It came into being from a motion of the Opposition in the Parliament of 1880-5. It is difficult for any Parliamentarian to free an Opposition motion entirely from the suspicion of ulterior motives.

Macaulay's gibe that the Puritan disliked bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators, is paralleled by the view that a motion coming from the Opposition is at least likely to be equally divided between a desire to promote its object and to embarrass the Government of the day. That view must not, perhaps, be unduly stressed.

Some not too cynical cynic has said that a combination of public and private interest is the best guarantee for a stable policy, and without endorsing too literally that view, it may be admitted that there are few actions public or private which are taken without some bias being given to them by the position of the actor or the state of affairs.

The Commission rose out of a motion by the Marquess of Salisbury in the House of Lords in 1884. Gladstone in power himself was beating out the policy which was to put his opponents into power for twenty years.

Disraeli was dead.

A cynic was to follow a wit, but the same ideas were the subject matter of their gifts.



*Panes et circenses* may be a rather brutal stripping of the ideals that Young England had draped, but both men moved to the same music. It was all of a piece that the successor of the man who had written "Sybil" and coined the phrase *Sanitas Sanitatum*, should ask for a Royal Commission on Housing.

Not only moved it, but accepted membership of it, attended its meetings, listened and questioned and joined in the Report.

A little tardy later, perhaps, when power came, and opportunity to translate the Report into action, but not altogether forgetful, which is high praise for a politician.

It is difficult to bestow even faint praise without seeming to imply censure in the opposite quarter, but I think it is possible to recognise that on the whole throughout the nineteenth century, the housing of the urban population received more attention from the Tory Party than from the Liberal, without implying an unnatural callousness on the part of the latter.

Someone has said, I think a Bishop, that he would rather see England free than England sober, and it was with her freedom rather than her comfort the Liberal statesmen of that day concerned themselves.

The franchise may seem a barren thing, when sheltered in a slum, but like the late wakening aloe it may bloom when many years have gone.

Who would be free himself must strike the blow, and the franchise has given to those who dwell on the border of these darkneses the power to lighten them.

Housing reform to-day does not rely on the sensibilities and kindlinesses of the fortunate and generous-minded youth that made up "Young England," Tennyson, Hallam, Monchton, Milnes, Disraeli, Hope and the others, nor on the more vigorous and vehement Kingsley, Hughes and Maurice of a little later day.

Those who feel the pinch have now the power to mend the shoe, and that is because of the Liberal activities of the nineteenth century.

All the same, I could wish that in looking through



the index to Morley's *Life of Gladstone* I could have found some other reference to Housing than the House Tax.

"These things ought ye to have done and not to have left the others undone."

It may be that Morley does not do Gladstone justice. It may be that it is Morley's lack of interest in Housing rather than Gladstone's that is chronicled in his Index—for Torrens was a Liberal, and his Act, though passed by Disraeli, was enquired into by a select Committee appointed at the instance of Mr. Gladstone. The Cross Acts again were the subject of a select Committee set up by Mr. Gladstone's Government, while the Royal Commission itself came into being in the same Government.

The truth of the whole matter, I suppose, is that those who are attached to old institutions will endeavour to make them work while those who desire new will rather concentrate on their destruction and the construction of others to succeed them, which being translated into political jargon means that in the nineteenth century one might expect social reform from the Conservatives and political reform from the Liberals.

In these latter days, however, the task of political reform has in the main been achieved, and any party—Tory, Liberal or Labour—that means anything, must engage itself on measures designed to ameliorate the evils and increase the amenities of life.

With whatever degree of single-mindedness the Royal Commission was brought into being, it did its work well, and its report remains and must remain of perpetual interest as a record of one great set of human conditions in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

This is one of the Great Commissions. It may rank with the Poor Law Commission of 1836. It stands mid-way between it and the Coal Commission of 1921. The work of the first Commission is said to have exhausted its usefulness, that of the second is believed by many to anticipate as great a social reorganisation as the first. The work of the Housing Commission of 1885 has yet to show its final effect.



Its personnel makes a fascinating perusal. A man who was to be a King, another who was to be a Prime Minister.

The chairman a figure hardly less tragic than Parnell.

A Cardinal cheek by jowl with a Bishop.

That vigorous soul Edward Lyulph Stanley, whom later as Lord Sheffield and President of the Cobden Club, it was my happiness, as Honorary Secretary, to know and serve.

Jesse Collings, eager for "three acres and a cow."

Politician and economist, priest and philanthropist, it was a goodly gathering.

Looking back now, perhaps its greatest interest is that on it sat Mr. T. McCullagh Torrens and Sir Richard Assheton Cross, and before it came as witnesses the aged Earl of Shaftesbury, the still more aged Edwin Chadwick, and last but not least Miss Octavia Hill.

A veritable twilight of the gods.

There were other witnesses worthy of note.

Joseph Chamberlain, at the zenith of his career, could tarry to tell his housing experiences gathered in the council chamber and streets of Birmingham.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach spoke of rural cottages and George Smith of Coalville, of van-dwellers.

Medical officers, trade union officials, local administrators, all made their contribution to the report which was to bring about the consolidation of housing legislation and open up an arterial road into this great area of human need.



## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE SECOND ROYAL COMMISSION

THE Report on England and Wales alone with its 728 pages and 18,260 questions taken over 39 days will be a quarry for ever to the historian of those times.

Blue books are not supposed to be the most amusing form of reading, but these pages are not without their entertainment, drab as is their subject.

Entertainment and instruction; could more be said? As the enquiry proceeds and the witnesses appear, a fabric slowly is woven in which it is possible to trace the various threads that make up its variegated pattern.

Slowly there emerge the governing ideas of the several members of the Commission, the themes they seek to establish, those they seek to destroy. The witnesses in their turn come, some to the attack, some in the defence; some in hope, others in despair.

Gradually they cease to be mere abstractions, indexed and numbered, and take on flesh and blood, show curiosity, satisfaction and temper. All intensely individual, all of them whether members or witnesses, because of some marked and special interest.

Here is Cardinal Manning, head of the Roman Catholic Church, with a flock largely and continually recruited from Ireland. Ireland, that ubiquitous figure.

Not content with monopolising the political stage in the crowded years of the nineteenth century, there is hardly a report that does not stress the aggravation of housing conditions that follow on the influx of Irish immigrants.

They were poor, they left houses that were bad in Ireland to make houses worse in England.

Listen to Mr. Plunket in the House of Commons in the



month of May, 1886, just a year before the Royal Commission reported, as he opposes the extension of the franchise to Ireland.

"Out of seven hundred and sixty thousand inhabited houses in Ireland, no fewer than four hundred and thirty-five thousand houses were rated at one pound and under," while Lord Randolph Churchill in supporting it, admitted the "mud cabins, while contending for the character and quality of their occupants."

To Cardinal Manning, therefore, the housing problem was, and rightly, the housing of the labourer, the Irish labourer, with his wages of less than 20s. a week. Nothing was being done for him by public funds or private charity, and so the Cardinal looked sourly on the philanthropy of the Peabody Trust and asked shrewd questions as to its discriminative selection of tenants and its practical exclusion of his flock.

Then there was Bishop William Walsham, Suffragan of Bedford. Very much concerned with Housing, no doubt, but just a little concerned with the fact that the responsible author, as the Committee terms him, of *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* by which public feeling had been very much stirred was the Reverend Andrew Mears, formerly a Congregational Minister in Chelsea, and then secretary to the London Congregational Union.

I suppose one of the difficulties of a State Church is that it must be regarded as having a special responsibility in the matter of the social conditions of the State, and no doubt it was a little difficult to accept so scathing an indictment of these conditions from an official representative of the principal opponent to the maintenance of an Established Church.

There is just a little effort then on the part of the good Bishop to show that the picture has been painted a little too darkly, that the details are drawn from rather too narrow an area, that what was after all only particular had been made to appear general. So he examines Mr. Mears, and so he examines the various clerical witnesses who appear.

A courageous line to take at such a time and on such a



Commission, but after all no cause gains by exaggeration, and a little cold water is excellent at times in restoring the judgment and clearing the vision.

I do not know that housing reform has ever needed much damping down, but I am sure its solid base is not that of an emotion aroused by disagreeable contact with insanitary conditions, but a conviction arising from observation and reflection, that such conditions are incompatible with the health, dignity and self-respect of a civilised community.

Nothing is gained by refusing to admit progress. Progress made is the best assurance that progress will be made.

Mr. Morley, the philanthropist, was on the Commission. In my recollections of early youth the names of Samuel Morley and Samuel Smiles seem to go together with some sense of distaste. I wonder why? It should not be so. "Abou ben Adhem, let his tribe increase." "Write me as one who loves his fellow men." Certainly.

But when the expression is a label it is less attractive.

"Philanthropist."

It seems, like wax flowers under a glass case, to belong to departed conventions.

I recall a letter by Mr. Edwin S. Rickman, who first taught us to distinguish Gothic Architecture as Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular, written to Captain Hay, of Common Lodging-House fame on the 18th January, 1853, in which, after thanking him for the opportunity of seeing the improvements made under the operation of the Common Lodging-Houses Act, he concludes by excusing the length of his letter on the grounds that these matters had long and deeply engaged his consideration, first as an architect and subsequently as a "*private philanthropist*."

What rare fortune for an architect to achieve such a position, and what a delicious distinction.

A *private* philanthropist. Philanthropy and privacy—the eternal conflict.

We are informed that privacy should conceal philanthropy. Perhaps it is because philanthropy has been so successful in obliterating privacy that our faint distaste for it has grown.



Our right hand has been so unsuccessful in concealing its affairs from our left, that it seems hardly worth while continuing the effort.

Moreover, if we succeed in life, our bibliographers will frustrate us in death, so why struggle?

Perhaps I am unjust.

I have a vague idea that in some way we owe the Old Vic to Samuel Morley. If that be so, *pace* Mr. Gordon Craig—in my view it covers a multitude of philanthropy.

Mr. Morley's view was very clear and unescapable. It was simply this: If instead of handing over your money to the landlord of the "Old Bull and Bush" or the "Pig and Whistle," you handed it over to another kind of landlord in the shape of rent, you could get out of the slums and into a decent house and the problem was settled. There does not seem any answer to it, and however much his victims might shy at it, Mr. Morley put them firmly at the fence and over they went.

He had a little more trouble than usual with G. R. Sims, who displayed all the dramatic qualities of his *Fireman's Wedding* in the tale he told the Commission. To Mr. Morley's insinuating enquiry, "I suppose if we could get the public-houses closed on Saturday night it would be a good thing," he got the discouraging answer, "I should not like to say that. It would be a good thing for some people, but it would be a very sweeping measure to close the public-houses on Saturday night."

So much for members and witnesses. The matters that came before the Commission were as varied as the personnel and in the chapters that follow an effort has been made to isolate representatives of both in the hope that the whole may be better seen after a study of some of the parts.



## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE CLERKENWELL COMEDY

THE great event in the proceedings of the Commission was what I may perhaps be allowed to call the "Clerkenwell Comedy."

Nothing gives quite such a picture of it as the memory of a lifted stone in a wood, and the scurry of a hundred creeping things that have sheltered in its protecting darkness.

Clerkenwell is described for us by the Vicar of one of its parishes.

"We have" he said, "the Clerkenwell Sessions House, we have a House of Detention, we have a House of Correction, we have Clerkenwell Green, we had the Fenian Explosives, and we have the Bradlaugh's Hall of Science just outside, and we get all the credit and discredit as it may be, of all that, though much of it comes from the west."

Into this olla podrida dropped the bombshell of the *Bitter Cry*, and the explosion made a great splash.

Its reverberations were heard in the local Vestry, further away in the highly respectable office of a long established firm of solicitors in Westminster and further still in the Great House of Compton-Wynyatt folded in the Warwickshire hills.

It cannot have been pleasant reading in those panelled rooms or in the shelter of the clipt yews.

There was mounting and riding and Lord William Compton was hotfoot to London.

For the freeholder of some of the worst parts of Clerkenwell was the Marquess of Northampton, and those who could not easily distinguish between the powers and duties of a freeholder and leaseholder were murmuring unpleasant things.



Some were hard in their judgments, more were hasty, and it needed to do something.

It is better at this interval of time to be neither, and to believe that the noble Lord was genuinely shocked at the disclosures and sincerely anxious to do what could be done.

That is certainly the impression produced by reading his evidence.

It is a simple story.

Houses built in 1815 for single families : the freeholder, a nobleman living far away : the leaseholders, middlemen, house-farmers, jobbers, knackers, what name you will, whose living it was to screw what rent they could from the miserable occupants of these decaying tenements.

The houses crammed from cellar to attic ; in almost every room a family, with all that means ; two water-closets to eight houses, no dustbin : all the squalid circumstances of a slum.

Costermongers keeping vegetables under their beds, to be sprinkled in the morning and sold as fresh.

Railings and stairs broken down, yards in a filthy condition, cowhouses and stables and slaughter-houses under dwelling-rooms.

A very inferno of dirt, disease and destitution.

And on all this turned the fierce light of a Royal Commission.

Little wonder there was some scampering.

The ground landlord came, the middlemen stayed away.

Everybody blaming everybody else—the Vestry most of all.

But the Vestry were the Middlemen, and the Middlemen were the Vestry.

As Vestrymen they were not enthusiasts for Sanitary Reform.

It was difficult, it was expensive, the Acts were complicated, it was the business of the Board of Works.

How they were pilloried !

There was Mr. Ball, Mr. Decimous Alfred Ball, he was the biggest of the middlemen, and much occupied with private business but not too occupied to take on public duties, a public-spirited man, Vice-Chairman of the Assessment and Appeal Committee.



A man about whom there were two opinions.

The Marquess of Northampton used to think very highly of him, but that was before the *Bitter Cry*.

After that hear Lord William, "Of course the disappointment as regards Mr. Ball is intense, I do not pretend for a moment that we are not disappointed in Mr. Ball." And Mr. Ball never said a word.

Then there was Mr. Ross, another farmer of houses with leisure for public work; he was Chairman of the Works Committee.

Then there was Mr. Martin, who followed the same leisure-giving occupation. An industrious fellow, Mr. Martin, a member of the Vestry, of all the principal Committees of the Vestry including the Assessment Committee.

Enough time, however, to mind his own affairs.

Lord William was more than a little shocked at his ability. Renting a house from the estate for £20 a year, he is able by good management to knock £100 a year gross rent out of it.

No wonder he was on the Assessment Committee; without his presence there the Committee might have misunderstood the position and formed an entirely wrong impression of the rent a tenant might reasonably be expected to give for houses in Queen Street.

Then there was Mr. Osborne; I should like to have heard more about Mr. Osborne. The Chairman of the Commission darkly hinted that Mr. Osborne had attained a certain public reputation, but it has not come down to our time.

He forms the centre of a little picture.

Lord William had got into a workmen's club in Clerkenwell, not intending to make a speech, but there, they would have it, and he took as his topic "Members of the Vestry." It was a delicate topic, more delicate because some of them were there, and Lord William apparently showed little of that politeness to present company generally associated with good manners.

Mr. Osborne spoke next and explained to the Club that until the Vestry got the circular from the President of the L.G.B., they did not know what powers they possessed.



Lord William does not appear to have accepted the statement and a little rudely expresses his scepticism of it to the Commission.

So the list goes on, Mr. Hill and Mr. Thame and Mr. Sans, Mr. Abraham and Mr. Eustace, Mr. Squire and Mr. Gibson, Mr. Travers and Mr. Haslam.

All of them dualists, experts in the art of getting a quart into a pint pot, and of combining attention to business with a zeal for public affairs.

How human nature wells up in these generation-old papers !

As the Chairman of the Clerkenwell Sanitary Committee reels off these names he gives little glosses as he goes.

Men do not like being pilloried. So we hear that Mr. Toraine had some slum property but " I might say I believe he has thrown it up." And Mr. Osborne, " I was told yesterday that it was thought that Mr. Osborne had sold all his lately," but Mr. Coker, " Mr. Alfred Coker has some and is trying to acquire more."

A stout fellow, Mr. Alfred Coker ; a Royal Commission has no terrors for him. There was money in it, that was enough for him and he stood his ground. I rather like Alfred.

Such was a London Vestry in 1885. Whether it is a fair picture I do not know, it is a picture drawn by the Commission. Vulgar, violent men.

" One has only to read what passes at their meetings as I do constantly in the local papers to see what class of men they are. The violence of the language is something extraordinary."

The words may comfort those who in these days are disturbed at a breach of manners in the meetings of a local authority.

Well, they are gone, and if the Vestry of Clerkenwell has gone with a little more limelight on it than the others, perhaps it but helped to light the way.

For fourteen years more the London Vestries were to linger despite the words of the Commissioners in their report.

The report was the death-knell of the London Vestries. They had been an unconscionable time in dying but the end was near. Unwept, unhonoured and unsung.



## CHAPTER XLVIII

### THE OLD GUARD

*SIC TRANSIT* the London Vestries and to have speeded them on their way would have sufficed to make this Commission memorable. The problem of London Government is not yet solved, but it goes in stages.

*Solvitur Ambulando.*

The Commission of Sewers giving way to the Metropolitan Board of Works, the Board of Works makes room for the London County Council, the Vestries are replaced by the Metropolitan Boroughs and still the city grows.

London becomes Greater London, and questions of transport, finance, housing, health, all test the adequacy of the present structure.

The recent Royal Commission on London Government found itself hopelessly divided. Not one but three reports issued from it—none being the report of a majority. That signed by the Chairman could find nothing better than the *status quo*, with some financial adjustments.

The matter will not rest there, the stream cannot be stayed, function precedes organism in sociology as in physiology, and in due course London will be possessed of a political body complete enough to perform its functions with satisfaction and success.

But while the importance of the Royal Commission on Housing no doubt consists of the effect it had in the years following, its interest is largely in what it held of the years before.

The old guard was being dismissed, the new guard being mounted.

There are three memorable figures amongst its witnesses to be considered and two amongst its members.



The witnesses shall have first place.

Edwin Chadwick and Octavia Hill.

Not a chance combination but a real connexion. The Alpha and Omega of Housing, the first and the last.

The material and the spiritual—there is hardly an anti-thesis that will not fit this pair.

His to clean the outside of the platter, hers to deal with the ravening and wickedness.

Some may like to see in this a fit example of the co-operation of the sexes, proper division of the task between man and woman.

Whether it is so, it is certain that in this case it was so.

He stood for Health and she for Housing.

At first it might be thought his connexion with housing was of the slightest, and his evidence before the Commission does little to remove that impression. It would be a very superficial view, however, that so regarded Edwin Chadwick.

In all great movements, the whole weight is never carried by one man ; there are thousands of willing helpers, but something in the nature of things singles out one powerful personality with whom the movement comes to be identified.

In that relationship Edwin Chadwick stands to Public Health in England and Wales.

The beginning of his work finds a sanitary condition in this country which beggars description. From the beginning he was in the van.

It is not a century since the first great outbreak of cholera in this country and many men are living who have had converse with those who lived in those days.

With the exception of a few towns which had sanitary powers of a limited kind, the elements of sanitation did not exist.

Those who live to-day in an age of well-paved, well-cleansed and lighted streets, who enjoy the advantages of a water sewage system, who live in places where the collection and disposal of refuse is efficiently conducted, where there exists an abundant water supply, where a system of in-



spection and hospital accommodation forestalls and prevents the spread of disease, can hardly imagine the England that stretched itself before Edwin Chadwick when he began to draw up the Reports made to the Poor Law Commission.

From these reports can be traced in a direct line the Public Health legislation under which to-day we thrive.

Scotsmen may say :

“ If you'd seen these roads before they were made  
You would throw up your hands and bless General Wade.”

It is only the restrictions of the rhymster that prevent Englishmen saying the same of Edwin Chadwick, not only in respect of roads, but of sewers and the whole series of sanitary conveniences.

Once apprehended it is not difficult to see that Edwin Chadwick's work was the essential preliminary to real housing reform.

The road to the house, the drains from the house, the refuse of the house.

With this doctrine of a sanitary trinity Edwin Chadwick evangelised the country and made straight the path of the Housing Reformer.

Even the pages of this Blue Book breathe the spirit of the old fighter.

He comes before the Commission keen as ever.

He wants more mortuaries ; at least the dead should not be overcrowded, and a cynic might smile to observe that this suggestion was not only adopted by the Commission but was that part of their report it required no pressure to induce the local authorities to accept, as we shall see when we go through London with Mr. Nichols and Dr. Murphy.

Then he wanted the tenure of Medical Officers and Sanitary Inspectors made independent of the goodwill of their employers. He is not on a Board, but he knows a member of one whose daughter is about to be married to a young medical man, and intrigues are on foot to get the Medical Officer out of his job and give it to the Benedict to be.

He wants examinations for sanitary inspection and more inspectors, weekly inspections of school children followed by an inspection of their homes.



A sound old man. From the Valhalla of Health it may be this old warrior sees now so much of what he wanted, come to pass.

On housing he was against common brick, he had discovered that a common brick contained a pint of water, and for years his followers made arithmetical calculations showing the number of gallons that hung suspended round the shivering occupants of brick houses.

Concrete was the thing, asphalt too; with these, you might even build over graveyards. Tell it not in Poland Street, but all the people who died from the Great Plague were buried in one place not far from that street, now lined by habitations.

His ideas on compensation were of the whirling kind, and made the Commission rather dizzy. I do not think they understood them. I do not know that I do, and I refrain from giving them as a mental exercise for my reader.



## CHAPTER XLIX

### A GREAT LADY

OF Miss Octavia Hill as of the others more is elsewhere said. She came before the Commission not as a stranger.

They had her evidence given before the Select Committee in 1881 and 1882.

They had more than that, they had the knowledge of her twenty years' work on this problem.

Half a century and more has passed to-day since she began that work, and her place amongst the great humanitarians is seen to be beside Elizabeth Fry. She did not think of the problem in terms of pig and sty. To her, to use her own words, it was a matter of the "spiritual elevation of a large class," and to that she set herself.

Amongst all the mysteries there is none like that in which the sensuous satisfactions of life are set aside for the sake of those to whom they are denied. Father Damien springs to the mind, but only as a more dramatic setting of a sacrifice equally profound in those lives given to service among the poor.

"In Spitalfields,  
I met a preacher there I knew and said :  
' Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene ?'  
' Bravely,' said he, ' for I of late have been  
Much cheered with thought of Christ, the living head.'"

Ay, they have bread that we know not of, these people who *could* have left the slums to look after themselves, who had the means and the opportunity to spend life in sweeter surroundings, but who chose to stay because others have no choice.

Those of us who are not of such stuff may do them reverence, while we take up the tasks we may.



Octavia Hill was of that rare kind who can enthuse with knowledge.

No one more completely complied with the dictum of Lord Morley that the impulses that start from the heart should go round by the head.

She was under no illusions and obscured none of the realities of the situation.

It was a difficult job, a slow job, but a job to be done.

Her evidence is clear and direct. She speaks of nothing that she does not know, but what she does not know is nothing.

Her eyes are everywhere. She notes everything.

If it is a question of the cost of improvement schemes, she has noted the offset in the way of increased assessable value.

If it is the action of the railways, she has plenty of modern instances to back her view that the railways adopt every device they can to evade their responsibility to rehouse.

Is it workmen's trains? They are very good but they do not help the poorest. They suit the family when there is only the head at work, with good money and reasonable hours, but except in so far as they clear out a number of people from their way they are of no use to the class amongst which she works, a class where many members of the family work and must work if they are to have any family life at all.

She is against all frills and "fancies," she is all for simplicity. "It seems to me," she said, "that where you remove the very lowest class of dwelling, and wish to re-accommodate the same people, you must adopt the very simplest manner of building," and again, "I should not carry the water and the drains all over the place, I think that ridiculous. It is no hardship to carry a pail of water along a flat surface surely; if you bring the water on to each floor that is quite sufficient."

I wonder if her shade hovered over the Women's Reconstruction Committee and what her vigorous common sense thought of their recommendations.

She was no friend of high buildings. "The way in which



people are building over back-yards, and adding storeys to existing buildings, diminishing air and light everywhere, is to me dreadful." Better men in the Vestries she wanted, and no doubt there was room for them, and she was hopeful of getting them. A note on the Clerkenwell comedy creeps in here and there. She is a little sceptical about the difficulty Lord William Compton had in enforcing the covenants in leases. She never had any difficulties.

She was against all subsidies and State aid; to subsidise rents was to her a rate-in-aid of wages, and open to all the objections of such a rate.

The dwellings must be self-supporting, and she knew what self-supporting meant.

"I mean by 'self-supporting' just this, that you should put them on such a footing that you can pay interest on the money that you get and that you can get any amount of money needed. That is what I call 'self-supporting.'"

No uncertain sound here. Poor Octavia Hill, with your sound economic doctrines, what would you do to-day, when the artisan—not the steady casual labourer, much less the uneducated destructive poor folk, but the artisan—is housed by a subsidy of 5s. 3d. a week; as much as the whole rent paid by many a family in your time?

The wage complex takes a different form to-day, and I fancy her political philosophy would find many critics, but how admirably she stated it.

No more uncompromising individual ever stepped.

Neither State aid nor Municipal action would she have. "I do not think corporate bodies are good builders, and I do not think they are good managers, so far as I know them."

What would she have done with the L.C.C.?

They took her over the whole of the ground so many witnesses had toiled over.

The cul-de-sac, what did she think of that, wasn't it difficult to get air into them? "Where I own them I feel very much more strongly the difficulty of keeping any public opinion and order in them than the difficulty of getting air."

How certain it all is, how self-contained, how sure.



What an amazing power comes to those who never seek it. "He that is diligent in business shall stand before Princes."

True, the Prince was not there that day, but the rest were, and in all their questions there is the note of deference.

This is a great lady, this, who spends her time in collecting rents and ordering repairs and encouraging poor wretches to believe they are men and women.

A great flouter of the command "let those that are filthy remain filthy still," she comes from her self-appointed task of cleansing the more than Augean stables of the slums, to this gathering of nobles and prelates as though it were but another part of her work.

And so it was. And how interested they were.

They asked her over 500 questions, and every answer was an illumination of her subject or herself.

The Cardinal was interested in her purchases. How did she buy?—by auction, by arbitration or agreement? "We either come to an agreement or let it alone." How did the seller fix his price? "By a calculation of his rent or of our purse, one of the two, I cannot tell which."

Perhaps she had paid too much.

"On the contrary, I think we have got them pretty cheap because we watch our opportunity."

No change there for the Cardinal.

She sees the problem as a whole and in parts. Nothing if not logical.

*Octavia Hill.* I should have thought that the best way of dividing the work was for the individuals to take that which they only can do, and deal with the lowest classes, and for the companies to deal quickly with the artisans; I should have said that the State and all the representatives of the public at large should confine themselves to destruction, and to keeping up the standard by the execution of the sanitary laws.

Could the view be better put?

Individuals can establish human relationships.

Companies,—well, companies, though she does not say so, have neither souls to be damned, nor bodies to be kicked—and her whole attitude is based on that.



They may do some part of the job, but even that they cannot do, either better or more natural. "If you ask me my private opinion, it is that these dwelling companies will come to us presently and ask us to collect their rents."

Did the Peabody Trustees, did Sir Sydney Waterlow, read the evidence? If they did, did they mark that passage? Another shrewd blow at Clerkenwell and its agitated ground-landlord and its wicked middlemen.

*Octavia Hill.* I think that whatever legislation there is, ought to throw a portion of the cost on the ground-landlord. I do not know how it stands now, but it appeared to me that the cost was rather unfairly thrown on the middleman in the only case that I knew much about; and after all, the ground-landlord's ancestors had authorised that lease, and chosen the leaseholder, and allowed the evil to grow up; and though, for the moment, the possessors may be powerless, I do not think they can treat it as if they had no share in the evil.

The Marquess of Salisbury tried to bring her to a softer view but without much effect. She knew her mind.

*Octavia Hill.* I do not think that a London ground-landlord is very much to be pitied; I think that many of the leaseholders and poor people are much less able to bear the burden, and I do not quite see why more taxation should not be thrown upon the ground-landlord if it can be done.

She had no use for Committees.

*Octavia Hill.* A Committee wastes a good deal of time in talking?—It does; and besides, as I said to Mr. Ruskin the first time we talked this matter over, no committee would do it, because we cannot set up a perfect standard immediately, but progress must be gradual.

As her evidence proceeds her view emerges more and more clearly. It is simply the replacement of the bad landlord by the good landlord. By the bad landlord she means the person whose connexion with his tenants is the cash nexus and the cash nexus alone. He is often short-sighted and does not see that he loses in arrears, and the deterioration of his property by neglect of repair, more than he gains.

But good repair will not satisfy her or make her estimate



of a landlord, she wants more than that. The landlord is a liege, he is to exact from his tenants fealty, but they are his people, particularly requiring his help and care, and if he is a good landlord he will also be their good friend.

So she sees London not a place of great areas covered by huge block dwellings, but a group of courts, swept and lighted and garnished, owned by individuals who collect their rents, and repair their houses, and advise and help their tenants so that each dwells in security under his own roof-tree, and none dareth to make him afraid.

Here is a homely note.

*Question.* One of the difficulties in converting a bad property into a good property, even under your system, is the difficulty of housing people temporarily, is it not?

*Octavia Hill.* No, not at all. We manage to get the drains and the water supply put right with the people in the place, and we do everything much more gradually than most people do. With every tenant who is clear we make an arrangement to do something in his room; very likely he does it himself on a Saturday afternoon or something of that kind.

Here is a clear-cut opinion, she is pressed to say whether she agrees to the sale of cleared slum areas below their market price. Some great friends of hers who are engaged on a housing scheme are helped in operating it by their concession.

*Question.* You have laid great stress upon this scheme of yours being carried out purely upon commercial principles; but do you consider that where land is cleared for the purpose of public improvements it is a violation of commercial principle to compel a public body clearing the land to dedicate the site to the re-housing of the poor?

*Octavia Hill.* I am afraid I do. I am sorry to say it, but I do think that the full force of the commercial principle is infringed there.

What an individualist—one in whom Mr. Harold Cox even could find no guile. Listen to her while she debates with Mr. Jesse Collings.

*Question.* I am speaking now on the question of supply and demand; would you agree to the principle that, if a property



owner could get the same price for one room that he previously got for two rooms, it is right that he should demand that rent?

*Octavia Hill.* I should have thought so, and that the natural tendency would have been for wages to rise in proportion if the cost of living rises.

*Question.* Supposing the people to be so poor, as we have abundant evidence that they are, that they cannot pay a rent—say of 2s. 6d., how can the difficulty be got over by the competition principle? If owners can get 5s. a week for a single room by competition, what is to become of the family who cannot possibly pay such a rent?

*Octavia Hill.* Is it not precisely the same thing as if bread went up to a very high price; is that so very different? I should have thought that when the cost of living rose the wages must necessarily rise or something more efficient must be done. People must emigrate, for instance. I should leave prices to supply and demand.

Let us leave here this mixture of granite and grace, with a will of steel and a heart of love. Hard, if you like, bound by hard practice and harder theory, but yet right in the heart and essence of things. She has much to say to this generation, so alien to her in idea and thought.

Her outstanding greatness is that what to others was an excuse for inaction, was to her a stimulus.

She could work, she could wait, and more than all—most of us can do one or the other—she could work while she waited.

In a day when the Millennium is wanted by return of post, and a New Heaven and a New Earth in a seven-hours' day, it is worth while to watch a woman who could work consistently, courageously, continuously though her belief was:

“You cannot get people to use the things that are given to them suddenly. I think that the two reforms (character and environment) must go gradually hand in hand, no large corporation would meet the needs of the people because the people have to grow into a better state of things gradually.”

The East and the West have joined hands; Sydney Webb with his inevitability of graduality, and Octavia Hill with her individuality, are perhaps not so very far apart.



## CHAPTER L

### A GREAT GENTLEMAN

I HAVE left to the last the three men who mattered most in the housing legislation of the nineteenth century. The Earl of Shaftesbury, William T. McCullagh Torrens and Sir Richard Cross; the authors of the Shaftesbury Acts, the Torrens Act, the Cross Acts, 1851, 1868, 1875.

The last two sat as members, the first was the first witness.

The wise men of the East warn us not to desire the fruits of action, to be content with the wages of going on, and still to be, and as one follows the proceedings from the 11th March, 1884, to the 20th February, 1885, the wisdom of the warning becomes apparent.

They are a healthy douche for those in a hurry, for those who are more for the prize than the game. See the old Earl as he takes his place at the table that March morning. The first witness, and well he might be; and the first question, listen to it and to the modest answer.

"I believe that your Parliamentary experience of the question of the housing of the poor extends over nearly sixty years since your first entry into the House of Commons in 1826?—Very nearly that."

Sixty years! 1826. Gladstone was at Eton breakfasting with Gaskell, sculling with Hallam; Disraeli was busy with *Vivian Grey*, the one not to enter the House till 1832, the other till 1837.

How remote it all seems, but remote in years as it may be, the remoteness in its outlook on Health and Sanitation and the condition of the people, is infinite.

Slavery in the West Indies had caught the eye of Wilberforce, but no Hercules had shouldered the burden of the Underworld.



If any came it was Shaftesbury. If he be taunted that his eyes forsook the fields for the factory it can be answered that it was the change from the field to the factory that marked his time.

Housing was not his first interest.

A quarter of a century of his Parliamentary life passed before his housing Acts were passed.

It was in 1851 that he placed on the Statute Book the first Acts that definitely and directly dealt with housing in this country.

Thirty-three years more, a generation, was to come and go before in the witness-chair he surveyed the work his Act had done. A bleak survey of a barren and unfruitful field. Hear him on it as he faces the chair.

"The Labouring Classes, Lodging-Houses Act sets out in legislative form some of the views your Lordship entertains upon the question, I believe?"

*Lord Shaftesbury.* That would have been a very efficient act if it had been put into operation?

But it has, in fact, been a dead letter?

*Lord Shaftesbury.* At the time when that Act was passed, there was no feeling in the country at all, and therefore it passed unnoticed, but if you were to look at the terms of that Act you would see that it would meet almost everything that is required at the present moment.

Poor Act of 1851.

No one to do it reverence. Yes, one, there was one observant eye, it was in Huddersfield, and in the records of those long years it is noted that the town of Huddersfield did build a lodging-house under the terms of the Shaftesbury Act.

Miss Octavia Hill knew of the Act, but she thought it was a dead letter, and believed its time had passed, she thought that if it had been put in force at the time, Commissioners appointed by the parishes might have shown models of what it would be well to do.

"Now that the whole public mind is alive on the subject." Ah, Miss Hill, did you mistake a flare for a flame?

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain knew about the Act and thought it was a dead letter.



What changes time will bring.

The stone that was rejected by the builder has become the chief corner-stone.

The seed less than a mustard-seed has become a tree.

Housing Committees sit in the shade thereof and the officials at Whitehall sing in the branches.

Wisdom is justified of her children.

Lord Shaftesbury's Act of 1851 as a result of the attention given to it by the Royal Commission, was perpetuated with certain amendments in the Housing Act of 1890, the "Principal" Act. Then it became known as Part III, and out of Part III the Housing Acts of Dr. Addison, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Wheatley and Mr. Greenwood have bloomed. Like those seeds that hidden in the hand of a mummy lie dormant for a score of centuries, and then being planted bring forth a hundredfold, the germ of housing activity generated in the Act of 1851 has come to harvest after seventy years.

As they listened to the old man these forty years ago, it is clear that with their reverence there mingled a faint compassion for one who failed to see that the old order had passed, had given place to new, and who clung to old far off remedies without avail. The last to talk with him was Cardinal Manning.

The witness withdrew, and I have no doubt a gentle murmur humouring an old man's views broke the silence when they had gone. But he was wiser than they. What they came to say of him and his Act may be read. What he thought of it was more true than what they said.



## CHAPTER LI

### THE MIDDLE MAN

WILLIAM McCULLAGH TORRENS occupies the middle position amongst these three men. The mean in time, and the mean in proportion. He is the "tweeny" in the housing establishment and shares somewhat the nondescript character of that useful member of a domestic staff.

The Earl of Shaftesbury in 1851 had the vision of buildings, model in type, springing up in every parish, setting an example to all builders. Sir Richard Cross moved like a conqueror over the slum areas of the land, sweeping all before him, heralding in ambitious schemes, giving scope to every imagination. Not so Mr. Torrens. His was a frugal mind. He patched and darned. As he surveyed the housing garment of the people he saw infinite possibilities of repair. He had the right instinct, the trees did not obscure for him the wood. He saw that the slum reformer should do what charity did, begin at home. The house was the unit to him. If he had a laureate it was the poet who wrote :

" The cottage was a thatched one,  
The outside poor and mean  
But everything within that cot,  
Was wondrous neat and clean."

That was his range, limited enough but very clearly seen. Mr. Chamberlain's great new street at Birmingham had no attractions for him ; as far as housing went it was an excrescence and only delayed what he desired to forward.

As a politician he was the complement of Octavia Hill as a philanthropist ; though—bitter irony !—when she thought of Housing Acts, it was rather of Sir Richard Cross than Mr. Torrens that she thought.



She was only one of those who gave no heed to this precise, persistent Radical who had been twenty years in Parliament and was within ten years of his grave ; this reformer, never resting, never still ; his fortune the reverse of Shaftesbury.

The two men together might have furnished the text of the "Grammarians' Funeral."

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
Sees it and does it ;  
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
Dies ere he knows it.  
That low man goes on adding one by one,  
His hundred's soon hit ;  
This high man, aiming at a million,  
Misses an unit."

The children have us at an advantage when their houses of cards fall, they shout with glee ; it is not so easy when you are older.

Torrens' youth was spent on Poor Law Reform in Ireland ; he was one of those who gave to Ireland workhouses, and to Disraeli in 1837, the opportunity of this inimitable bathos :

"I would not have the poor man deprived of the small consolation of witnessing the games of his grandchildren—I would not deny him the mournful satisfaction of viewing the tombs of his forefathers. One of our poets has beautifully said, 'Sweet is the music of the Sabbath bells,' but of this music the Whigs have deprived the poor and the aged. For him the Sabbath bells sound no more. Immured in a prison, no spiritual consolation can be derived in the hallowed temple of his ancestors ; but, at length, brokenhearted, he quits a world with which he is disgusted."

And he lived to hear Sir Richard, afterwards Lord Welby, say at this very Commission :

"The Public Works Loan Commissioners have advanced loans to Ireland under certain heads, and on certain occasions, and they had advanced one loan which was a very unfortunate one ; it was a very large sum, for workhouses in Ireland, over £1,000,000 which had to be written off."

*The Marquess of Salisbury.* What date was that ?—About the year 1837, I should think.



The middle period of his life was given to the setting up of a School Board in London. Happily he did not see the dissolution of this part of his life's work.

At the time we see him it was in its hey-day and a great part of the evidence before the Commission is that of School Board visitors whose work had given them a close knowledge of the conditions of the poor.

His colleague on the Commission, Mr. Lyulph Stanley, afterwards Lord Sheffield, was also a colleague on the Board. Of him I should like to say more. An amazing man whose activities were only limited by his life. Age could not wither him nor time stale his infinite variety ; permanently young, with an interest in affairs and a zeal for reform that could not be abated.

But to return to Mr. Torrens. Member for Finsbury from 1865 to 1885, did he know, did he fear the next election would leave him outside the House ?

He had barely been a year in the House when he introduced a Bill " To provide better dwellings for Artisans and Labourers " which was lucky enough to secure the attention of the Government and was sent on the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone to a Select Committee. Two years later it became the Torrens Act. The Commission speaks of the " natural favour with which a legislator regards his own production," and while they spoke of Lord Shaftesbury they might have been thinking of Mr. Torrens. Part of the human comedy of the Commission is his almost pathetic eagerness to establish the usefulness of his Act.

You can see he feels it is overshadowed by the Cross Act : there is nothing grandiose about its operations, it goes quietly to and fro " tinkering " with this house and with that.

Nobody is enthusiastic about it ; some of those most likely to know seemed to know nothing about it. Everybody had seen the great areas cleared by the Cross Act. The industrial dwellings company were all quarrelling over these carcasses stripped as they were of the gross flesh that had so long encumbered them.



The Cross Act was administered by a Great Board, the Torrens Act was in the hands of Little Vestries.

Millions passed under the Cross Act, there was profit, there was plunder under them. Nothing under the Torrens Act but the unblazoned visit of a sanitary inspector, a few notices, a struggle more or less severe with a property owner, then a few repairs carried out, no paragraphs in a paper, no opening ceremonies, no dinners, no speeches.

It is clear as the evidence is more closely studied, that the Torrens Acts and the Cross Acts were the real study of the Commission. History and sentiment, the courtesy required by the occasion led to a glance in the direction of the Shaftesbury Act, but the real contest was between the others.

So every witness is asked for his view on what each has done, and one needs to know little of human nature to conjure up the interest of these two rivals in Housing Reform. And they were rivals; if not personally, then in their schemes. This is evident throughout, not only in the evidence of the witnesses but in the examination conducted by the two rivals. It begins with Lord Shaftesbury.

The Torrens Act, in retaining old houses, did not, of course, lend help to securing the wide streets and larger rooms which were beginning to form the cardinal points from the Health aspect of Housing, and so it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Torrens found it necessary to discount some of the arguments brought in support of theories that led to demolition.

His examination is therefore directed to discount the death-rate in the old courts and to show that high death-rates were to be found in the new block dwellings that rose out of the Cross Acts.

So he examines Lord Shaftesbury. And he cross-examines Dr. Shirley Murphy to show that larger rooms are really not necessary.

There is a glimpse in the evidence of a clash between housing and educational activities which has not entirely vanished with the Board. Here it is.



*Question.* Have you noticed the proceedings with regard to the proposed School Board site in Clerkenwell?

*Dr. Murphy.* Yes.

*Question.* The School Board, I think, are taking some very good houses there?

*Dr. Murphy.* Yes, in Green Terrace.

*Question.* They do so because the bad ones are too dear, do they not?

*Dr. Murphy.* They said that the cost would be very much greater.

How comic can be the conduct of affairs. To provide schools for some children by depriving other children of their homes!!!



## CHAPTER LII

### SIR RICHARD CROSS

WE will leave the Commission with a word on Sir Richard Cross and his Acts. He is the Alcinous of Housing. He comes later than the others, in 1875. Trial and error have shown the dead ends into which housing may stray. He comes with his bold schemes that inspire the imagination and attract the adventurers in social reform.

He is the surgeon who cuts away where the physician has failed to cure.

The "half-a-loafers" who have been satisfied by the "tinkering" of the Torrens Act are swept away by the "whole-hoggers" who find the Cross Acts wholly to their hearts.

Those who believe that things do not exist if you do not see them are immensely pleased by the "disappearance" of the slums.

They pass the vacant sites, or view the great block dwellings rising with equal satisfaction.

I fancy Sir Richard's face must have been wreathed in smiles as he heard Lord Shaftesbury say, "There has been a great improvement in London," and Miss Octavia Hill add: "The existing Act seems to have effected a very large amount of good in many districts that I know."

While the praise coming from Mr. Chamberlain:

"Speaking for myself I should like to say that I have always held the Artisans Dwellings Act is the most important contribution that has been made to the settlement of the question,"

must have gone very near to his heart.

The "most important" contribution. Yes, and the last, for with the shaping of the Cross Act the last great weapon



in the housing war had been forged. I am not forgetting town planning, but of it housing is but a part.

With Shaftesbury, the Torrens and the Cross Acts the armoury was complete. The weapons may have been improved in shape, a finer edge given to them, more powerful hands may wield them, but in substance the work was done in 1875 when the Cross Act was passed.

If we have a housing problem to-day it is because for half a century the authorities in this country have been supine and the people indifferent. The country was opened up—the main tracks were blazed, all that remained was to go in and possess the land. If for fifty years we have wandered in the wildernesses it is because we are a perverse and stiff-necked people.

The Royal Commission of 1885 is as decisive an event in housing as the Reformation in religion and the Revolution in politics.

Here the Housing Act of 1890 was gendered, the Ministry of that year merely the midwife that brought it to birth.

1890 is the Hegira of Housing and for the rest of the story we shall date from it. With it ended the old dispensation, but those who look back beyond it will find there, as of old, the Law and the Prophets.



## CHAPTER LIII

### MR. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

THERE were other witnesses.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain comes to the Commission and the Prince of Wales resumes his attendance to hear him.

He enters the room an object of great interest.

Within the doors of Richmond Terrace men may humdrum on housing but outside there are things more electric.

Disraeli is dead. Gladstone is losing his grip on the Liberal Party and Parnell is fastening his on his Nationalist colleagues. His hearers in Dublin have already been told that the next election would make the Nationalists the arbiter of fortune in English politics.

It was a day of miscalculation.

Churchill was to forget Goschen; Parnell forgot Chamberlain.

Here was the man on whom English politics were to depend for twenty years, who was to give it a new bias, and dying leave behind him sons hereditary not only in name but in ability.

The great fields of politics were still before him. He came to the Commission, coloured indeed by the speculative interest in his future that was even then beginning to grow in the minds of men, but still in the sober light of his late tenure of the Local Government Board and with the experiences gathered in the municipal life of Birmingham thick upon him.

His evidence is like himself; direct, forceful, cutting at the heart of things.

He fastens at once on the question of compensation.

On it he could speak with authority.



Birmingham was the great example of the operation of the 1875 Act.

It was the view taken with regard to compensation that was Mr. Chamberlain's main grievance.

He did not complain of the wording in the compensation clause of the Cross Act of 1875, indeed, he said that if at the time he himself had formed the Act, he could not have devised better words. He said :

" I do not think it is the fault of the Act. If I had had to deal with the thing, without the experience of the Act, I do not think I could have devised words which should better carry out the fair consideration in these cases. At all events we are now face to face with the fact that whatever the intention of the Act, and however it is worded, these excessive prices have been given under the Act ; and I consider that we ought to go on altering the formula until we have found one which arbitrators will interpret in the evident sense of the intention of the promoters of this legislation ; the formula I would supply I will tell you."

In answer to a question on the excessive prices paid for slum property he said :

" I think it is very much owing to the habit of the professional people employed, and I would try and break that habit by a new formula which they would be forced to observe. I want to mark for their benefit the intention of the legislature that excessive prices should not be given. The formula which I myself have put forward is that in every case the fair value should be given as between a willing buyer and a willing seller in the open market without any allowance for compulsory sale, and I believe that if that formula were adopted, it would be impossible for the Arbitrators to go beyond a fair value."

Much water was to flow under the bridges before the formula was accepted and at the time it went too far for the Commission to adopt.

The Marquess of Salisbury, who was not then *en rapport* with Mr. Chamberlain (I wonder if he was ever entirely so), put him through an interesting examination which is worth perusing.

*Lord Salisbury.* With reference to your formula, the price which a willing purchaser would give to a willing seller, do you think that is really a definition which a court of law could easily



apply? Is there not a great difference in willingness? There is not an absolute willingness to buy on the part of the purchaser; it is a willingness to buy if he can get at the price he likes. There is not an absolute willingness to sell on the part of the seller; it is a willingness to sell if he can sell at a price he thinks sufficient.

*Mr. Chamberlain.* Yes, but I think that the definition could be easily interpreted by a court of law, as they very often do by applying common sense to it. I should say, in the first place, that the price ought to be the price at which a willing seller would sell; but I want to meet the case in which no purchaser at all is to be found.

*Lord Salisbury.* Do you think that if you made the normal conditions of the law more severe you would array against yourself in greater hostility this opinion under which you generally suffer?

*Mr. Chamberlain.* No, I do not think so. I think that a jury is always a very bad tribunal for dealing with these cases, but the arbitrators I should expect to do better if my formula were adopted, without at the same time the least fear of imposing unduly upon owners or property.

These doubts and fears, how time dissolves them! A generation was to pass before the desired formula came, but it did come when a Government containing a son of each of the men that questioned and answered across the table in Richmond Terrace that June day in 1884 passed an Act dealing with nothing but the question of Compensation, the Acquisition of Land Act, 1919, which adopted the very formula, almost in the same words that Mr. Chamberlain used a generation before.

In these days of rent restriction Acts I cannot leave Mr. Chamberlain without quoting his views.

*Question.* With regard to some questions that were put to you, would you be in favour of a local authority providing house accommodation for the poorest class at less than the market rate?

*Mr. Chamberlain.* No, I do not think I should; I should be afraid of it. I should be afraid that by doing so they would so much disturb the market that they would stop the supply, and would therefore do more harm than good, because the builders would be afraid of the competition of the public authority, and they would not come in and do what they are now doing voluntarily.



*Question.* Your opinion is distinctly against any attempt on the part of the local authorities, or on the part of the State to regulate a maximum rent for the poorest class?

*Mr. Chamberlain.* I think that is impossible.

*Question.* It would be Utopian to try it?

*Mr. Chamberlain.* I think so.

Utopian! What are fancies to the fathers, may be facts to the sons.



## CHAPTER LIV

### PRIVATE BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC UTILITY SOCIETIES

AN interesting part of the proceedings was that connected with the agencies then at work on the supply of dwellings. These may be classified first of all as private builders and public utility services.

The latter may again be divided into those providing block dwellings in Central London and those providing self-contained homes in the suburbs.

The private builders were divided on the question as to whether block dwellings or tenement houses were the best, but ended in agreeing that the action of philanthropic agencies subsidised either by legacies or public money at unduly low rates of interest tended to drive the private builder out of action.

One could almost imagine the year was 1930 instead of 1885. New methods too! They did not begin with 1919.

Mr. Goodwin of the *Builder*, a member of the Commission, puts several builders through their paces. Listen to Mr. Lascelles, who has invented a method of fixing 1½-inch slabs of concrete to a framework of wood.

"I am quite convinced of one thing, and that is that either by my system or some other, the use of thick walls not only for cottages but for dwellings of all kinds is doomed. In time to come men will think no more of building walls 2 or 3 feet thick of stone or brick than of building a wooden vessel with sides 12 inches thick as used to be done. The cheapness of iron will cause the framework of houses to be made of iron, and the filling will be of cement."

If this is an intelligent anticipation of ferro-concrete, it is pretty good. But it has not arrived yet as far as the



housing of the working classes is concerned, despite the various categories of steel houses that have been constructed.

The fear of the private builders seems rather curious now we know that the 1885 Commission was followed by a period in which the number of private houses constructed was the greatest of the century.

I have never disguised my view that as no two bodies can exist in the same place at the same moment of time, so public action supported and subsidised by public funds and unaided private enterprise, cannot continue to operate in the same place. As one comes in by the door the other must go out by the window.

The great philanthropic and semi-philanthropic Institutions were there, a little proud of themselves and justly so. They felt they were It. They had delivered the goods. Foremost amongst them the Peabody Trust.

Some of the members of the Committee may have heard for the first time of George Peabody's dream. So naïve it was—a darling dream, a darling dream. It was just this: you started with £500,000 and built some model dwellings, out of the rents of these you built more, and out of the rents of those more still, and so on *ad infinitum*, until all were housed.

Could anything be more simple, more inevitable!

God bless you, George Peabody. I like your dream better than I like your dwellings, though Heaven forbid I should despise them; they may be drear, but at least they are decent, and Henry James could find nothing finer to say of us during the Great War than that we were "a decent and dignified people."

Dignified would perhaps be putting it a little too high for your dwellings—"dull" would be a truer term, but anyway, behind them there was an idea, the greatness of which lay in its doctrine of continuity, of going on till the job was done.

Others have come after you who have in their work gone before you, but the City perhaps did better than it knew when it found a little space for your molten image within its crowded streets, and some day when your vision



comes true, and every family in London has its separate dwelling, men, women, and children will come and lay a few fragrant flowers at your feet in memory of your dream. So may it be.

The work of the Peabody Trustees filled the gap left by legislation in the powers and duties of the Metropolitan Board of Works. That body could de-house, but to re-house was not their task.

They cleared the sites for the Peabody Trustees and similar bodies, who built on them their dwellings. The London County Council unites both functions in its powers and duties, and it is true to say that the methods and traditions of the Peabody Trustees are embedded deep in the policy of the L.C.C.

It was to this method and these traditions that the attention of the Commission was directed.

I think the representatives of these great Institutions were a little chilled by their reception, and a little hurt by the probing questions they had to face, but reflection might have led them to expect it.

The Commission came together, not because of those who need no physician but because of the sick, not because of those who could pay economic rents but because of those who could not.

"Ah," said the Peabody Trustees and Sir Sydney Waterlow, "see what we've done in Southwark and Clerkenwell." "Look," said Lord Lymington, "at my estates at Shaftesbury Park, Clapham, at Queen's Park, in Homer Road and Noel Park near Hornsey. Why, the Earl of Shaftesbury has said they are 'the most beautiful things that I ever saw, and if any of your lordships have time to go and see them, it would do your heart good.'"

To which Cardinal Manning replies, "But what about my Irish labourers? Isn't it a fact that you won't let them into your dwellings?" and on his heels comes the whole pack of the Committee with "Isn't it a fact that you select your tenants, and isn't it a fact that you select those with the smallest families, and isn't it a fact that you select those with the largest wages?" and before



they have time to recover, in the very spirit of Scott's "On, Stanley, On!" comes Mr. Lyulph Stanley with his disconcerting enquiries as to the number per acre crowded on to their sites, of the sunlight shut out from rooms and the air from playgrounds?

It is not just the welcome I think they expected, and Sir Curtis Lampson for the Peabody Trustees and Sir Sydney Waterlow for the Industrial Dwellings, I daresay, forgot the little differences that had arisen between them in the struggle for sites, because of the apparent favour shown by the Board of Works for the Peabody Trustees, and condoled with each other over the ingratitude of reformers in general and housing reformers in particular.

Lord Lymington could afford to spread himself a little; his estates contained no monster blocks shutting out sunlight and air, they were in the suburbs with forecourts and back-yards and everything handsome about them and might have expected an unqualified approval.

Not so. His flank was open.

Had his company not boomed the fact that they were out to supply the wants of the owner-occupier?

Were working men not to be able to come on these estates, the most beautiful places that were ever seen, and to buy their houses by instalments, and had not his company forsworn themselves in this matter more horribly than the troops in Flanders?

It is hardly credible in these days that the cult of the owner-occupier had no more earnest devotees in the eighties than in the Trade Union Movement.

But so it was. Here is Mr. George Shipton, the Secretary of the London Trades Council, called on the same day as Mr. Shaw Lefevre, so that the Prince of Wales might hear and question him, bearing down on the Commission with a banner on which is inscribed words that read strangely to-day, in the changed view of the Trades Union Movement.

"With regard to these self-supporting dwellings, however, whether built on 'block plan,' or as separate houses, no system will be satisfactory or obviate social discontent that does not



provide for the ultimate purchase by way of rent of the houses or tenements inhabited by working people "!!!

This was no individual view, for Henry Broadhurst, the first Trade Unionist to hold even a minor post in Government, took up the cause and Lord Lymington and his agent were raked fore and aft on the tergiversation of his Company in this matter.

The answer given was one of substance, being to the effect that the Company, contemplating great extensions, was of opinion that they could borrow more cheaply for the purpose on an undivided estate than on one which was divided by individual holdings, and that as cheap money enabled them to supply cheap houses, such a course was more to the advantage of the great numbers of the working classes than allowing a small number to become owner occupiers.

The wit of man has since devised a means of reconciling these positions by giving to the occupier security of tenure while making his holding not the house he occupies but stock in the Company holding the Estate.



## CHAPTER LV

### THE RAILWAYS

LORD LYMINGTON in his turn opened an attack on the Railway Companies.

Here was he hard at work on the housing problem, buying land and building houses, and the people could not get out to them because the Companies would not give facilities. The Great Northern charged a fare that amounted to 4s. a week for anyone who could get the workmen's train at 5.8 a.m. This was only 6*d.* less than the weekly rent they charged for a tenant of one living-room and two bedrooms.

There is no doubt this was a useful onslaught, and it brought a reply from one Railway, the Great Eastern, of whom it was complained that it issued no third-class season tickets. The reply was to the effect that the working class did not mix well with the other classes, and if season tickets were granted so that workmen were not compelled to travel by workmen's trains but could travel by ordinary trains, it would be very annoying to a large section of passengers to have to hob-nob with "working men"—excellent men, perhaps, in their walk of life, but "the language which they naturally use is very offensive to most people."

*Autre temps, autre mœurs.*

Third-Class season tickets have come, and the hob-nobbing has been endured, with perhaps not too annoying an effect.

The result is encouraging ; it leads to the hope that as the general standard of culture is raised, many of the old barriers will be unnecessary ; the pit and the stalls may be merged—though not to make more stalls as is unhappily the case to-day—and a good deal of expenditure that is



incurred solely for the object of keeping other people at a distance may be saved.

However that may be, the relation of railway fares to housing made apparent more than forty years ago is still as close.

Other less imposing figures flit across the pages of the report. There is the Vicar of St. Bartholomew, Cripplegate, who for a quarter of a century has watched the houses in his parish being gobbled up by railways and the enterprises that follow them. With the houses went the parishioners, 5,000 people were dwindling to 400. A sturdy opponent of the railways with all their works. A disbeliever in all their promises. He tells of model dwellings put up by a railway company to appease public clamour, and within a year or two when the clamour had died away, converted into warehouses, the tenants all evicted and the place thereof knowing them no more.

A good word for the Peabody buildings, he has, however, though I am not sure that his ground for commendation would convince everyone. He said :

“ If you went, specially of a Sunday, past the large block of the Peabody buildings, you would be astonished at the number of pianos that you would hear.”

Mr. Spurgeon thought a young man who played a cornet could be a Christian but was doubtful about the people next door. I do not know that his opinion was ever sought on pianos, so cannot say what would have been his opinion of a Peabody building as an element in the revival of religion.

Then there are Dr. Shirley Foster Murphy and Mr. Daniel Cubitt Nichols, whom we shall follow on an enquiry tour through London ; policemen and vestrymen, solicitor and surveyor, men from the provinces, great city and small town, village and hamlet, Medical Officer and Departmental officials, all with an interesting story, many suggesting lines of research and reflection that would fill a larger book than this can be. These we must leave ; for there are other matters to draw our eye and arrest our ears.



## CHAPTER LVI

### THE SECOND LONDON ENQUIRY

THE Royal Commission recommended enquiries into the working of the Housing Acts in London, and these enquiries were soon set on foot. I have the reports of several of them before me. Not so faded as the others, for these are in the eighties while they were in the fifties, but with their tale to tell. It is worth giving a moment to two of them because it helps us a little to measure the progress made in thirty years.

The enquiries were made in six of the London parishes.

What a juxtaposition of names! Each one itself holds a tale, and together they tell of that engulfing, submerging London, which, century after century, has drawn into its train the cluster of villages whose relics and remains may still be found embedded like fossils in the drift of street and square that has encompassed them.

Mr. D. Cubitt Nichols conducted all the enquiries, at two without any colleague, at three with Mr. Shirley F. Murphy, who afterwards as Sir Shirley F. Murphy, the Medical Officer to the London County Council, was to make his mark on London, and of whom we shall hear more.

It was a perambulation and conducted in the true perambulatory spirit. The Commission ambled along. It began in the Parish of St. James and St. John, Clerkenwell, on October 28, 1885, and with commendable celerity arrived at the hamlet of Mile End Old Town—how deceptive the name with all its rural connotations—on January 11, 1886.

The pace then slackened, for St. Matthew's, Bethnal Green, was not reached till October 12, 1887. At this point Mr. Nichols had a rest; I do not blame him, nor, I think, would anyone who read his reports. He did not



reach St. Mary, Rotherhithe, till October 19, 1889, and his closing labours began, as far as the records show, at St. Leonard, Shoreditch, on the 12th November, 1890.

Truly a kind of Housing Pilgrimage and all within the sound of Bow bells.

“When shall it be? said the bells of Stepney,  
When I grow rich, said the bells of Shoreditch,”

and the theme must have been Housing Reform.

Let us follow the round. The procedure is always the same. We are enquiring into the way the Vestry has performed its duties, but our enquiry is conducted in a perfectly gentlemanly manner. All is open and above board. The Vestry provides us with accommodation, its Clerk and Surveyor meet us and accompany us on our rounds, the Vestry itself provides us with colleagues, who in some cases share our opinion and sign our report.

That is not to say it is not a serious business, for if the complaisance and courtesy of the Vestry were inclined to make us less critical of their doings, we have at our elbow a prosecutor who is not to be put off.

There was a Mansion House Council on the Dwellings of the People which appears to have acted as a general prosecutor of the case against the Vestry, and was ready with its list of insanitary property. Dr. Parkes, a great name on the Roll of Health, advised them, and for Counsel, I see in one Report the name of Reader Harris, famed at the Keswick Conventions for his doctrine of Holiness. It gains weight from this association with the Gospel of Cleanliness.

There was to be no doubt as to the thoroughness of the enquiry; the Mansion House Council list was prepared, amended and enlarged, Mr. Nichols and his colleagues were intended without a doubt to get some insight into the dwellings of the poor.



## CHAPTER LVII

### CLERKENWELL

AT Clerkenwell, the first list comprised 234, the second list 277 houses.

In all, 475 houses were inspected out of 511; one likes to think that the Mansion House Council in leaving 36 houses uninspected were moved by a humanitarian compassion which could find an object even in a fatigued Commissioner.

However that may be, here is what he found in the houses he did see :

Water-closets without water supply . . .	294
Do. with defective pans or apparatus . . . . .	52

and a large number of dirty and dilapidated houses, *particularly the houses formerly occupied by one family but now let in tenements.*

There were some interesting little differences between the Mansion House Council and the Vestry, which, read to-day, may afford the gentle cynic who watches all movements for reform with amiable detachment, a little amusement.

The Mansion House Council thought water should be laid on to the water-closets, the Vestry thought the existing system of hand-flushing better adapted to the habits of the occupants.

The Council thought there should be galvanised dustbins with covers on, the Vestry said these would be used for domestic purposes, or sold by the occupants of the house.

Mr. Nichols agreed with the Council, but soothed the



Vestry by saying that " Although I think it most desirable some additional sanitary precaution should be adopted, I do not consider the parish to be in a bad sanitary condition." He mildly suggested that he thought the use of water-butts for storing drinking-water was " objectionable."

He also noted one very considerable improvement that had taken place in the parish. " A very good mortuary and Coroner's court have, within the last few years, been erected by the Vestry !!! "



## CHAPTER LVIII

### MILE END OLD TOWN

MOVING on to Mile End Old Town, Mr. Nichols found 10,000 houses to which regulations might apply, and of these 3,387 were occupied by their owners.

Here a list almost as formidable awaited him.

Poor Mr. Nichols! 508 houses there were to inspect, and 508 houses were inspected, and this is what he found:

Water-closets without water supply . . .	367
Do. with defective pans or apparatus . . . . .	72

and a large number of dirty and dilapidated houses. This out of a total of 10,000 houses coming under the Acts.

Here the Vestry were in more than a fighting mood, and roundly stated in respect of the water-closets, that first of all they were not water-closets at all, but privies, and next, that if they were water-closets, hand-flushing was "better adapted to the habits of the inhabitants."

With regard to providing ashpits, they were "agin" them as they had been told that ashpits were likely to promote disease, and they pinned their faith to movable receptacles.

This is the common case of the reformer being wrong in the long run and the reactionaries right, though the reverse was true at the time.

No one to-day would dream of erecting ashpits, and nothing is more necessary than that those which are in being should be replaced by movable receptacles.

The excuses of the Vestry in this matter were "better than they knew."

With regard to the charge that they were not using



the Torrens Act to its full, they replied that it took a very long time to operate, as owners could cause great delay by objection, and in any case if houses were unfit, it was due in a great degree to the dirty and destructive habits of the occupants.

The theory of "stewing in their own juice" was clearly regarded by the Vestry as one that should not be confined to Ireland,—whose condition at that time bulked largely in politics,—but should extend to the inhabitants of certain parts of London.

The attitude of the Vestry stirred Mr. Nichols to some severity; it seemed to him "most improbable (as is contended) that persons too idle or too indifferent to cleanliness to use the water if laid on would take the trouble to draw a pail of water to flush the pan." He thought the Vestry should insist on dustbins, that they had neglected putting into force their own regulations, and that further action should be taken under the Torrens Act. Softening a little, he declared that while adhering to what he had said, he did not "consider the hamlet to be in a bad sanitary condition."

After all, only 226 persons per 10,000 died in Mile End Old Town as against 203 per 10,000 over the whole of the Metropolis, and the inhabitants of the hamlet being generally of the poorer classes, it would be unreasonable for them to expect to live as long as more well-to-do people.

It does not appear that Mr. Nichols's eyes were gladdened in the Old Town by the sight of a new mortuary or Coroner's court.

The Vestry had a parting shot at the good Inspector; they took him round to see a new block of artisans' dwellings in Stepney Green (Norfolk House). I do not know if they are still there. "Look at these," they said, "with your new-fangled ideas of Housing Reform. People are saying, 'Get rid of the Vestries, give the Metropolitan Board of Works more power.' Look at these, built under the Metropolitan Buildings Act; some of the rooms, the lower ones, are unfit for human habitation; deficient in light and air and sanitary appliances. 'Give us more



power,' the Vestry said, 'so as to prevent the erection of such buildings.' "

It was a shrewd blow, and Mr. Nichols visibly staggered, but with that disregard for facts which is the firm foundation of all consistent political theory, held stoutly to his view that the Metropolitan Board of Works and not the Vestry, was the body to whom new powers should be given.



## CHAPTER LIX

### BETHNAL GREEN

BETHNAL GREEN proved an interesting visit. Here a list of 1,345 houses awaited the undaunted Inspector ; little wonder he did not get to Rotherhithe for two years. When he would have reached that place Heaven only knows, but fortunately the Vestry threw its hand in as far as 785 houses were concerned and showed that they were taking steps to improve them, and of the remainder this tale is told :

Dilapidated and dirty houses . . .	29
Water-closets without water supply .	560

The number of houses rated at £20 or under was 14,411, so that slightly over 9 per cent. appeared on the list.

The Inspector reports in great detail on many interesting points, his general conclusion being :

“ That the efforts of the Vestry to maintain houses in proper habitable conditions have not sufficed for the purposes of a Parish which contains population and houses of the character of Bethnal Green.”

At the risk of being charged with digression, I cannot resist a note on the peculiar feature of Bethnal Green : the existence there to-day of the old weavers' houses.

Travellers between Manchester and Leeds will have noted in the Yorkshire dales the presence of stone houses, the architectural character of which is enhanced by a many-mullioned window extending nearly across the whole front of the house on the first floor. This window lights the room in which the loom was placed, the weaver and his family living on the floor below. Similar houses were to be found in Bethnal Green, of which the Inspector says,



"The old weavers' houses can be distinguished at once by their large windows on the upper floor extending over the width of the house."

I remember that the first time I saw these houses I was transported in an instant to the Yorkshire dales, saw their green and rolling slopes pressing up into the bosom of blue skies to which the old weavers of Yorkshire could lift their eyes. At least industrialism to them was tempered by these country dales, bordering as they do on miles and miles of still unspoilt moor and hill. In Bethnal Green!

"'Twas August and the fierce Sun overhead  
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,  
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen,  
In Spitalfields, looked there dispirited."

It is gratifying to read that whatever reluctance had been displayed by the Vestry to provide for other sanitary requirements, they had provided a public mortuary for the use of the parishioners. This provision is noted with approval by the Inspector, who also points out that the Vestry, in respect of its dead parishioners, had shown a discrimination not always present in the treatment of their living ones, by providing in the mortuary separate accommodation for the bodies of those who had died from infectious diseases as distinct from that provided for those who had died from non-infectious causes.

*"De mortuus nihil nisi bonum."*

And yet whatever advantages have followed by reason of the change over from Vestry government, and no doubt they have been considerable, it would appear from the report of the Bethnal Green Housing Association of to-day, to be found in a later chapter, that a satisfactory solution still remains to be found there of the problem presented by the unfit house and the unhealthy area.



## CHAPTER LX

### ROTHERHITHE

ROTHERHITHE was reached in 1889. Here the task was easing. No doubt everybody was becoming more familiar with the procedure. The "don't shoot, I'll come down" attitude of Bethnal Green was followed here.

The Mansion House Council list of 643 houses was reduced by admissions made by the Vestry to 118. The admissions made by the Vestry did not, however, include the condition of the water-closet, so that as a result of admission and inspection the Inspector reports:

"Alleged sanitary defects in the above houses, found by our inspection generally to exist, excluding those under notice:

Dilapidated and dirty houses . . .	62
Water-closets without water supply . . .	564

One paragraph in the Report stresses a point which is elsewhere made in later years. It would appear as if the influx of a worse off and worse educated class, whether the Irish of the first half of the nineteenth century or the alien of the latter half, is a real factor in the slum situation. In this connexion it may be observed that the Bethnal Green Public Welfare Association, whose report has already been referred to, in recommending that immigration into congested areas should be effectually checked, observed that the invasion of aliens is particularly extensive.

The conclusions of the Inspector cannot have been very satisfactory to the Vestry for he said:

"On the question of desirability of water being laid on to all water-closets in Rotherhithe, we entertain no doubt. No reliance can be placed on the willingness of the inhabitants to carry water in pails from the house to the water-closet, and in Rotherhithe, where the distance the water would have to be carried is often considerable, an expectation that generally they should do so is certain to be disappointed. Indeed the condition of



these places in that district emphasises the necessity for the interference of the Vestry.

"During recent years the population and houses of Rotherhithe have greatly increased, the district is now, as heretofore, burdened with large numbers of persons largely dependent upon the action of the Sanitary Authority for the maintenance of their dwellings in condition fit for habitation and the administration has not kept pace with the increased demand made upon it by the development of the parish. It is in fact no exaggeration to say that the results of lax administration abound in Rotherhithe, and especially in houses occupied by poor persons."

One interesting passage to be found in the Report is that a map of the date 1843, published by the Registrar-General, showed Rotherhithe to consist at the time altogether of a fringe of houses on the banks of the river, the rest of the district being open fields.

This would seem to indicate that apart from the conditions of the older courts, the slum condition had grown up within a space of 40 to 50 years. This is interesting as helping to fix a period at the end of which replacement may require to take place.

The character of the population necessarily influenced the condition of the dwelling-houses. More than fifty years ago, the local Registrar of the time, reporting on certain houses let out in tenements, stated that they contained "six or eight rooms occupied by as many families of the poorest kind, chiefly Irish." The sanitary condition of such houses will be understood by the statement of this officer, that they were "in a very old and dilapidated state" and the drainage was defective. Others again were exposed to the offensive exhalations of an open sewer which received the filth of the whole neighbourhood.

The reference to "Irish" abounds in reports made in the first half of the century on the condition of tenements, and its widespread character would seem to indicate that it was founded not on prejudice but on fact.

Deficient, however, though the Vestry of Rotherhithe had been in the care of their living, they had not neglected the dead, and a mortuary had duly been provided, though, it is to be regretted, without the discriminative accommodation provided by Bethnal Green.



## CHAPTER LXI

### SHOREDITCH

OUR tour concludes with Shoreditch in 1890. By that time the London County Council had come into being, and Mr. Shirley F. Murphy was in attendance, not as a Commissioner but as the Medical Officer of the London County Council, in which capacity he was to do yeoman service in the cause.

To the credit of Shoreditch the Inspector reports that at a time when it was "*quite the exception for local authorities in London to accept any responsibility cast on them by the Legislation with regard to the isolation and care of the infectious sick,*" Shoreditch had taken active measures in times of emergency.



## CHAPTER LXII

### REFLECTIONS

READ with the words in some of the foregoing paragraphs, the accounts of the solicitude of the Vestries for the isolation of the infectious *dead* in the mortuary, to whose provision such importance is given in the reports, are full of the most delicate irony. They asked for houses and they gave them mortuaries!!!

Here we come to the end of our ramble, and if much space is given to it, it is not without justification; the reports taken together give a vivid picture of the times in respect of the matter considered in this book.

How far they may be regarded as typical of the country each reader will, no doubt, form his own opinion. I am willing to assume that on the whole they are perhaps a little worse than elsewhere, not much, and if the seaport towns were alone considered, perhaps not at all.

One of the main points of interest in them is the change in direction of the attention given to this matter. It is no longer the gross overcrowding with its filthy concomitants of which the reports of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in the fifties are full, there is nothing of the mountainous heap of refuse, the ill-paved streets. . . . No, here is a state of things in which we find that the public authorities are well on the way to putting their own house in order: their streets are well paved, their sewers are good; the part of their duty in which they have failed is in seeing that private houses are in order, and the liaison between what they should do as public authorities and what the private owner should do, is not complete. The sewers are there, but the connexions to them are faulty, the roads are well paved but the footpaths and court-yards leading



to them are defective ; they have made arrangements for the collection of house refuse, but they have failed to provide or to insist on the provision of proper receptacles for refuse pending collection ; it is not in what they have done, but in what they have left undone, their censure lies.

Another main point is the limitation of concern on the part of the Commissioner ; he goes to the house, and he looks at the water-closet, the sink, the gulley, the paving of the yard, the condition of the roof and water supply, but nowhere is there a trace of interest in the provision for the proper storage of food and fuel. No enquiry as to whether there are proper facilities for cooking—all this is yet to come, this milestone had not then been reached, and at it the housing movement must start to-day.



## CHAPTER LXIII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW AGE

THE Report of the 1885 Commission led directly to great legislative and administrative changes. Beyond the consolidation of the Housing Acts it set on foot enquiries which led directly to the reorganisation of the system of Local Government in London. Close on its heels followed enquiries into the administration of the London Vestries. These in their turn were followed by the establishment of the London County Council in 1888, to which was passed the powers of the Metropolitan Boards of Works.

An admirable summary of its recommendation is to be found in the *Housing Handbook* by Mr. D. Thompson, which runs as follows :

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF 1885

- (1) It should be declared by statute to be the duty of the local authority to put in force such powers as they are by law entrusted with, so as to ensure that *no premises shall be allowed to exist in an insanitary state.*
- (2) More efficient supervision and inspection of the sanitary conditions of the people's dwellings.
- (3) Reform of local administration, especially as regards London government.
- (4) General adoption of Byelaws.
- (5) Consolidation and Amendment of the Public Health (London) Acts and the Housing Acts. (These have been effected to a considerable extent by the Public Health (London) Act, 1890, and the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890.)
- (6) Local Authorities should have greater facilities for the *erection* of workmen's dwellings. (Facilities have been increased by the Act of 1890.)
- (7) Rating of vacant sites on 4 per cent. of their selling value.



- (8) Compulsory powers to purchase land for new dwellings under the Housing Acts should be given to the local authority.
- (9) Reduction of compensation for land acquired under Housing Acts.
- (10) Cheap Government loans for municipal housing schemes.
- (11) The sites occupied by Metropolitan prisons should be appropriated for the erection of working-class dwellings.
- (12) The water supply should, as a general rule, be in the hands of the local authority.
- (13) Replacement of accommodation destroyed by railway companies, etc.
- (14) Cheap transit to the "grass lands."
- (15) Government to initiate the provision of workmen's cheap trains.
- (16) There should be a simple power for civil procedure for the recovery of damages against owners or holders of property by those who have suffered injury or loss by their neglect or default in sanitary matters.
- (17) Facilities should be provided for enabling workmen to acquire their own dwellings on the rent-purchase system.
- (18) Cheaper land transfer.
- (19) Small holdings to be encouraged.
- (20) Minor reforms, which have been embodied in subsequent legislation dealing with van dwellings, hop-pickers' lodgings, cellar dwellings, erection of mortuaries, and the application of trust funds and entailed land for housing purposes on the best terms.

Royal Commissions are late flowering trees, and to-day, nearly fifty years after their Report, those who know the subject will see that some of these recommendations still remain unfulfilled.



## CHAPTER LXIV

### THE BOOTH ENQUIRY

IT would not be proper to conclude our survey of this period without some consideration of the enquiry into "Life and Labour" in London conducted during the years 1886-1900 by Charles Booth. This will remain, as long as men dig into history, an inexhaustible quarry for building up the story of London at the end of the nineteenth century.

The enquiry, conducted on the largest scale and with the most meticulous care, began in 1886, the year after the report of the Royal Commission, and was carried on unceasingly to its end.

There is much in it pertinent and relevant to our subject.

You cannot study people and not observe the conditions in which they live, and the Booth enquiry elicited to the full the close relationship between poverty and the slum.

The classification of undesirable housing conditions embodied in the conclusions of the Booth Report are worth quoting. Here they are :

Undesirable housing conditions may be classified under some twelve heads :

(1) Old property in bad condition ; (2) Comparatively new houses badly built ; (3) Property neglected by the owner ; (4) Property abused by the occupier ; (5) Houses built upon insufficient space ; (6) Houses erected on damp or rubbish-filled ground ; (7) Houses occupied by families of a class for which they were not designed and are not suited ; (8) Insanitary houses ; (9) Badly arranged block dwellings ; (10) Badly managed blocks ; (11) Excessive rents ; (12) Crowded homes.

It is also said that remedial agencies may be similarly summed up, as : (1) Philanthropic or public-spirited work such as that of the Peabody Trust ; efforts which shade off gradually into (2) Private enterprise for profit ; and (3) Municipal enterprise in clearing, or clearing and building. (4) Legislation, such as



the obligation to re-house in cases of eviction under Parliamentary powers. (5) Municipal inspection or interference. (6) Miss Octavia Hill's method; and (7) private endeavours to put the laws in motion, such as that of the Mansion House Council; and lastly, the helpful personal influences exerted by nurses, visiting sisters, and others. We may also count, though of an entirely different character, the recommendations of the Royal Commission. How far short these numerous and varied efforts fall, is only too evident, yet what they do and have done must not be ignored.

The following further extracts are given :

(1) *Old Property in Bad Condition.* It is pointed out that the leasehold system works badly; since in the closing years before the lapse of the lease no repairs are executed and the actual landlords, often men who make a business of acquiring such property, are small rack renters, while the real ultimate owner is powerless.

The same condition of neglect is also found sometimes when property is bought bit by bit for some ultimate use, as by railways in anticipation of enlargement of their line or of a station. Then in this case also no avoidable expense will be incurred on the doomed houses. If, however, the property when rebuilt is still to be used for dwellings, it is to be remembered that for any complete reconstruction the occupants must leave, and that then a different class will probably come to the improved houses, whether built on the same or an alternative site. Consequently there is little, if any, immediate and direct advantage to those for whose sake ostensibly the improvements are undertaken: they were used to their old familiar quarters; they knew their neighbours and their neighbours knew them; they might quarrel, but would also help each other. The old haunts can never be reconstituted. Moreover, the rents for the houses as they stood, though nominally very high, would not and could not be strictly collected, and crowding was unchecked.

(2) *Badly Built Houses and their Evil Effects.* Of these much also has been said, but a few direct quotations from our notes may serve to recall and emphasise the views expressed. Of one whole district it is said that it has been "ruined by bad building, having everything else in its favour"; of other parts, and frequently, that "Much iniquitous building has been allowed"; and shoddy houses are pointed to as the probable "slums of the future." In one district, a road of quite recent construction, suffering from the same trouble, is described as "doomed to rapid decay," and "new houses subject to speedy deterioration because badly built" are continually mentioned. Thus, in more



detail, we have such statements as: "houses only up a year, already cracking from roof to front door" and are told that "the vestry surveyor condemned all one side of one street and it was rebuilt," but that "he seemed to have done nothing since."

(3) As regards mischief that arises from neglect by the owners, we have first to ask, "Who is the owner?" And the question is partly answered by the complaints made as to the effect of the leasehold system to which I have already referred. It is said that "assuming that the attempt to keep in repair is abandoned, the maximum of sub-letting brings the maximum income," thus constituting a terrible machinery for the distillation of evil. Such is the effect of ownership when no further responsibility is accepted save that of the exaction of rent.

(4) Of the destructive ways of the lowest class innumerable stories are told. "They don't study their homes." Anything handy in the way of wood—skirting boards or stair rails, and such superfluities—will be torn down to light a fire. Locks are forced and fastenings wrenched, and it is quite useless to supply such things as balanced window-sashes or roller blinds. If a window-pane is broken, paper is pasted over the aperture, or a piece of cardboard is set against it, or a bundle of rags will be stuffed into the hole, if it is large. If put in good order, the house would soon revert to this uncared-for condition.

(5) The building of houses with insufficient space is the most insidious form of short-sighted greediness, since the immediate benefit of squeezing in a few more houses on a given piece of ground is so evident, and the ulterior result, in general, and perhaps continuous, depreciation, so likely to slip out of view.

(6) Of the use of damp and rubbish-filled ground for houses, a good deal has been said locally as regards the valleys of the Lea and the Wandle, Plumstead marshes and other districts.

(7) We come now to the houses occupied by a different class to that for which they were designed. This may have been due to the change of Fashion—the "going down," as it is said, of a neighbourhood; or it may be that the particular houses became discredited because ill-built or placed on insufficient ground; or because they were ill-arranged, or were altogether a miscalculation and thus did not hit the mark at which they were aimed. The results at best are unsatisfactory, but there is a wide difference between the use that can be made of good old houses deserted by fashion and the jerry-built imitations that have been rejected from the first.

(8) The responsibility for insanitary condition, more than any other, is shared between owner, occupier and the local authorities. It is a matter in which all require to be kept up to the mark. The strings are in the hands of the public authority,



but the public must, themselves, see that they are kept taut. Every side of the housing question touches on health, and in health we have the true test of failure or success. This is our gauge, and the statistics of disease and death make it available.

(9) (10) The construction of "Model" block dwellings has figured as a cure. In this way more families, it was reasonably claimed, might find house room on the same area and under far more healthful and advantageous conditions, and it cannot be denied that these results have been accomplished; but in various directions limitations have been reached. It is not only that philanthropic or other private efforts are discounted by municipal action, and that the increase of population is never overtaken, but also that such dwellings do not suit all localities, nor every one in any locality, and that unless very well arranged and carefully managed they bring in their train a variety of new evils.

(11) There are few parts of London, especially of those occupied by the working and lower-middle classes, in which rents are not rising. The needs of the people for houses are not adequately met. From Outer South London we have such statements as "high and rising rent, a rise at each fresh tenancy"; "Rents have risen from 7s. 6d. to 9s. 6d. in the last five years"; and "Peckham is becoming poorer owing to increased rents driving better-class workers away." From a more central part comes, "Housing difficulty insuperable, rents enormous, large single rooms 15s. to 17s.," but it is said that "high rents are due partly to the non-payment of arrears."

(12) The pressure falls particularly heavily on families where there are many children. Such often "cannot obtain respectable quarters, and then become degraded by their surroundings." This is mentioned often. "It is almost impossible to find room, and when people have to move they roam about like hunted dogs." The Guardians are often appealed to for accommodation. Special instances of overcrowding appear frequently on our notes, such as "father, mother and eight children in one room." In another instance, "Man, and wife, two sons ages twenty-seven and twenty-one, and two daughters, ages twenty-one and eighteen," all living in one room. Again, an old woman, her daughter and grandson, and in two other cases, man, wife and five children occupied one room. Such instances are by no means extreme or unusual.

With single people "Box and Cox" arrangements are not unheard of. "Is it right," a decent woman said (speaking to a deaconess), "that I should have to sleep in a bed that a man sleeps in during the day?" "Crowding," says one of the clergy, "is the chief obstacle to spiritual influence. Decency, modesty, cleanliness, etc., are made impossible, but," he adds, "so full



are the people of natural virtue, that with better housing there would be no difficulty."

Who, reading the extracts given above and those which follow, a generation after they are written, can fail to realize their continuing truth. They sum up for us not what was said then but what is said now, and teach us that here we are facing a task no spasmodic effort can complete, but one to which consistent and persistent energies must be applied.

"Drink is fostered by bad houses." "Crowded homes send men to the public-house." "Crowding the main cause of drink and vice." "Incest is common, resulting from overcrowding." "Religion has failed, education has done something, but good homes lack." "The root of evil is deficient house accommodation." These are but a few out of many expressions of opinion that could be cited.

Something has been done by more effective administration to introduce a higher standard of life, especially as regards crowding. "Overcrowding," says one of our witnesses, "is the great cause of degeneracy, but there is less of it than formerly, owing to a higher standard of requirement," and we have seen that this is borne out by the census statistics.

But in spite of this general improvement the evil has become worse in places, and of these, naturally, one hears most. In one street in Southwark where there are "many single-room tenements," it is said that there are eight hundred people living in thirty-six houses. "There is a tendency in this neighbourhood" (we are told) "to sub-divide two-room holdings into single-rooms, under a resident landlady."

Throughout London, wherever clearances have been made, things become worse in the surrounding streets.

This difficulty is inherent in the whole problem. The local bodies do not lack energy; their medical officers are keen on their work, taking a professional pride in it; public opinion is fairly aroused.

But the difficulties in the way are insurmountable, or at any rate the road has not been found. Sanitary authorities dare not enforce the law stringently, knowing that if they evicted the people, many could not obtain house room.

"Much agitation about housing, but appear helpless. Find they could not build to let cottages probably under three shillings a room, nor any cheaper in blocks," was said of one of the vestries.

When rebuilding is undertaken "the public are told that the class turned out will be re-housed, but the authorities know



perfectly well that they will not be. They don't want such accommodation, and would not take it if offered, and, if they did, it would only end in the new buildings being spoiled."

In another quarter it is said, "the displaced people have the first offer, but are got rid of as soon as may be." And again, "the people turned out did not come; their places were filled by railway men and police."

Still, the evicted find new quarters somewhere, and even if they tend to make a new slum there, may gain something: "The forcible process of scattering is salutary"; "Those that come are bettered by the mere fact of change"; "Bring the poor to the light and you improve them."

The remark is also true that "it is harder for bad to become better than for good to become worse," and in any case, "housing is not solved by moving people on."

Moreover, the people most concerned are ill pleased. It is regarded as "a — shame to pull down the houses of the poor." "Going to turn us out of our houses, are you?" "You'll have to find us some others if you do"; but it is just this that it is so difficult to compass.

Thus the benefit of such improvements is indirect and uncertain, while the cost is enormous.

Schemes are made and laid aside, or given up during discussions between the Borough Councils and the L.C.C. as to sharing the cost, or with the Local Government Board on the numbers to be rehoused and where. Years perhaps elapse, and meanwhile, every evil is aggravated; a fresh excuse is provided for postponing all repairs and speculation is rife, "much money being invested in such sites in anticipation of clearance," since compulsory powers of purchase are held even in these cases to call for the fullest compensation.

Clearly the way out of this difficulty has not been found.

Put baldly, "lower buildings and wider streets" are the things needed, and instead the people are offered "depressing streets, dark and narrow," or "tall, prison-like dwellings." But their tastes carry them on a good deal further.

Not only is much more expected from the builder than formerly in house fittings, but the demand for "artistic cottages" is noted, and gardens are the pride of those who possess them: "houses blessed with gardens—wonderful influence."

"Houses with good gardens at back," seldom empty, and hard to get; "Houses with porches covered with creeper eagerly tenanted."

There are, however, limitations; prudence and the pressure of city life step in. Gardens must not be larger than can be tended without hired help, or, if the rent that can be afforded is insufficient for both, an extra room may be preferred.



Here we may leave the Booth report with an expression of satisfaction that it is being followed to-day by an enquiry on similar lines which should by comparison show us what general progress on these matters London has made in a generation.



## SIXTH STAGE

1890-1909

### CHAPTER LXV

#### THE COMMITTEE OF 1906

THE period between the passing of the 1890 Act and the 1909 Act is not one in which we need linger. Housing Reformers were making use of the extended powers given to them, and of what they were doing we shall read something in the chapters which deal with this stage.

For special consideration I have singled out the proceedings of a Committee of Parliament set up in 1906 to deal with the question of rural housing : a subject that has received little attention in the foregoing pages.

The year 1906 might from some points of view be regarded as the opening of modern politics. The reverberation of the South African War had died down. Protection had suffered the most serious set-back since the 'forties.

The old Whigs had passed away. The new Tories had scarcely come. The barometer seemed to have set fair for social progress and reform. The cloud smaller than a man's hand which was to darken the skies of Europe as they had not been since the days of Napoleon was barely, if at all, discernible on the horizon. The way was clear to usher in the Millennium, and naturally the first evidence of its advent was to be in the improvement of the homes of the people.

Housing was the thing, but it was to receive a new setting. The towns had hitherto almost monopolised the stage : the country was now to have its turn.

Rural housing was not what it should be. Those charm-



ing cottages with their thatched roofs and curving dormers, their trellised porches and flower-bordered walls were not all that they appeared. So a Bill was drafted, a "Working Classes Dwellings Act Amendment Bill," and that sound instinct which leads a Parliament which knows nothing of a subject to send it to a Committee which, if it knows less, will at all events learn something, operated in this as in other cases, and a Committee duly sat on the Bill.

We have its evidence, we have its findings, and they form an important chapter in our story.

We shall find new friends but hear old stories. Suggestions will be made that are still unfulfilled, but there are a few things new then, but now familiar.

With it all some sense of progress eating away at the stubborn cliffs of obstruction and reaction which guard old vested interests.

Much interesting evidence was taken not only from England and Wales, but from Russia, Holland and Ireland. Mr. Rider Haggard was a witness, but the three outstanding ones were Alderman W. Thompson, Chairman of the National Housing Reform Council, Mr. J. S. Nettlefold, Chairman of the Birmingham Housing Committee, and Miss Constance Cochrane—the Octavia Hill of the village.

The two men are the most prominent Housing Reformers in the period between the Royal Commission and the war.

Both were authors, but more than that, both had taken prominent parts in the administration of housing legislation.

The Old Guard had passed on in the decade between the Royal Commission and this Committee.

Shaftesbury died in the year of the Commission. Chadwick followed him soon after. Torrens was dead. And their places were taken by these two men. They had the advantage of the Consolidated Act of 1890. Men no longer talked of the Torrens Act and the Cross Act, but of Parts I, II, and III. Part I was the Cross Act, Part II the Torrens Act, and Part III the Shaftesbury Act.



## CHAPTER LXVI

### ALDERMAN THOMPSON

ALDERMAN THOMPSON was a Part III man. He believed in building rather than repairing.

In the town in which he achieved municipal honour may be seen the cottages built through his initiative and immortalised in the Housing Handbook of the Association which for so many years he led with distinction.

Speaking in 1906, sixteen years after the first Act of 1890, he told the Committee that only six authorities out of one hundred and thirty-eight who had operated Part III of the Bill were rural.

It was not that cost was prohibitive, it was that they did not care.

He gave figures of cost which sound like a dream to the would-be house builder of to-day. Four-roomed cottages for £160! Five rooms for £200!! The outside cost £70 a room!!!

He gave examples; five-roomed cottages at Southwold built for £150 and let at 4s. 6d. a week.

One notices in the papers of this period the care and attention men were giving to the detail of cost. They were now at the work. It was no longer necessary to make flaming and emotional appeals to the conscience of the country—the task was acknowledged and remained to be done. The thing now was to do it. The main thing was to get the lowest possible rent and for this Alderman Thompson had seven points. Three of them were concerned with cost, namely, the cost of the land, the cost of its development by way of streets and sewers and then the cost of the actual building. Of the remaining four points two dealt with loans and required lower rates of



interest and longer periods of repayment, and the remaining two with repairs and rates. The whole handling of this part of his case is a model in its application of practical intelligence to a material problem.

He points out shrewdly a deficiency in the 1890 Act which even the Housing Act of 1930 has not yet remedied, and that is that while the initiative in the destruction of slum property may be taken by the private citizen such initiative cannot be taken to secure the erection of new houses.

Ireland has always fared better than England in the matter of sound legislation and it is not surprising therefore that he should be able to point to Section 4 of the Irish Labourers Act, 1883, whereby the local authorities are compelled to take action "where the existing accommodation for labourers and their families is deficient having regard to the ordinary requirements of such parish or area." Nothing quite so definite has yet appeared in English legislation, but it cannot be much longer delayed.

He demanded a survey, not a casual visitation but a complete house-to-house examination, brought up to date every five years, and quoted as a fundamental point put forward at an international Housing Conference at Liège that no district could tackle its housing requirements until it knew what the conditions were, giving as his opinion that the knowledge and publication of the facts would be one of the greatest helps to definite action.

Much of course has been done in this direction since 1906 as a perusal of the Medical Officers' Reports for the whole of the Metropolitan Boroughs and of the larger provincial cities will show, but there is still wanting a definite survey that shall tell us not only how many bad old houses exist, but how many good new houses are required.

He shows the necessity of a central Housing Commission to deal with the relative questions of the acquisition of land, the erection of houses, and transit problems. Since his time we have had Housing Commissioners who have disappeared, Electricity Commissioners who have been



doing excellent work, and we are now appointing Traffic Commissioners whose virtues are yet to adjudge.

For my part I am in agreement with Alderman Thompson. The problem of housing is a national one, it cannot be finally settled by the piecemeal operations of a host of local authorities, and it is too important to be dealt with by a section of a department even if that department be as efficient as the Ministry of Health.

A step in the direction of co-ordination in respect of housing in rural districts has been taken in the Housing Act of 1930, by placing it under the County Councils, but it is a step which needs to be followed by others before the journey can be regarded as an end.



## CHAPTER LXVII

### MR. J. S. NETTLEFOLD

MR. NETTLEFOLD was a disciple of Torrens. Repair not replace was his motto. With twenty years of experience behind him in Birmingham since Joseph Chamberlain gave his evidence before the Royal Commission of 1885 he brought to the Committee a close and intimate knowledge of the working of the 1890 Act.

With a prudent vagueness as to the whereabouts of it he told the Committee that it was the practice of certain persons to buy up small houses and let them get into bad repair so that the owners might be bought out compulsorily at high prices.

That hole at any rate is stopped now by the 1930 Act, but in Mr. Nettlefold's day it could only be avoided by a refusal to work that part of the Act. Practical minded man as he was, he preferred to take another path and under his guidance Birmingham went all out for repair.

Owners were persuaded to carry out what otherwise they could be compelled to do. The iron hand was not without the velvet glove. To read the evidence of such a man awakes the keenest admiration. The patience, the persistence, the shrewdness, the tact. Can we sufficiently admire such men and women who bring to a work altogether altruistic in its conception and execution, qualities that others employ only to their own advantage!

Over and over again suggestions were made to the committee that have now been given effect and one realises that housing legislation in its present form is the result of the cumulative effort and experience of generations of those who have worked at these problems with insufficient powers.



Mr. Nettlefold was not very keen on Municipal building—to make a little money go a long way was his method. Make it compulsory to demolish after a Closing Order. Make it compulsory on the Magistrates to make Closing Orders. If owners saw demolition in front of them they would repair, so one got one's desire out of the private and not the public purse.

If public money was to be provided let it be for land and not houses. Get hold of the land in the suburbs ; control its layout and development ; that was the method. Hear him !! “ A pound spent on Municipal land purchase goes at least seven times as far towards solving the housing problem as £1 spent on Municipal house building. Not seven points, but three were his. Cheap money, cheap land, cheap transport, and from this trinity he saw an England of green, not black arise.”

He saw twelve Bournvilles round Birmingham on land at £200 an acre, with Corporation trams running out to them.

A quarter of a century later the trams are going but the houses are coming.

Mr. Nettlefold's dream is still to come true, but he saw the promised land, even if we have not yet entered in.



## CHAPTER LXVIII

### MISS CONSTANCE COCHRANE

MISS CONSTANCE COCHRANE came before the Committee. She was to the country something of what Octavia Hill was to the town.

She had her "daimon" who would not let her rest. Long before any official organisation took up the case she was busy on her own investigations. Thousands of circulars issued and their replies tabulated, gave her material on which to speak.

She was there to indict and softly be it said, colleges as well as cottages. These were the worst offenders—land-owners who provided so few houses that their land was worked by the occupiers of little slum cottages rapidly falling to pieces.

She had not been as happy as Octavia Hill in her coadjutors. The country was a different place from the town; more apathetic, harder to move.

The very people for whom one worked distrusted one and would not help themselves. "It is very difficult," she says, "to get anything out of a labourer if he thinks he is going to hurt himself, and unless he knows you very well indeed."

Vested interests, firmly established there as everywhere else, the general obstacles.

"The opposition came from the owner of from twenty to thirty cottages and his plea was that there were no cottages needed as there were two empty" but it was proved by the sanitary inspectors that they were quite unfit to live in. It was generally from the owners of small cottages that the chief opposition came.

The powers that were, were not helpful, "the members



of district Councils were frequently the owners of this kind of slum property."

Reading her evidence in 1906 it is difficult to believe she has not strayed out of the pages of the 1838 and 1842 reports. Listen to her as she speaks of Birdbrook in Essex.

"The only drinking supply is a pond which is polluted; it is used by cattle and is polluted from other sources by a number of inhabitants. We have been doing what we can, but owing to the law we cannot compel the owner to spend £35 in order to make the pond water fit to drink, although there are nine cottages, therefore it remains in that condition, the children are all ill and nothing can be done."

She had not much faith in Parish Councils—

"I think the reason why people believe in the Parish Council is because they have never had anything to do and they have not been afraid to do it";

or indeed in any Authority—

"Whatever Authority you give the power to, on that Authority all the people will take care to get there who do not want anything done."

Another quarter of a century has passed and the 1930 Act has placed on County Councils the oversight of housing in country places. Will Miss Cochrane be justified of her despair? We shall see.

One thing is clear, that the task of the twentieth century is to provide rural England with those facilities and amenities in the way of roads, sewers, water supplies and other adjuncts to civilized life which the nineteenth century provided for the town.

On this point there was made to this Committee by a Medical Officer a statement on the effect of providing for town workers in a country parish, which is of interest:

"In some of our districts, where building has been carried on in the way of providing cottages, it has been by speculative builders, not because there was any demand for cottages in the parish, or that they hoped to let them to people living in the parish, but because they thought that the working men engaged in Chelmsford would prefer to have their cottages out in the country, where they would be able to get a cottage with three



bedrooms for probably 2s. a week less than in the town. In the parish of Writtle the builders have put up a number of cottages, and these were taken by the men who were working in town who could go backwards and forwards on their bicycles, as it is only about a mile ; but we soon found that these people, accustomed to having a house with the water supply laid on, with a drain connected with a sewer, became very discontented when they found that they had to travel some little distance to get a bucket of water, and when they found their drains went into a cesspool, and that cesspool had to be emptied every week or two ; and complaints began to be very rife and it led ultimately to the parish having to adopt a water supply and a system of sewerage ; for a population of about 1,500 we have had to spend about £16,000 to provide them with water and sewerage."

" The result is now that the rates are about as high as they are in the adjoining town. A great many of these cottages are empty, and of those which are occupied the rents have gone down about 2s. a week. So that if you attempt in a village to introduce water supplies and sewers as you get them in towns you must expect that the rates will go up quite the same as they are in towns ; because over a thinly populated district it naturally costs more to provide water and lay it on to houses, and to provide sewers, than it does where the houses are much closer together, where the area is more compact."

A difficulty—indeed—but to be overcome.



## CHAPTER LXIX

### THE FINDINGS

THE report of the Committee sets forth the main points on which evidence was given.

Their recommendations are given :

- I. Transfer the administration of the Public Health and Housing of the Working Classes Act from the rural district councils to the county councils, retaining to the rural district councils the concurrent power to build under Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890.
- II. Statutory duty of county councils to appoint a medical officer or medical officers of Health and a sufficient number of sanitary inspectors for the purpose of carrying the statutes into execution.
- III. Register of survey of all buildings intended for human habitation to be compiled and revised periodically.
- IV. The sections of the Public Health Act and Housing Act which deal with sanitary defects to be revised.
- V. County Council to be empowered, alone or in conjunction with council of adjoining county, to construct impounding reservoirs.
- VI. County Councils to be required to frame bye-laws for every district.
- VII. Local Government Board to register plans and specifications of model cottages.
- VIII. Simplification and codification of the law under the Public Health and Housing Acts.
- IX. Statutory right of complaint to the Local Government Board of default of county council to be given.
- X. Local Government Board to appoint a special Housing and Public Health Department.
- XI. Simplification of the law for acquiring land compulsorily.
- XII. The Treasury to lend money for the purposes specified in the report at the lowest rate at which the Treasury can themselves borrow.



XIII. Grants from the Exchequer to be administered by and allocated to county councils.

A quarter of a century has passed since these findings and while to some extent they have been given effect, something still remains to be done.

It will be seen that while they proposed that Housing powers should be transferred to County Councils, they also desired a special central housing department.

The compulsion of owners to repair is a matter that still requires more fully enforcing, and the compiling of a register awaited the passing of the 1930 Act.



## SEVENTH STAGE

1909-1919

### CHAPTER LXX

#### THE COMMITTEE OF 1912

THE period between 1909 and the outbreak of war was marked by the passage of the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909, the great work of that great Londoner, Mr. John Burns ; and by general evidence that all three parties had come to the conclusion that decent housing conditions in Great Britain were only possible by the co-operation of the State with private enterprise in the provision of houses. The enquiries made by the Liberal party which registered the conclusion that it should be the statutory duty of Local Authorities to provide housing accommodation in their areas as and when it was required ; the introduction of Housing Bills by the Conservative opposition based on the obligations of the State to make financial provision for this problem, the known views of the Labour party, all sufficiently indicates the arrival of all political parties at the point of view which, when the flood tide of war had ebbed, was to determine the whole future policy in respect of housing.

The series of Acts which commenced with the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, and continued in the Acts of 1923-4-5 and now 1930 have all been so well commented on and elucidated that it is not intended to give them more than passing notice in this story. They embody nothing new in principle but show a continuing expansion of that policy the seed of which was sown in the earlier legislation that has bulked so largely in



this book. Leaving then a survey of their results, I have chosen to present at this stage an account of a problem that herein attracted particular notice and received special attention. The problem of the demolition of working-class houses by reason of improvement schemes, or development of public enterprise, the subject of frequent comment in the earlier part of this story. No excuse is made for the prominence herein given it. Efficient as may be the means that have been devised to deal with it, it still remains one of the most insuperable obstacles to the solution of the problem of the Slum. The pages that follow show it in some of its phases, and exhibit some of the devices that have been employed to deal with it, but they equally exhibit it as an obstacle that can only be dealt with by the general powers that yet remain to be conferred on an appropriate authority.

The following extracts sufficiently show that the same disregard may follow the satisfaction of private interest or the zeal for public welfare. In both cases the desire to get on with a scheme and the annoyance at being hampered in its pursuit is expressed in the wish to be relieved from the restraint of orders enacting that new houses shall be found for old, and that people who are displaced must be replaced.

Let the story unfold itself.



## CHAPTER LXXI

### THE HEDGE

A COMMITTEE of the House of Commons was set up in 1912 to deal with the Standing Orders relating to houses occupied by persons of the labouring classes, and to the clauses usually inserted in Private and Local Bills.

At a meeting of the Committee an account of these orders and clauses was given.

The first Standing Order on the subject was passed by the House of Lords in 1853 on the motion of Lord Shaftesbury. That order merely required the promoters of Bills which sought power to take thirty houses to deposit particulars showing the number and description of the houses, in the Parliamentary offices.

The order had very little effect, and it was not until 1874 that much more extensive orders were adopted by the House of Commons, and in 1875 by the House of Lords. Those orders required the deposit of the plans and of the statements as to the number of houses taken in the Parliamentary offices. They further required that when fifteen or more houses were taken, notice should be given eight weeks beforehand so as to give the working classes full notice of the intention to displace them; and then there were provision that the promoters should insert clauses requiring them to procure sufficient accommodation for persons of the labouring classes to be displaced if those provisions were applicable; but it was left to the discretion of the Committee to say whether the provisions were applicable or not.

The improved orders had an effect in securing that a certain amount of compensation was given to working people before they were turned out, and that some provision was made for their getting accommodation for the time being;



but they did not, in fact, add anything to the permanent stock of accommodation for the working classes in place of what was removed by the companies. That was the finding of the Royal Commission of 1885.

The most important change in later Standing Orders as compared with earlier Standing Orders, was that they required railway companies and other bodies, not merely to re-house the persons whom they displaced, but to provide new accommodation in place of the accommodation they removed.

To secure this, it will have been noted the Standing Orders required first that there should be a deposit with the Parliamentary offices and with the Home Office of a statement showing the number of houses which were to be taken under the Bill, and the number of persons of the working class who were to be displaced and they directed the insertion in the Bill of clauses requiring that the company should submit to the Home Office a scheme for re-housing, and that before any displacement took place that scheme should have the approval of the Home Secretary.

From time to time Standing Orders have been altered, partly in consequence of alterations in the law, and partly on suggestions made by the Home Office on points where it was found that the Standing Orders left loopholes for escape.

Sometimes after the passing of the Standing Orders model clauses were settled to give effect to them. These model clauses were included in the "Model Bills and Clauses" of the House of Lords.

The main point of them is that before twenty or more houses are taken, the company

"shall have obtained the approval of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to a scheme for providing new dwellings for such number of persons as were residing in such houses on the 15th day of December last, or for such number of persons as the Secretary of State shall, after inquiry, deem necessary, having regard to various circumstances."

Then, before they begin to dishouse, they must also give "security to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State for the carrying out of the scheme."



## CHAPTER LXXII

### THE GAPS IN THE HEDGE

It was found that certain of the Railway Companies made arrangements for taking the houses before the 15th day of December, and had the houses cleared of the working classes before that date, so that the houses did not come within the clause at all, and to meet this a general clause was drafted which appears now in all Bills.

A difficulty however arose on this clause. As it was settled in 1890 it applied to houses—houses were acquired or purchased for the company on lands shown on the deposited plans. A way in which it could be evaded was by the companies purchasing not actual houses but sites from which the houses had been cleared away altogether before the company purchased them.

A third difficulty which arose on this clause was that, as originally drafted, it applied to any houses shown on the deposited plans—that is the plans deposited by the railway companies or other companies before they bring in their Bill to Parliament.

Limited companies have power under the Companies Acts to take and hold land, and the clause did not cover all the cases in which they take land under statutory powers, in this way: an electric lighting company might obtain power from Parliament to take a certain number of houses, and then by going to the owners, might purchase some of them not under the statutory powers but without special powers, and in that way might escape the requirement of the Order.

The model clause was altered so as to cover that case. Instead of saying “any house shown on the deposited plan,” it now reads—



“ Any houses purchased or acquired by the company for or in connexion with any of the purposes of this Act, whether purchased or acquired in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act or otherwise, and whether before or after the passing of this Act.”

Another question that arose on the St. James's and Pall Mall Electric Lighting Bill, 1899, turned on the definition of the word “house.” It was found that the company in this case proposed to take two model dwellings—one containing 15 tenements, the other containing 16 tenements—and that they were reckoning those two model buildings as one house each so that they regarded themselves as not coming within the Standing Order; they made no deposit, and they inserted only the short form of clause in their Bill.

At the end of the Session the alteration of the Standing Order by the introduction of a definition of the word “house” was accepted by both Houses.

Another way in which the Standing Orders had been evaded had been by breaking up a scheme and taking part of it in one Session and part of it in another—that is to say, if a scheme involved the taking of say 30 houses, then that was done by two Bills—one taking 15 houses one Session, the other taking the remaining 15 the next; so that neither of the Bills contained the obligation to re-house.

In the particular case where that actually happened, it was the London School Board who did it; provisions were inserted in one of their Bills requiring the schemes of five years to be treated as though they had all been included in one Bill.

The case also arose in the event of 10 houses being taken in one borough and 10 houses in another.



## CHAPTER LXXIII

### GATES

IF private interests desired to evade the restrictions placed on them by finding gaps in the hedge, those responsible for public welfare were wishful to have gates provided for them through which they too might pass beyond the range of the orders.

A speaker for an Education authority said :

“ I wish to submit that a body like the School Board, acting under a statutory duty and not acting for profit, when making a provision which in itself is very much for the advantage of the working classes, has a claim to be treated with equity by the Home Office in using their discretion as to enforcing the Standing Order.”

There is, of course, a discretion in the Home Office ; but I think in the case of such a body as the School Board the presumption ought to be that the discretion will be used in favour of a great latitude as to rehousing.

The Glasgow Corporation had a similar complaint and desired a similar remedy.

Their spokesman said :

“ It is really our opinion that the clause should not be made to apply where a Corporation is promoting a measure for the purpose of rehousing the working classes themselves. For example, if we are to have houses built and ready for occupation, before we purchase or demolish houses, which we propose to purchase and demolish, because they are unsatisfactory, it is obvious that we are simply blocked ; we are unable to do that which we propose ; and, assuming the case—a case which has occurred, and may occur again, and will occur again, doubtless, in Glasgow and elsewhere—assuming that we purpose purchasing a given number of houses, with a view to demolishing them and rebuilding them in more sanitary and satisfactory conditions, we are told by this model clause you cannot do that.



"We think that a Corporation, such as Glasgow, whose only object is to do the best it can for its people, and who are proceeding with a proposal for the purpose of improving their conditions, should be left very largely to do what is wisest and best in the circumstances themselves without the imposition of such clauses as will, in the case I have referred to, obstruct them altogether, or, in the other case, with which I was dealing just now, will add so largely to the cost they have to pay as will necessarily raise the rentals of the future inhabitants."

The suggestion simply was that in regard to proposals and purchases of the Corporation, with a view of housing the working classes, the model clauses should not be made to apply.

The 1930 Act has not adopted this view. Re-house before you de-house is the command to-day; had it always been so the need for such a command would have been less.



## EIGHTH STAGE

1919-1929

### CHAPTER LXXIV

#### A ROYAL COMMISSION

THE end of the War ushered in the penultimate stage of our story.

Housing Act followed Housing Act. Houses have been built in unprecedented numbers. Still the Slum problem remains in all its complexity. Town Planning—Regional Planning—Garden Cities—Transport—the building of new houses, the reconditioning of old. All have exponents—all devotees. There is a multitude of counsellors; whether wisdom or not, remains to be seen.

Out of it all came the view that a resolution of all the problems and difficulties could only come out of the comprehensive enquiry which only a Royal Commission can make. Perhaps no better résumé of this view can be found than that in the Memorandum presented to Mr. Stanley Baldwin and Mr. Neville Chamberlain urging the appointment of such a Commission.

The Commission was refused by the then Government—it may be that a similar request might fare better to-day. Here is the Memorandum.



## CHAPTER LXXV

### THE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER BY A PRIVATE CONFERENCE OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS IN LONDON ON THE HOUSING OF THE POORER SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION.

1. A new era in housing legislation may be said to have begun with the passing of the Housing Act of 1919. Since then, there have been reports from four groups of Departmental Committees on building costs, from one Committee on new methods of construction, from one Committee on the building industry, from a Committee on Unhealthy Areas, and from a Royal Commission on London Government. In addition we have had in London reports from the London County Council, the Borough Councils, the Local Authorities bordering on London, and the annual reports of the Ministry of Health, while several provincial centres have given concentrated attention to the housing problem. We have had further the Housing Acts of 1923, 1924, and the consolidating Acts affecting housing and town planning in 1925.

2. As regards London the sums raised between 1919 and 1927 by loan or otherwise for the purpose of housing on the part of local authorities and the State are greater than in any previous period of equal duration.

3. In spite of all these efforts the housing position in Greater London in the case of the poorer sections of the population is worse now than it was in 1919.

The County Council received a report from its Housing Committee on the 25th January, 1927, showing that whilst in 1919 the shortage of houses in the Administrative County was 50,000, at the close of the first nine months of 1926



this shortage was extended to 62,000. The report goes on to say :

“ It must be remembered that of the houses provided, considerably less than one-half are of the working-class type, instead of the required proportion of about three-quarters, so that while as a whole the number of dwelling-houses now being provided exceeds the normal annual requirements due to increasing population, the building of working-class houses still falls far short of what is required.”

This statement in the Report of the Housing Committee of the County Council of the 25th January, 1927, is amply confirmed by the reports of the Medical Officers of Health throughout London, and its crucial importance is shown by the census of 1921 from which it appears that in Greater London no fewer than 904,899 persons were housed at the rate of more than two persons to one room.

These facts are borne out by the experience of social workers and Housing Associations in different parts of London. The evidence may be summarised under six heads :

- (a) Health Authorities are crippled in their attempt to prevent overcrowding or to obtain closing orders because of the lack of dwellings at rents which the tenants can pay.
- (b) Societies of a semi-philanthropic nature providing working-class dwellings find that classes which never before applied for them are now applying, thus reducing the accommodation for the poorer classes.
- (c) New dwellings in the Suburbs allotted to London wage-earners are being vacated after occupation owing to expense of transit.
- (d) Housing Trusts have to reject applications for their cheap dwellings from outsiders because all their accommodation is required for their tenants with growing families.
- (e) The utilisation of houses as warehouses and workshops is continuously causing displacement of population.



- (f) Houses designed for occupation by one family are increasingly occupied by three or more families without the necessary increase of suitable sanitary and other accommodation.

5. There is a general view that overcrowded areas are developing slum conditions more rapidly than the slums are being cleared or improved. We submit that these conditions might be alleviated in various ways, as for example on the part of the Ministry by publication of working details of the best schemes under which houses have been produced at low costs; on the part of local authorities by a more regular and detailed survey of local needs, and by co-operation with local landlords in urgent cases of poor families; on the part of voluntary bodies by an extension of the work of Public Utility societies.

The reports of the Medical Officers of the Metropolitan Boroughs for 1925 give overwhelming proof of the inadequate housing conditions in their areas, and of the inability of Borough Councils to solve the problem in their areas apart from co-ordination by some more powerful authority and co-operation with that and adjoining authorities.

6. It is felt, however, that while some benefit may be expected from the more complete exercise of existing powers, the goal aimed at—namely, the supply of houses sufficient in quantity and adequate in quality—will not be reached so long as the two main problems of London Housing remain unsolved:

- (a) the diffusion of authority;
- (b) the lack of space.

7. There are 125 authorities within Greater London which are directly concerned with housing. Under the Town Planning Act, 1925, these authorities may co-operate where there are no buildings; but they cannot do so in areas that are built over; and these constitute a large portion of the whole. Also the housing problem is intimately connected with questions of transport which involve other authorities.

8. So far as space is concerned, London as a centre for labour attracts factories over and above such concen-



tration as naturally belongs to it as a central market for the world; and it is in relation to this most important fact that the possibilities of satellite towns merit more careful investigation than they have yet received. Some method of re-distributing population will prove essential. This involves the consideration of what trades can economically be removed from London.

9. Both these problems were touched upon by the Royal Commission on London Government, and the Committee on Unhealthy Areas.

10. There are other matters which demand the attention of a Royal Commission, *e.g.*, the procedure in making Schemes, the method and terms of compensation in acquiring land, the provision of materials and labour, and the raising of funds by taxation or otherwise.

11. The object to be kept in view should be to carry out a scheme which in a series of years is calculated to

(a) do away with existing slum areas and prevent their growth in the future;

(b) result in a sufficiency of adequate dwellings at rents which the poorer sections of the population can pay;

(c) provide ample open spaces in the neighbourhood of large areas occupied by the poorer section of the population.

12. The problem of housing the people in Greater London has now assumed very large proportions and it is closely interlaced with other questions such as the proper distribution of population, the provision and regulation of transport, the direction of new roads and bridges, the location of factories, the planning of suburban districts or satellite towns. It involves considerations far exceeding the scope of existing local authorities and only capable of being dealt with by Parliament itself. We therefore submit that the time has come when the whole subject should be referred to a Royal Commission strong enough to treat the problem comprehensively and to build up a solid structure on the foundations laid by the enquiries of the last eight years.



## CHAPTER LXXVI

### THE DEPUTATION

IF there is anything lacking in the Memorandum it may be found in the speech made by Lord Dickinson in presenting the Memorandum. It was as follows :

“ This deputation is the outcome of a meeting of delegates from almost all the London societies interested in Housing and Town Planning and these persons were unanimously of opinion that the problem of Housing has assumed such proportions as to justify an authoritative enquiry of the broadest possible character. The chief reasons for this we have set out in the memorandum which has been sent to you and is before you.”

“ The meeting I have mentioned was convened by the ‘ London Council of Social Service ’ and the ‘ Mansion House Council on Health and Housing. ’ The former, which is a comparatively new society, is a federation of social workers in London and, as such, it can speak on behalf of at least fifty metropolitan organisations. The Mansion House Council dates from 1880 when, with the approval of Lord Salisbury, it agitated for, and successfully obtained, the appointment of the great Royal Commission on Housing of the Working Classes of 1885.

“ To-day we tender a like request and we hope ultimately to obtain a like result. We know the gravity of the proposition and the difficulties attending it ; but we are none the less convinced that our proposals are justified. We do not want the appointment of a Royal Commission to be used as an excuse for delay. We recognise that there is danger of this happening ; but we see no reason why a Government department, or a local authority, cannot continue its work notwithstanding that there is in progress an enquiry as to how that work may be facilitated.

“ The fact is that whilst the Commission will, of course, investigate existing methods, it will find itself, in reality, considering a far wider problem than that which the present authorities have now before them. The Housing question is no longer a question of merely pulling down all houses or building new houses. It is something immensely greater. I have had some experience of this myself, for in 1889 I was elected a member of the first



London County Council. Shortly before that election the report of the Royal Commission of 1885 on the housing conditions in London had deeply stirred the public conscience. The new Council therefore set to work with the greatest zeal to remedy the evils that had been disclosed, and since then, their successors have maintained a fairly constant policy in this respect. But with what results? I am far from depreciating either our own work or that of our successors. But the facts and figures to-day show that with all that energy we have but scratched the surface of the soil. I admit that the slums I knew have disappeared; but other areas have developed slum conditions. In my early days we were wont to quote the fact that 900,000 persons in London were living in what were officially defined as overcrowded dwellings. Forty years have passed and according to the latest census there are nearly the same number still living in this state. It is true that the population has increased; but this does not affect the terrible fact that in the heart of the British Empire, notwithstanding our best endeavours, a population not far short of one million is unable to obtain dwelling accommodation having what is officially recognised as the minimum requirements proper for a civilised people.

"There is no gainsaying the fact that present conditions are intolerably bad.

"Intolerably bad! Forty years ago we found the conditions 'intolerably bad.' Our children are now finding them the same. They are battling with the same problem as we were, and I venture to say that unless we are bold enough to adopt new methods of dealing with this problem forty years hence our grandchildren will still be faced with the question of how these vast aggregations of human beings, that we call cities, can be so organised as to make it possible for every inhabitant to possess a home where the ordinary conditions of health, decency and morality are attainable.

"I am sure it can be done; but not by any one Government department or local authority or even by Parliament itself. It will depend upon the development of an enlightened and convinced public opinion, and it is because we believe that such opinion can best be generated and guided by a Royal Commission that we submit this request to His Majesty's Government."

The author also spoke and may perhaps be forgiven for repeating here what he said there.

"The point with regard to precedent has been made, that two Royal Commissions have sat, one in 1842 and the other in 1885. The only thing I will say on that is that in both cases the demand arose out of the concern for the social welfare of



the lower-paid working classes, and was supported by the strongest medical testimony. The same concern exists to-day, and similar testimony can be found among the reports of the medical officers of the various boroughs in support of it.

"The next point is that there were very good results from the past Commissions. Useful legislation followed. Practically all the public health legislation of the country flowed from the 1842 Commission, and the 1885 Commission moulded and shaped housing policy for a generation, from 1885 to 1918.

"With regard to the grounds for the proposed Commission. The first one is the slow progress that has been made. The year 1875 is the starting-point for real powers to deal with slum areas. Now, in 1911 the Medical Officer of the London County Council reported that there were in London something like 195,000 people living in slums who ought to be displaced. In 1922, eleven years later, Mr. Frank Hunt, the housing expert of the London County Council, reported that there were still 200,000 people living under these conditions, and in addition some 350,000 people living in congested areas. Well, from 1875 to 1927, *i.e.*, from the time when powers were first given to the present time—52 years, the total number of people who have been displaced in London by slum clearance schemes under the Metropolitan Board of Works and the London County Council is only 69,024, and that is taking into account all the schemes at the present time before the London County Council. Well, that is at the rate of something like 1,300 a year, and unless we accelerate the process it looks like 150 years before we get rid of the 200,000 people who are now living under those conditions.

"A Royal Commission, we think, is necessary, because a very large issue of policy must be raised immediately this question is thoroughly looked at, and that issue is as to whether housing in respect of the poorer paid workers is to be made as definite a statutory obligation as their education, or in other words, as to whether the home place for every family is to rank with the school place for every child.

"Further, a Departmental enquiry, however valuable it may be, is not sufficient, because the Departments themselves are involved in this question. The Ministry of Health is involved in the responsibility for the progress of dealing with the slum clearances, the Ministry of Transport, in the problem of decentralisation, and therefore any enquiry must be conducted by some body which is capable of reviewing both these Departments.

"Then, before such a Commission would come the need for reviewing local administration. The 1842 Commission led to the supersession of the Commissioners of Sewers by the Metropolitan Board of Works, whilst the Commission of 1885 led to



the supersession of the Metropolitan Board of Works by the London County Council. These were great landmarks in the history of local administration in London, and each was brought about by the appointment of a Royal Commission on Housing.

"The Royal Commission now asked for would have to consider the capacity of the present Metropolitan machinery for the housing of the poorer working classes. Then another matter is the question of procedure for the acquisition of land, and the terms of compensation. That is a very contentious subject upon which a very great deal of difference of opinion will exist, and upon which a good deal of information could be gathered.

"Then there is the need for relating and co-ordinating the recent Departmental enquiries into the prices of building materials and the conditions in the building industry. Those enquiries which are very valuable have not yet been brought into any real connexion, and it would be very desirable that some strong and independent body of economists should make recommendations thereon.

"The last point is that objections might be raised on the ground of delay. It has already been pointed out that some of the requisite legislation can be proceeded with without any unnecessary delay ; but I consider that in this matter more haste may mean less speed. It is thought that the best preparation for legislation commensurate with this great problem in our opinion is an enquiry of an authoritative character which is associated with a Royal Commission."



## CHAPTER LXXVII

### THE REPLY

THE reply was a refusal. The considered reply was given by Mr. Neville Chamberlain. The then Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, with his unfailing courtesy, made some preliminary remarks leading up to his refusal and left it to Mr. Chamberlain to give the reason.

These were summed up by him in the concluding passage of his speech, which was as follows :

“ What is it that Major Barnes said, that an average of 1,300 a year had been displaced ? ”

*The Author.* “ Yes, that is what it worked out at.”

*Mr. Neville Chamberlain.* “ Yes, 1,300. Do you think that it does not mean something that you ought to take into account ? Why is it that progress has been so slow, that only 1,300 a year have been displaced ? You must remember all the things that are going against you in the progress of slum clearance. Some of them have been detailed by one of the speakers—I forget which—but it is an enormous business. You have to have a very careful investigation of the area first of all ; then it has to go up for a resolution of the council ; all the people whose interests are affected adversely, or who think their interests may be affected adversely, will be whispering into the ears of the councillors that it is a bit of faddiness and ought not to be gone on with. When eventually the resolution has been passed, every owner, every interested person has to have notice. Then begins the long process of consideration, trial and error, to see what is to be the compensation for the properties that are to be taken over ; wrangling, fighting, argument, hard swearing on one side and the other, may carry the thing on for months and months, and then presently when it is all done, it is a very costly business. You must remember that in so far as you are successful in getting your slum clearance scheme through, you are adding to the problem of overcrowding, because you are pulling down houses which are holding people—they may be



holding too many people, but when you have pulled them down, unless you are providing some other houses, they have nowhere to go except to live in other people's houses. All these things make it very difficult to get a slum scheme through local authorities. You require to make it easy for them, and not difficult for them to go on with them if you are to increase the rate of progress, and I say that if you tell local authorities 'We are not sure that the present system is right, it has been a long time since there was a Royal Commission, there has not been one since 1885, we think the questions of policy raised are so large that they cannot be decided by any Government department or even any Government, but that they must have a Royal Commission to go into the whole thing and see whether it can come to some agreed recommendation at the end of two or three years'—if you tell them all that, they will say, 'Now, thank Heaven, we can postpone these slum clearance schemes which are going to give us so much trouble, and we will wait until the Royal Commission reports to see what is to be done.' That is my view of what will happen if you appoint a Royal Commission."

Mr. Chamberlain's speech did not produce conviction in the minds of every member of the deputation as may be gathered by what Lord Dickinson said in his speech of thanks. He said :

" It only remains, Prime Minister, for me in the name of the deputation to thank you very much for having received us, and particularly the Minister of Health for his assistance on this occasion. I regret that we have not convinced you as to the expediency of having a Royal Commission ; but I venture to say, with the greatest respect, that you have not convinced us. I do not propose to argue that. If I were in the House of Commons still I should have liked to have made a speech in reply to Mr. Chamberlain's observations. I think a good many points might be made, but on this occasion I merely want to say that since we started this we have become aware of the fact that there is a demand for a Royal Commission to operate all over the country.

" We shall go on with our work with the view not only of assisting the Minister of Health in the work he is doing, but also with a view to obtaining what we still believe we may obtain ultimately—A GREAT AND BROAD ENQUIRY INTO THE QUESTION OF HOUSING."

This book will have failed in its purpose if the majority of its readers do not echo Lord Dickinson's belief.



Lord Dickinson is not in the House of Commons, but he adorns the House of Lords, and there may succeed in obtaining from the Government of the party to which he belongs the great and broad enquiry he was refused at Downing Street.



## CHAPTER LXXVIII

### IN THE PRESENT

IN the Memorandum presented to Mr. Baldwin in 1927 reference was made to extracts from the reports of Medical Officers of Health. These were made from the reports for 1925.

The following extracts from the reports of Medical Officers in the Metropolitan Boroughs and provincial cities for the years 1928 and 1929 serve a double purpose.

They bring us to the end of our story and show by comparison with those reports made nearly a century ago and given in the early chapters of this work the distance we have travelled and that we have to go. They also bring out into clear relief the present difficulties and serve as a pointer along the road we shall travel in the remainder of this book as we seek their solution.

If they vary in degree and intensity it is first of all because circumstances in the Boroughs which they describe are different, and secondly because these Annual Reports differ from year to year in the degree of attention which they give to the subject of Housing.

Let them now speak for themselves.

#### HACKNEY

The Council expressed the opinion that the suspensory provisions in the bye-laws as to houses divided into separate tenements should cease to have effect as regards houses which become wholly decontrolled under the Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Acts.

#### SAINT PANCRAS

##### *Overcrowding.*

Overcrowding is still very prevalent, and there can be little doubt that this is an important factor in connexion with the high death and infant mortality rates.



A very large proportion of the cases of overcrowding occur amongst the poorer classes of tenants, such as unskilled workers, who, if the family is large, are quite unable to pay the rents demanded for the new dwellings being erected either in or on the outskirts of the Metropolis. The provision of accommodation at lower rentals appears to be essential if overcrowding is to abate amongst families of this type.

There is also a considerable amount of overcrowding in connexion with families whose work compels them to live in a central situation. The majority of these persons are well able to pay for the necessary additional accommodation, but this is not available in a suitable situation.

In St. Pancras, with practically no available sites for building purposes, the provision of centrally situated additional accommodation is a matter of great difficulty. It can only be accomplished by replacing a number of houses of two or three floors by blocks of dwellings of five or six floors, but the housing of the persons displaced during the intervening period is a serious problem.

The amount of accommodation provided during recent years, both inside and outside London, especially for the needs of Boroughs centrally situated, would appear to be inadequate, in view of the amount of overcrowding still existing.

#### STEPNEY

Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	23,425
Number of dwelling-houses found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	12,087

#### BETHNAL GREEN

Housing is the major problem in Bethnal Green's health, "the population is too great to be housed properly within the area of the borough." That a great deal of the housing is thoroughly unsatisfactory in itself accentuates the evil of the overcrowding and congestion which prevail in the borough. The solution of the problem is beyond the capacity of the Borough Council and is obviously bound up with the general question of housing in London and Greater London. It is clear that only the fringe of the real needs of the situation have so far been touched. There has unfortunately been a lack of vision and comprehension in the treatment of London Housing, especially in the defective correlation of housing with places of employment and means of transit, to say nothing of the economic circumstances of the families needing improved accommodation. We have the ironical situation that families are seriously overcrowded in Bethnal Green and willing and desirous of moving while accom-



modation has often been available at places 10 or 12 miles away, but as far out of their reach as though it were in another land because of their inability to meet the rent and added travelling expenses to say nothing of the sacrifice of time and temper in long journeys in overcrowded buses, trams and trains.

The Borough Council and its officers might well be excused for despair at the slow rate of progress in housing, a classic illustration of which is the Brady Street area originally represented to the L.C.C. by the Borough Medical Officer of Health as long ago as 1904, and where the improvements have not even yet (1929) been completed.

Overcrowding is known to be prevalent in the borough, but in the absence of alternative accommodation for the overcrowded persons it is difficult to take effective action.

#### BERMONDSEY

Without doubt the inadequate housing conditions of the people of this borough constitute the most serious problem with which that authority has to deal at the present moment. It is not a single straightforward issue, but a many-sided problem in which numerous folk are involved. One aspect of the problem which presents itself is that of education. The tenant, the actual dweller in the house, is sadly in need of instruction; sometimes, indeed, of instruction in the elementary duty of cleanliness. But those whose contribution to the solution of the problem consists in criticism of the tenant, should picture to themselves the hopeless and heartbreaking circumstances of the person on whom they lay the blame. So far as the education of the tenant is concerned the sanitary authority has done and is doing its duty with energy and enthusiasm. There remains the matter of educating landlords and owners. It would be quite wrong to say that there are no landlords as it is to say that there are no tenants alive to their duties in this matter. There are, however, owners who acquiesce in, if they do not actually encourage, conditions of overcrowding and dilapidation which are deplorable in the property which they own and from which they derive substantial profits. Observed from another aspect altogether, the problem is a dual one. There are two main directions in which the housing conditions of this Borough commonly transgress the postulates of hygiene. A house which is fitted to be a dwelling-place for human beings must be properly constructed and in reasonable repair, but it must not, if it is to remain suitable for a dwelling-place, be occupied by more than a certain number of people. In other words the problem is one of disrepair and dilapidation on the one hand, and of overcrowding on the other hand.



There is only one satisfactory way of dealing with old and dilapidated property and that is by demolition and reconstruction. This could, of course, be done house by house, but piecemeal methods have nothing to commend them, and it is therefore the practice to mark out definite "areas" for improvement. Procedure in this case is governed strictly by law and is always slow. *The average length of time elapsing between the first step in the process and the completion of the new houses is stated to be eight years.* The Salisbury Street Improvement Scheme was completed during the year 1928, the formal opening ceremony being held on Saturday, 27th October. This area was first represented as an insanitary area on the 21st September, 1920, so that the period elapsing in this case was almost exactly the average period of eight years.

The Dockhead Area was represented on the 9th May, 1919, and the improvement scheme which is that of the London County Council is *now partially completed.*

The Vauban Street Area was represented on 4th May, 1926, but no *agreement* has yet been arrived at in connexion with the improvement scheme for this area.

It is this factor which renders the situation somewhat disquieting, and unless more speedy action is undertaken with regard to rebuilding, there is no prospect of overtaking the process of decay.

Practically all the available vacant sites in the Borough suitable for housing have been purchased and utilised already, and in many cases houses and factories have been bought and reconditioned and converted into flats for two or more families; in other cases houses have been leased and, after being put into proper repair, have been used for the abatement of overcrowding.

With regard to houses let in lodgings, there are at present 223 such properties on our register. The conditions in some of these houses are very unsatisfactory, but our powers in this connexion are limited. Only a few of the London County Council Bye-laws are at present in force. Briefly those which relate to the "lodger," and refer to questions of cleanliness are at present in force, *but those which relate to the "owner" and "tenant" do not come into force until after the removal of the Rent Restrictions Act.* Consequently it is, in many cases, impossible to secure desirable improvements, such as the provision of proper lighting for staircases, of proper water supply and so. There have been occasional whispers that the problem, as such, is nearing solution, but there is no justification for any relaxation of efforts in this Borough, in fact, our present efforts and activities will have to be redoubled if there is to be any material improvement in the next few years.



The position with regard to three insanitary areas is set out in the following table :

Area.	Date of Representation.	Present Position.
Bethel Place .	January 20, 1920	In abeyance.
Prospect Street .	January 20, 1920	Do.
Leroy Street .	January 20, 1920	Do.

#### BATTERSEA

The housing conditions in Battersea are still very unsatisfactory, and during the year 1928 hundreds of cases of congestion and overcrowding have been brought to the notice of the Housing Committee. It has been impossible, except to a very limited extent, to remedy these insanitary and otherwise undesirable conditions. There is still a large number of families in Battersea living under conditions which are, on sanitary and social grounds, deplorable.

##### *New Houses.*

Practically the whole of the available area of the Borough is built upon.

##### *Overcrowding.*

A considerable amount of overcrowding still exists. Owing to the remoteness of the newly built houses from their work there is a reluctance on the part of the inhabitants of the Borough to accept accommodation on these estates of the London County Council. A more specific difficulty which has also been referred to is that in many cases it is quite impossible for the workers to pay the rents demanded for such houses. It is, therefore, essential that some steps should be taken to enable families, especially the large poor families of limited means, to be provided with accommodation at rents which they are able to pay.

#### CAMBERWELL

One of the most distressing features of slum life is the evil effect of such environment on the children living in these areas, not only from the public health point of view, but also from the mental and moral aspects.

There is little doubt that children born in slums and brought up in slums tend to develop a slum mind. Unfortunately children usually abound in the slums, with the result that the associated evils of bad housing and overcrowded conditions cannot fail to seriously interfere with the healthy development of these children.

There are four small insanitary areas in the Borough which urgently require to be dealt with and are described in the following table :



Number of Working-  
class Houses in Area.

10

17

6

18

These properties were officially represented in 1922.

The difficulty which tends to defeat all efforts to solve the problem of overcrowding is perhaps not so much the shortage of houses as the inability of poor people with large families to pay an economic rent.

What is required is a type of dwelling to span the gap between the slum and the tenement occupied by the more prosperous class of worker which can be rented by the poorer classes of the community.

It would seem that the most suitable provision to meet the requirements of this class is the storey-dwellings type of accommodation. In my opinion blocks of dwellings of an improved standard, with as many as possible of the domestic amenities of the small dwelling-house preserved, probably offers the best solution of the problem, particularly in districts where there is an absence of suitable building sites.

#### DEPTFORD

There is an increasing tendency for larger houses, originally occupied by one family, to be adapted for use by two or more families. This entails supervision to ensure that provision is made for, *inter alia*, adequate water supply, and water-closet accommodation.

Only by continual vigilance on the part of the Inspectors can this class of property be kept in a habitable condition.

Overcrowding continues to be one of the most difficult problems encountered.

The most pressing need at the present time is for more houses at rents within the means of those now living in unsatisfactory surroundings.

Until the solution of the housing shortage is found, we must frankly face the facts that the money spent on our social services is not yielding anything like the full return we are entitled to expect.

#### FULHAM

At present there is considerable difficulty in dealing with cases of overcrowding.

A number of the people accommodated by the County Council have returned to Fulham as the travelling expenses to and from work were too high. In considering the question of housing



accommodation for the working classes in Fulham two points stand out prominently in contrast to one another, namely the urgent need of dwelling houses and the scarcity of sites within the Borough suitable for building. The question in the Borough is of course much more general than could possibly be cured by building in Fulham itself. Overcrowded families from other areas are constantly crowding into Fulham. The Borough Council alone cannot solve the overcrowding problem.

The main difficulty in dealing with overcrowding is the poverty of the class who suffer most acutely from this disability. When overcrowding exists, and even in many cases where the shortage of accommodation does not amount to actual overcrowding, it is impossible to secure separate bedrooms for members of the two sexes.

A type of overcrowding which is very general in Fulham is that in which houses were originally built for one family but are occupied by two or more.

#### *Underground Rooms.*

There is a considerable number of underground rooms in Fulham.

The lack of alternative accommodation prevents action from being taken to remedy matters. If accommodation were available it would be possible gradually to close underground rooms as sleeping places if the rooms did not comply with the statutory requirements.

#### GREENWICH

Cases of overcrowding continue to come to the notice of the Department.

In my opinion the housing problem is indeed very far from being solved at the present time, and I almost begin to fear that its solution will not be reached within my time, for the difficulties one meets in connexion with this matter among the very poorest classes are as great as ever.

We have a particularly unusual case in Greenwich. Certain houses were closed by the order of the stipendiary magistrate as being definitely unfit for human occupation as far back as the early part of 1921. The occupants of some of these houses as time went on have been able to obtain alternative accommodation, but those occupying one of the houses have been unable to obtain such accommodation, although they have applied both to this Council and also the London County Council, and have been continually on the look-out for other private accommodation. Up to the present they have not succeeded in obtaining any, and accordingly have been living rent free for the whole of this period. The owner, of course, realises that if he collected any rent he would be liable to a penalty, and accordingly has



not attempted to do so. *The Greenwich Borough Council have, however, regularly collected the rates from the occupying tenants.* This tenancy, however, must by the operation of natural causes come to an end at no distant date, *four courses of slates* only now remaining upon the roof. Therefore the conditions under which these people continue to live are getting very bad indeed.

#### HAMPSTEAD

It was decided that there were apparently no further available sites in the Borough for the erection of working class dwellings. The search for sites, however, is still continued.

There yet remain a few back-to-back houses, relics of the old village of Hampstead, and during the year steps were taken to deal with certain of these.

#### KENSINGTON

Overcrowding can be and is dealt with by the Council under the Public Health Act and under the bye-laws for houses let in lodgings made under the Housing Act, but the Council always hesitate to take proceedings and magistrates have been loath to give full effect to the provisions of the law during the post-war period of shortage of housing accommodation.

#### LAMBETH

The housing accommodation in Lambeth is quite definitely inadequate and during the period under review the conditions disclosed as the result of the surveys undertaken for the local authority do not indicate any improvement in the general inadequacy of the housing accommodation in Lambeth.

#### PADDINGTON

During 1929 six tenements in registered houses were reported to be overcrowded. In only two instances was it possible to secure the abatement of the overcrowding before the close of the year, the occupants of the remaining four tenements being unable to find other accommodation.

Owing to existing social conditions only extreme cases of overcrowding are dealt with by official action.

#### SOUTHWARK

The Hatfield Street and Paris Gardens district which I represented in 1926 is being proceeded with, and the slum area thereon has been cleared, alternative accommodation having been provided for the tenants by the London County Council.

#### ST. MARYLEBONE

*Carlisle Street Area.*

As indicated in the report for 1927, the London County Council accepted responsibility for this area, and having received the



formal representation made by me under Section 35 of the Housing Act, 1925, passed the necessary resolutions and arranged for the taking of all steps preparatory for the local enquiry. This was eventually held in July, 1928, and occupied two days. The year closed without any active steps in the direction of carrying out the scheme having been taken, though the lay-out has been prepared and the majority of the negotiations, it is understood, have been completed.

#### STOKE NEWINGTON

##### *Houses Let in Lodgings.*

The Bye-laws made by the L.C.C. under the Public Health (London) Act, 1891, and the Housing Act, 1925 (Sec. 6), now apply to all houses which are let in lodgings to members of the working classes; they contain provisions to prevent overcrowding, to enforce the proper separation of the sexes, and to secure cleanliness, ventilation and lighting. These Bye-laws also require landlords to provide for each family adequate water-closet accommodation, washing accommodation and the necessary accommodation for the storage, preparation and cooking of food. *These latter provisions are postponed until six months after the Rent Restrictions Acts shall cease to operate.*

##### *Housing.*

Many whom it would have been desirable to recommend for accommodation on the London County Council estates were unwilling to travel the long distances daily to and from work. Others who were living in overcrowded conditions could not be recommended owing to their poor economic circumstances or low standards of cleanliness.

Owing to the present difficulty of securing alternative accommodation latitude must be allowed in the majority of cases of overcrowding.

Housing expansion is required in the Borough to permit of the overflow from the more densely populated Southern Wards, but local improvement in this direction is difficult of attainment owing to the absence of suitable building sites.

#### WOOLWICH

##### *Houses Let in Lodgings.*

During 1926 new bye-laws for houses let in lodgings were approved by the Minister of Health for the whole of the County of London. The full effect of these bye-laws is not yet known because many of them only come into force after the cessation of the Rent Restrictions Acts. These bye-laws define the standard of housing in houses let in lodgings, and when fully in effect will be of much value in raising the general standard of such houses.



## WESTMINSTER

The problem of working-class dwellings becoming uninhabitable owing to instability of structure is becoming acute and is likely to remain so.

"Owing to the shortage of housing, it has not been found practicable in Westminster to exercise in any degree approaching completeness the existing statutory powers and regulations prohibiting the occupation of underground rooms as sleeping rooms. Only the worst cases have been dealt with and the term 'worst' includes those which offend most from a structural point of view and others where overcrowding is pronounced. When underground dwellings are vacated, owners are warned in writing against reletting them in a manner likely to constitute illegal occupation. These warnings have proved effective, and the number of illegally occupied underground rooms is steadily diminishing. Last year thirty-two cases were discovered and in eighteen of them removal to better accommodation solved the difficulty. The Council has resorted to Closing Orders only in the most aggravated cases."

"The proposal to widen restrictive powers to include unsatisfactory underground rooms used for the ordinary purposes of human habitation in the interests of the public health is one which should receive every sympathy. As, however, it has not so far proved practicable to exercise fully the powers already conferred without causing undue hardship owing to the extreme difficulty in obtaining better accommodation, it would appear precipitate and inadvisable to ask for further powers which are still less likely to be properly exercised in the present circumstances."

## BIRMINGHAM

The rapid building of houses during the past few years has materially reduced the amount of overcrowding in the city, and it seems possible that conditions to-day are no worse than they were at the outbreak of the war. Nevertheless, cases are continually coming to the notice of the Public Health Department.

In the case of the new Housing Estates the death-rate of infants is only 72 per 1,000, while that of the city as a whole was 79 and that of the Central Wards, from which many of the tenants of the Corporation houses come, was 106. If the infant mortality in the Central Wards had been as low as that in the Housing Estates, there would have been 375 infant deaths in them last year instead of the 544 which actually occurred.

## BRISTOL

A very large number of houses, because of their situation and of the continued neglect of owners, are beyond repair, and in the



interests of public health and safety demolition is the only expedient.

There still remain hundreds of houses which ought to be cleared.

#### LIVERPOOL

In view of the shortage of dwellings no Closing Orders were made under the Housing Acts during the years 1916 to 1920 and 1922 to 1929 inclusive.

The approximate number of insanitary houses existing on the 1st January, 1930 (including added areas) was as follows:

Number of courts . . . . .	253
Number of court houses . . . . .	1,362
Approximate number of front houses contiguous to court houses . . . . .	506

*Rathbone Street Area.* (Confirming Order dated 1st August, 1913.)

At the present time all the property on this area is in possession of the Corporation. The houses have been demolished with the exception of twenty-three houses, of which sixteen are occupied, and seven unoccupied and derelict.

*Saltney Street.* (Confirming Order dated 10th October, 1924.)

With regard to Saltney Street, all the houses are occupied, and the only change since the date of the Order is the demolition of eight houses which became in a dangerous condition.

*Blenheim Street Area.* (Confirming Order dated 10th October, 1924.)

On this area the City Council has erected twenty-four tenements, but there still remains to be dealt with the property fronting St. Augustine Street and Silvester Street, a total of forty-eight houses. Of this number ten are in possession of the Corporation.

The real barrier in regard to the removal of insanitary houses within the city is the question of replacing the persons who may be dispossessed. The Ministry of Health have already approved of the reports of the Medical Officer of Health in regard to certain unhealthy areas, but, in each case, a clause is inserted in the Confirming Order to the effect that any unoccupied houses on the unhealthy areas shall not be demolished until accommodation for the number of persons equivalent to the number of working-class occupants in each house is available in new dwellings erected by the Council unless the Council are satisfied that suitable alternative accommodation for such occupants is available elsewhere.



## MANCHESTER

Owing to the prevailing conditions with regard to housing shortage only four cases of "houses unfit for habitation" were certified.

## NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

In 1928 the death-rates were 17.1 per thousand in St. John's Ward, and 14.7 in Stephenson, where congestion is great, as compared with 9.3 in Fenham and 10.8 in Dene and Heaton Wards, where the density of the population is less. The attack rate per thousand population of pulmonary tuberculosis was 3.32 in Armstrong Ward, and 1.09 in Jesmond. Approximately 34 per cent. of the population live in one- and two-roomed houses, yet over 46 per cent. of the deaths from consumption were in this class of dwelling. In Armstrong Ward 115 babies under one year of age died to every 1,000 born, and in St. John's 113, whereas in Jesmond the rate was only 46, and in Fenham 50.

Over a period of twenty-one years the deaths of babies in one-room, two-room and three-room houses have been 129, 116 and 96 per thousand births, respectively.

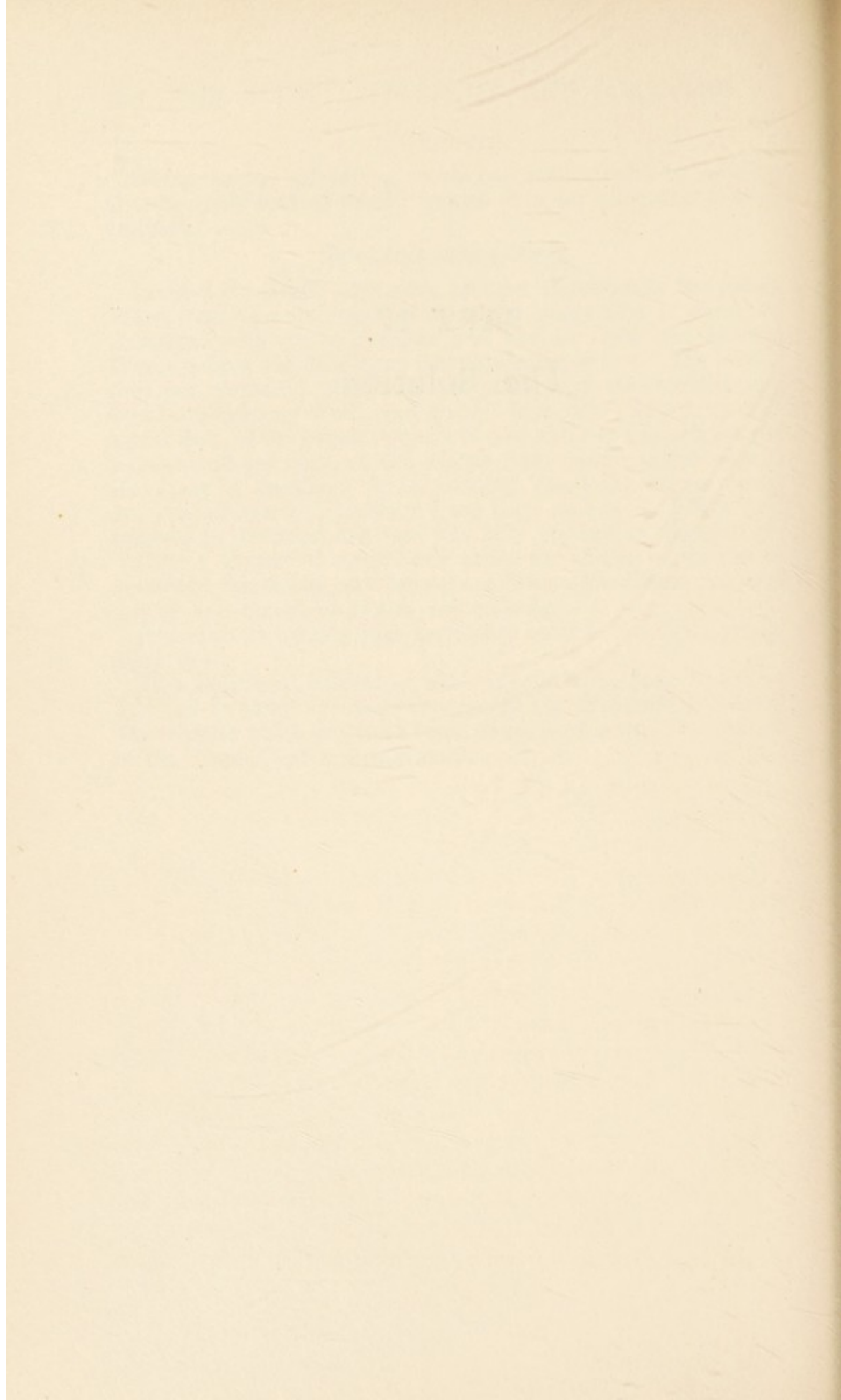
Procedure in dealing with insanitary areas is most disappointingly slow.

Two additional Inspectors were appointed in June to enable the staff to carry out more adequately the Tenement Bye-laws. The impulse which this work received resulted in rapid congestion of the Town Clerk's Department.



PART II  
The Solution







## CHAPTER I

### THE LAST LAP

THE solution to the problem of the Slum is in sight. The Housing Act of 1930 has brought it perceptibly nearer. Under it bad houses are regarded in the same light as bad food, something to be discovered and destroyed. Homes unfit for human habitation are put in the same category as food unfit for human consumption. The only difference is that those who sell bad food are punishable without warning, while those who let bad houses must first be warned before they can be punished.

We are getting on however and that may come next. Meantime the Housing Act of 1930, while it contains little if anything that is actually new in principle, is framed in such a way and breathes such a spirit as to make it a notable advance on any hitherto existing legislation.

This does not mean that anything of a dramatic character is to be immediately achieved.

The cavalry dashes of French will not avail in this matter; it is to the slow, dull, block-house method of Kitchener we must resort.

Behind his method there must be, however, his determination, his will to win through.

A way has been found, a tedious way doubtless, but a way. Based on knowledge and backed by power, determined and directed effort can now prevail.

The knowledge can be had, the power acquired. We have already some of the one and much of the other. The next step will make both adequate.

The stages on our way are set out in the following chapters. Coming to them from our story, we see that there is no spectacular remedy to offer, nothing indeed novel, little



more than a quickening of the pace, a lengthening of the stride, but it is the last lap that tells.

What have we to do? First, our knowledge of the facts must be more extensive and more accurate. Then we must see more clearly the bearing of other movements of reform on the slum problem. With this we must use more preventive measures, and having all these things done we must grasp our nettle boldly; acquire land and buildings on a more wholesale scale, and apply more ingenuity to the erection of the new buildings that are to replace the old. Last but not least, we must use all our powers of persuasion on those obstinate and intractable folk who are more difficult to move than to remove. We shall have to enlarge our resources and diminish our authorities. If we are in earnest we will do all these things and in our generation place the coping stone on the structure, the foundation of which in the preceding pages we have seen our forefathers lay.

Let me take you then along the Appian Way to this Newer Rome for whose walls we shall seek no marble but be content if they be builded in good brick.

Beginning with knowledge, we shall end with power. Let the next chapter tell us what knowledge we must seek.



## CHAPTER II

### ASCERTAINING THE FACTS—THE SURVEY

THE surest way to prevent action is to conceal the facts on which action would and should be based.

No body of men have more clearly apprehended this than those who, by reason of indifference or self-interest, have been opposed to the improvement of housing conditions.

The path of Housing Reform is strewn with unfinished surveys, the partial records of which are lost in oblivion.

The need for survey and record has been the keynote of all propaganda on the subject. Over and over again that need has been stressed. Efforts more or less spasmodic have been made to ascertain the facts, from the great enquiry led by Charles Booth to the limited and incomplete investigation of a local housing association—in itself no less meritorious. In the main, enquiries have been lost in minutiae, overwhelmed in detail. The goal should be more direct, the enquiry more definite. There is one thing, and one thing only we want to know of any area: *it is the number of families who are not possessed of a separate dwelling containing those conveniences prescribed in Section 6 of the Housing Act of 1925.* That is a simple, definite enquiry, to which a clear and direct answer can be given as the result of a comparatively inexpensive survey. On that answer and the facts supporting it can be determined the question whether the areas in which they lie are clearance areas in which all the buildings are to be demolished; improvement areas, part of which only need to be so dealt with; or areas in which only individual houses require attention.

This need to know the facts cannot be too strongly insisted upon. The duty laid upon the Local Authority in this matter is imperative and those citizens who call



for reform cannot do better service than to ensure the proper performance of this duty.

Under Section 25 of the Housing Act, 1930, all Local Authorities are to consider the housing conditions in their area, the needs of the area with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation for the working classes, and for that purpose, to review the information which has been brought to their notice, and are as occasion arises, or after three months' notice has been given them by the Minister, to submit to him proposals for housing.

Under Section 33 a similar duty is laid upon County Councils in respect of Rural Districts, they being admonished to have "constant regard" to the housing conditions of persons of the working classes.

Under Section 26 the Councils of Borough and Urban Districts with a population of over 20,000 are required to submit five-year programmes of housing. These requirements, together with their duty under Section 8 of the 1925 Act and the consequent obligation to keep proper registers and records, should put an end to any ignorance of what is legally required to provide satisfactory housing conditions.

A word to the private citizen! Any four of you, if you are determined, and are local government electors, can secure, by a complaint that an inspection of any house which in your opinion is insanitary shall be made by the Medical Officer; all that is required is that you shall make a complaint in writing to him under Section 52 of the Housing Act, 1930. He must inspect and he must report, and on his report the local authority must act.

When the facts are known and the slum area discovered, a start can be made to transform it from a slum. The work required to be done will be both general and particular: particular, in the operations that have to be performed in the slum area itself; general, in the operations that are required to deal with conditions that are productive of slums. Of these, the principal is the lack of cheap and easy transport from the centre of our great towns and cities into the suburbs and beyond. This is of immense import-



ance. It is a kind of blood-letting ; that drawing off of pus which is needed to make a successful operation possible. It is no exaggeration to say that, but for what has already been done in this matter, conditions of life in the poorer quarters of urban life would be appalling beyond description.

The consideration of Transport is, therefore, one to which attention must be given, and it forms the subject of the succeeding chapter.



## CHAPTER III

### TRANSPORT

ON the authority of Sir Boyle Roche, supported by the lesser dictum of Euclid, no man can be in two places at once, barring he's a bird. It is this elementary fact, despite its mythological reservation, that makes the question of passenger transport relevant to slum clearance. If people are in one area they will not be in another, but the distance they have to go is, as we have seen, a very material consideration in deciding whether they will go at all.

This means, of course, that the importance of transport is in direct proportion to the extent of the built-up area around the slum. A village slum may be but a step from the open country and its continuance rest on other difficulties than transport.

Again, there are few provincial slums that are not within a fast tram journey of open country and undeveloped land. The necessity of transport by train exists only in the larger of the provincial cities and, *par excellence*, in London.

Where it does exist, however, its necessity cannot be exaggerated. Mr. Wells in his *Anticipation* estimates that an hour a day is the most that men will give to travelling to and from their work, and while many did more even then, his estimate was no doubt a good average of what was commonly done. Now, it is hopelessly under the mark. There is no possible development of building to serve the requirements of inner London than can be brought within half an hour of that working centre. Here is a table showing the distances to the London termini from the principal housing estates now being developed or acquired by the London County Council.



## BECONTREE ESTATE :

MILES

## Northern part :

Chadwell Heath to Liverpool Street . . . 10

Chadwell Heath to Fenchurch Street . . . 10½

## Southern part :

Dagenham to Fenchurch Street . . . 11½

Dagenham Dock to Fenchurch Street . . . 10½

## WATLING ESTATE, HENDON :

Edgware to King's Cross . . . 11½

Burnt Oak to Charing Cross (Tube) . . . 10

## MORDEN ESTATE :

Waterloo to Morden . . . 9½

Bank to Morden (Tube) . . . 9½

After these termini are reached, bus rides have to be taken, and it is pretty safe to say that in each of the cases given he will be a lucky man who will find himself inside his door within an hour of leaving his work.

Many of us are becoming familiarised with the terminology of the miner's work. We know what the "face" means, and that in the miner's day is reckoned the walk required to get from the bottom of the pit-shaft to the face of the coal. The average time occupied, as given to the Coal Commission in 1921, was forty minutes. Many a London worker would be glad to get to the face of his work in that time.

I do not underestimate the advantages which living in open country gives to the worker, but to spend two hours in order to secure them is a heavy price to pay. We all have our temperament, and I frankly confess that my ideal is to live as near my work as I can get and to spend as little time as I can in travel. I would rather live in a London street that I could get to in fifteen minutes than in a country lane I have to spend a feverishly racking hour to reach.

By all means let us get as many factories as we can into the country and their workers with them, and let the gaps they leave behind them be turned into green gardens for those remaining in town, but it is useless to expect that the conditions which aggregate men in masses can fundamentally and finally be changed.



Geographical and geological conditions anchor industries to certain spots and with them those who are engaged therein.

Happily many modifications in past methods are possible.

Industrial areas based on mineralogical conditions can be sufficiently isolated to allow the populations dependent on the industry to spread out in open order. The colliery and the pit villages can have a breathing space between them. Steel and iron works have limits which need not unduly expand. In a word, the heavy productive industries can be sufficiently segregated. Probably the next opportunity for applying modern principles of community planning arises in the new coalfields. The new colliery is in the country, and ample space is available around it for commensurate housing. To a lesser degree this is true of the iron and steel industry, though placed in the coalfield or near the ironstone mines, there is no inherent reason why the setting of their attendant population should not be as spacious as is desired.

The case is different when distributive industry is considered. It is of the essence of a market to be crowded. The buyer wants to find many sellers, and he will seek the one where the most are.

Markets come where roads converge, where great rivers open their mouths to the sea. London, Liverpool, Hull, are no arbitrary aggregations of population; Liverpool and Glasgow are the ports for America; Hull and Newcastle to Northern Europe; London to Southern Europe and the East. Rivers are equipped with harbours and furnished with docks. Shipping, and all it means, must be as near to water as ducks to a pond, and the Boroughs that fringe the Thames are as inevitable as the cottages that line a village street. There must be great cities as well as little hamlets. The Atlantic Ocean is the water in the villager's pail writ large, but it produces phenomena on a different scale. A crust of ice in the one is an iceberg in the other. More terrifying, true, and also more of a spectacle. Humanity will have the spectacular and the city furnishes it. So cities come and so they stay. Be it ours, if we



may, to prevent them becoming the Frankensteins of society.

While we are building our garden cities on the circumference of these great metropolises, let us do what we can to make the metropolises garden cities also.

Travel to and from work is, at its best, a necessary evil. It takes time, it costs money and, above all, it is a drain on already exhausted energy.

There is somewhere a balance to be found between the number of those who dwell near their work and those who must go to a distance from it. It is for these last that the workmen's trains are a vital business.

It would be too great a task to tell their history from the Act of 1844 which established the Parliamentary Train, through the Farthings Act of 1858, to the Cheap Trains Act of 1883. They have been the subject of enquiry by Select Committees and Rates Tribunals. The London County Council has given persistent and protracted attention to them and particularly from the point of view of Housing. They have said that to any of their great housing estates the workmen's fare leaves little change out of a shilling. The reduction of this charge is of vital importance.

That is the case for the London County Council and for all local authorities who have to provide the housing requirements of their people at distances remote from their work.

The Companies of course have a case. Railway Companies are not philanthropic undertakings. There is no more reason why they should put their hands into their pockets to help housing than the vendor of building materials, the builders, or the operatives.

The authorities are engaged in the Sisyphean task of rolling the ball of cost up the hill of profit. Every man's hand is against them, and the hand of the railway company is but one of many. To build on the outskirts should be to get land more cheaply ; that is the gain : it involves the cost of travelling ; that is the loss. On a balance honours should be easy. If they are not, redress must be sought somewhere.



It is a question of pull devil, pull baker. Is the company to have the higher fare or the authority the higher rent ? Or is the occupier to have it both ways in lower fare and lower rents.

It seems clear on the one hand that the Companies should not be allowed, by reason of this public need, to improve their position in relation to this kind of traffic. On the other hand they should not be expected to accept a worse position. If there is to be a loss on housing it must be borne out of public funds and not out of private funds, even when they are of the quasi-public character of railway revenue.

Sufficient has been written to show the bearing of this charge on the housing of the working classes. We know that every mile of travel, broadly speaking, involves a call on working class income of over 6*d.* per week. The present London extent of ten miles means 5*s.* a week at least if only one person in the household travels, or £13 a year.

In any sober estimate of what is possible in Housing, this factor of transport must be included, and proposals examined in the light of it.

It is not, however, the only factor. It would be of little avail to draw off population by transport facilities, if we are to allow it to be increased by the indiscriminate resort of industry to areas already overcrowded. Here, again, the remedy is of a general and not particular character. Concurrently with the provision of transport facilities must go the application of town planning and zoning principles to built-up areas. To the operation of these principles and their effect on overcrowding, both directly and collaterally, the next chapter is devoted.



## CHAPTER IV

### TOWN PLANNING AND ZONING

THE housing necessity for town planning and zoning built-up areas arises from one or other of the following conditions. There may be an insufficient amount of open space : the user of the land may tend to overcrowding.

To remedy these conditions local authorities require powers in addition to those which they already possess for dealing with built-up areas. These are at present in the main Street Improvement and Unhealthy Area powers, and by the vigorous use of these a great deal can be and has been done in improving the lay-out of the central areas of the larger towns.

Further powers are necessary ; and the first two recommendations of the Unhealthy Areas Committee, the Chairman of which was the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., in their report dated 20th April, 1921, are accordingly :

#### 1. TOWN PLANNING.

That the Town Planning powers should be extended to enable local authorities to prescribe the line of main traffic routes and to arrange for " zoning " in built-up areas.

#### 2. ZONING.

That reconstruction schemes should conform to a plan of the whole town concerned, together with its surrounding area, such plan to provide for the ultimate distribution of dwelling-houses, commercial and business premises in the area.

The recommendations of such a body demand and deserve profound attention. I do not propose to give equal attention to them in what follows, because, important as they are, we have dealt already with that phase of traffic which most affects housing conditions in the previous chapter on Transport.



In its wider aspect—that of using land not covered with buildings so as to ensure that a sufficient area is not crowded with traffic—Town Planning has a very direct relationship to the removal of slum areas in that it provides good layouts by which traffic, both in its origin and direction, is so controlled as to reserve a proper proportion of open spaces.

In the course which our argument is taking, however, it is that part of Town Planning known as Zoning which is the next link in the chain of reasoning. We have seen how Transport may help to drain our area of superfluous population; we have to see how the growth of such population and the recurrence of the evil may be avoided.

While we are draining industries off into the country, how are we to prevent other industries taking their place in town?

The answer is, by applying the principle of Zoning to town areas: by determining to what extent, if at all, industries shall be allowed to establish themselves in such areas. This determination is Zoning. It has its problems and its difficulties and with these it will be useful to deal.

Zoning in built-up areas is applied to land that has been bought for specified purposes and covered with buildings applied to these purposes. It is true that the purposes for which it is now used may be far removed from that for which the land was originally bought and covered, but it is, even now, in the vast majority of cases, a conscious purpose, definitely directed to the profit of the owner.

Zoning proposes to substitute a purpose which will also conduce to the convenience and profit of the public.

It may be a paradox that where all gain some may lose, but where public policy conflicts with private enterprise, that is what may first happen.

While we are without the benefits or otherwise of a written constitution, the provision of Article V of the American Constitution, "Nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation," is as effective in this country as in the United States of America.

The substitution of public for private direction in the



use of land is a limitation, which, next to the limitation of personal freedom, is the most irksome that could be devised.

Despite half a century of Public Health Acts, the speculative eye still turns calculatingly on the profit to be derived from the use of land.

Little wonder therefore that, to say of whole areas of land now built on, they shall be put to this or that purpose and no other, creates apprehension even in the minds of those who support it. In a discussion on Zoning, a President of the Town Planning Institute said :

"There are advantages and disadvantages in putting your plans on paper and having them published. In a scheme with which I was slightly concerned, when we attempted to plan for a built-up area under existing powers, the effect of putting these areas down in the plan led to a general uproar in the whole town and a general feeling of unrest prevailed."

The difficulties in the way of zoning are in the main of two kinds : technical and financial. Zoning proceeds in defiance of the maxim that it is never safe to prophesy, because it is action based on prophetic vision. Certain areas are marked out for certain kinds of development ; but will these kinds take place ? We may call spirits from the vasty deep, but will they come ? Even the stoutest-hearted Town Planners feel an occasional doubt. One says :

"In a manufacturing city there must be elasticity. Some trades start in a town, prosper for a time and then leave it. The design for building varies ; whereas we used to have tall factories with many floors, now in the same industry, rather than build upwards, larger areas of land are covered on one floor away from the centre of the city."

"It is possible that this country holds nearly as many inhabitants as it will have and ought to have. Judging by the vital statistics issued, there soon may be little or no increase in population."

"We cannot take America as our guide. It has wealth and growing population, and no doubt will continue to expand and can zone with much greater certainty.

"Here, our cities will undoubtedly change and be partially rebuilt, but we may not necessarily have a growth in numbers, only a redistribution, and, therefore, a cautious policy seems to be the only safe one to adopt."



Another says :

"One word of caution here : any rigid rule for redevelopment would invite disaster. Each locality must be studied, the particular tendencies ascertained and understood (and they differ much from town to town) and proposals formulated to fit each particular case. This is not a job for the wholesale clothier."

On the other hand, another says :

"Certain distinctive facts do, however, emerge, and the most prominent of these is, I think, that functional zoning for built areas is perfectly practical and sound, and will, on the whole, work well in practice if done on right lines. By 'right lines,' I mean, of course, with proper regard to facts as we find them. A proper civic survey will undoubtedly show of almost any town that it is already much more clearly and decisively and indeed rationally 'zoned' than one would expect from mere cursory examination. If our civic survey is thorough enough, we shall be able, without insurmountable difficulty, to allocate different areas to clearly defined functions without creating unsolvable problems."

Dr. Raymond Unwin, moreover, on his recent return from the United States, stated that the progress of Zoning had been very remarkable. There are 300 Zoning and Planning Commissions at work, and 325 or more cities and towns have adopted Zoning ordinance.

Two-thirds of the urban population in the United States in towns of over 25,000 inhabitants live under the benefit of Zoning Regulation. Further, he said that a study of the cases arising under the Zoning provision showed that very often in regard to use and density zones, the petitions in favour of greater stringency were more numerous than those in favour of relaxation.

These quotations are sufficient to show that Town Planners are alive to the difficulties of this side of their problem.

They are great, but should not be insuperable. They are engaging the attention of a number of experts who approach the subject with an unexampled combination of enthusiasm and experience, and it may be safely assumed that solutions to these technical difficulties well within the bounds of practical politics will soon be found.



A more serious difficulty is that presented by the financial aspect of Zoning.

Starting from the basis that the public advantage of the policy of Zoning is not to enure to the disadvantage of individuals, there at once looms up the possibility of enormous claims. It has well been said that local authorities have a surfeit of experience of the large sums of money which have had to be expended in improving the central parts of towns.

Little wonder if they shy at proposals that appear to lead to greater expenditure.

It is generally recognized that any Zoning scheme which materially changed the nature of development in any area would result in a large transfer of values. In the present application of Zoning provisions to unbuilt areas, there is no compensation payable where the provisions are certified as reasonable, but it is evident that in the case of unbuilt-on land no such transfer of values could take place as in the case of built-up areas, and the stabilisation of future values may fairly be set off against the loss of expectation. It has been well said that "there is a vast difference between building and rebuilding lines, and such questions as compensation and betterment in built-up areas will have to be dealt with on different lines to those applied to unbuilt-on lands."

What has to be done where there are transfers of values? Can machinery be devised by which those to whose property value accrues can be called upon to make up loss to those who have suffered it? What of the extinction of values, if and when it occurs? From what fund is compensation to be obtained?

If Zoning imposes a restriction on the development of a site, when will the financial effect of that restriction be felt? How shall it be calculated? When shall recompense be made for it?

It is said that all roads lead to Rome; and in these days it might equally truly be said that all schemes lead to pools.

Will Zoning lead to some pooling of interests in land?



Already expression has been given to many ingenious ideas tending in that direction. It is clear that, if the Zoning of built-up areas is to receive legislative effect, or, having passed that stage, is to be anything but a dead letter, the problem of securing private interests without incurring great public expenditure will have to be solved.

Many people think that to add Zoning to Town Planning is to pile Pelion on Ossa, but it is difficult to see how they can be separated.

There are those who are for a general plan, but a plan put away in the safe. They are for secrecy: Zoning means publicity, the two ideas are irreconcilable. The whole essence of Town Planning and Zoning is that all the cards are on the table, that public consent is given, and private co-operation secured.

Perhaps the wisest motto for a Town Planner is that Rome was not built in a day; with such encouragement as may be found in the fact that one individual could claim, if but in boast: "I found Rome brick and left it marble."

Sooner or later sanity will prevail, and municipal authorities will realise that the planning of the municipal area is at least as important as the planning of the municipal building, and will then seek and obtain all the powers they need.

Till then, in dealing with insanitary areas, whether there is a general plan or not, the municipal authority should consider, if only in a diagrammatic fashion, the requirements of the whole of their area, and the improvements therein necessary, so that the particular work they have in hand may fall into line with a general scheme and not prove an added difficulty in the carrying out of improvements that later come to be made.

We are, however, in this survey looking farther ahead than the present; and are laying down the condition under which slum areas which have been purged of their surplus population shall not again be flooded with people drawn from afar—attracted by the expansion of old industries, or the establishment of new ones—to areas that



have and can have no surplus accommodation for them. As our story has shown, such influx of population in the past has been the most productive cause of slums. This must not happen again, and the only way to prevent it is to Zone. Let us therefore Zone.

The Housing Act, 1930, contains provisions that will greatly help local authorities in this respect.

Under Section 2, Subsection 5, the authority may impose such restrictions and conditions on the use of land as they may think fit, and subject to appeal to the Minister of Health, they must be observed.

They may further purchase other land not included in a clearance area and impose the same restrictions on it.

On land coming within an improvement area they may extinguish all easements, and lay out the area as they may determine.

Having found an area, having drained it of population as far as adequate transport will do it, having circled it by Zoning barriers, how are we to prevent other slum areas being created while this one is being improved? How are we to see that they do not fall into the same condition of disrepair and unfitness? The answer is, by a vigorous application of the powers that exist for dealing with insanitary property, and the consideration of these may fittingly form the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER V

### REPAIR

THE relation of Landlord and Tenant is one full of difficulty, and in no aspect is this more clear than in that of the repair of property let and occupied.

It is the landlord's house, but the tenant occupies it ; what more reasonable than that the person who is in the house, sees daily its condition and is in a position to put the stitch in time that saves nine, should be made liable to do so ?

Reasonable or not, that is the implied covenant between landlord and tenant and, generally, in the case of property let for a term of years, the express covenant.

Where tenants are men of substance it works all right ; where they are men of straw it won't work. To make a repair, however slight, means the expenditure of a sum of money, and the weekly tenant of a workman's house has on the one hand little surplus cash to spend in repairing his landlord's property and, on the other, little inducement to expenditure which his tenancy may not endure long enough to enjoy.

Houses need repair. Hour by hour they rot and rot. Every house, like every other building, is a challenge to the elements and to the force of gravity. The Hindus have a proverb : " An arch never sleeps," and that is true of every form of construction. Strains and stresses are always at work. Walk around a house ; look at the walls at their junction with window-heads or window-sills ; go into a room and look at the plaster where the ceiling joins the wall. The roofs are pushing the walls out, the floors are drawing them in. A continual conflict is going on, none the less real because for the most part silent ; though in



the quiet of the night the late worker may hear creaks and cracks like the sound of far-off guns, that tell him, if he cares to listen, of the battle that is raging.

Put a level on the floors, note the fitting of doors and windows: everything tells the same story. Slowly but surely destructive forces are overcoming the constructive forces, and the building, as surely as its occupants, is passing to its end.

Then the elements: wind and rain, snow and ice, sun and shade. A continual onslaught, only to be repelled by innumerable devices, the flashings to the roof, the eaves gutters, the fall pipes, the damp-proof courses, the surface drainage, the coats of paint, the pointing to the brickwork: all means of defence.

Lastly, "wear and tear," the treading of floors, the mounting of stairs, the opening and shutting of doors and windows, the movement of furniture, the attachment of fixtures, the burning of fires, the accumulation of dust and dirt: everything a menace.

To the attacks of this destructive trinity, the building is exposed, and against it all a losing fight is waged. The end may be delayed, but it will come. The day will be when "past repair" is the verdict, and the building disappears.

To prolong life, maintenance, repair and renewal are essential. These words connote actions that, though distinguishable in their broad meanings, tend to fade into each other. If coats of paint are maintenance, is pointing of brickwork repair? If a new lock is repair, is a new door renewal?

These sophistications need not detain us; they have their place and their purpose, but in the mind of accountants, lawyers and surveyors rather than in that of the builder.

Who is to defend the citadel, the landlord or the tenant? The force of events has decided that in the case of the property we are considering it shall be the landlord.

That decision has not come quickly, as we have seen. The germs of it are to be found in early Public Health



Acts dealing with the abatement of nuisances. The principle is later embodied in the Public Health Act of 1845, but the Act of 1868 specifically placed the burden of repair of such properties on the shoulder of the landlord.

It was bound to be so. In the absence of it houses were deteriorating and had so deteriorated that their occupation was dangerous to health in the last degree.

In 1868 Dr. Clifford Allbutt, Physician to the Leeds House of Recovery, describing a Leeds slum, said :

“ This is no description of a plague-stricken town in the fifteenth century ; it is a faint effort to describe the squalor, the deadliness, the decay of a mass of huts which lies in the town of Leeds, between York Street on the one side and Marsh Lane on the other : a place of ‘ darkness and cruel habitations ’ which is within a stone’s throw of our parish church, and where the fever is bred. These dwellings seem for the most part to belong to landlords who take no interest whatever in their well-being. One block has fallen perhaps years ago by inheritance to a gentleman in Lancashire, Devonshire, or anywhere ; another to an old lady ; a third perhaps to an obscure moneylender. Meanwhile the rotten doors are falling from the hinges, the plaster drops from the walls, the window-frames are stuffed with greasy paper or old rags, damp and dung together fester in the doorways, and a cloud of bitterness hangs over all. To one set of houses, appropriately named Golden Square, there is no admission save by alleys or tunnels, which are only fit to lead to dungeons ; so that for perhaps half a century or more the winds of heaven have never blown within its courts.

“ If anyone is attracted upon the threshold of Harper Street, let me be his guide a little farther. Harper Street is freshness itself compared with the courts where the thick air is bound in stagnation by a cluster of mouldering walls. Such is Freetham’s Fold, and many of Freetham’s Flock have found their way to the Fever Hospital. The street passing by it is also ill-drained, but less deadly, as the air has freer course up and down. By the way, the schoolmaster being abroad in Freetham’s Fold, an enterprising man has at last begun to open out the gully-hole, down which I am assured, and well believe, that for four months nothing had passed. Heaped up about me were masses of horribly fetid mud and ordure—the most innocent cause and consequence of this slight obstruction. Next let him take any yard about Off Street, York Street : say Dunn’s Yard, Off Yard, Philip’s Yard, or Riley’s Yard. Riley’s Yard is horribly filthy, but enjoys a fair draught ; if he will look into any of the



others he will see the places which fill the Fever Hospital, and he will gain his knowledge at the price of a nausea and an oppression of the epigastrium which will not leave him for hours."

If it be said that this is 1868, let me supplement it by the following extract from a North Country paper dated the 13th August, 1930 :

"Seventy-eight people, of whom over forty are children, are living in an old rambling building, known as 'College Yard,' at the head of Tuthill Stairs, Newcastle.

"Each of the rooms in this human 'warren' is occupied by a separate family. In the main part of the building are 11 rooms, while out in the yard are 9 more rooms.

"In a tunnel in the yard are 3 more rooms, in which 3 families—8 persons in all—are living.

"A family of 7 is living in one of the rooms, and another room is occupied, among others, by a boy of 15 and a girl of 17.

"With the exception of 6, all the houses in College Yard have only 1 room. In the 6, the addition is a windowless room of cupboard-like dimensions.

#### "SEVEN IN ROOM

"There is a family of 7 living in 1 room. In this house of 1 room, a girl of 17 and a boy of 15 are among those living in the apartment. Inside the yard are 24 rooms, while there is another room at the entrance. Another family has 6 in 1 room, while next door live 2 widows with 4 children, also in 1 room. In the tunnel, a dark, forbidding passage-way, are 3 houses. The rooms in the tunnel-houses are fairly large and surprisingly light.

"The only water supply for all the families in the yard is one outside tap. There is no lavatory accommodation in the houses, but there are 6 lavatories in the yard."

And here are other accounts of conditions as they stand to-day.

#### SOUTHWARK

"No. — *Bittern Street.*

"In this 5-roomed cottage there are 3 families. In the first floor front live a man and his wife and 9 children—11 people. There are 5 girls and 4 boys, the youngest 2 years and the eldest 13 years.

"About half the floor-space is occupied by 2 large beds. In spite of excessive overcrowding, the room is clean and tidy.



"The tenant is a hawker of mascots. In the summer he may earn £10 a week; in the winter, nothing.

"He has an army pension of 25s. per week and states he has never applied to the Guardians for relief. He wants to move to Downham, but states he has been refused because he has not a sufficient steady income—so he is seeking accommodation elsewhere.

"No. — *Alvey Mews.*

"These are 3 damp and dilapidated rooms, made particularly unhealthy by reason of a manure-heap just outside.

"They are occupied by a man and his wife and 4 children, 2 elder boys, a married daughter, her husband and 3 children—13 people.

"The man is on the staff of the Borough Council (earning about £3), his wife is a rag sorter, and 1 boy is at work.

"They are very anxious to move, and offer 17s. in rent, but cannot go out to Downham as all are employed locally.

"Industrial expansion is taking place rapidly, spreading southwards from the river, and in every direction from the main thoroughfares. This means a decreasing population in the Borough as a whole, but not among the poorest residents. The tendency is rather to add to overcrowding of casual workers, as the demand for unskilled labour keeps many large families in the district in the hope of finding work. High factory walls shut out the light and air from adjacent small houses; smoke and fumes penetrate cottage windows; perpetual noise and vibration from machinery all have a bad effect on the occupants. . . . No satisfactory results from Southwark housing as a whole can be attained until the old courts and passages and streets of damp and worn-out cottages are swept away. . . . The chief difficulty in the way of clearing the remaining slum streets is the poverty of the inhabitants. Very few of these people have any hope of being able to rent an L.C.C. flat, and certainly none of moving out to one of the Council's cottage Estates."

#### SHOREDITCH

"No. — *Baches Street.*

"This is a dilapidated house, overcrowded throughout.

"In 2 rooms on the ground floor, which are dark, gloomy and dirty, live a man and wife and girls aged 18, 10 and 3 years, and boys aged 16, 6 and 4 years.

"In the little back room the elder girls share a bed with the boy of 6, and the boy of 16 sleeps on a couch bed, which is made up at night.

"There is no room for this bed, and a table has to be moved out of the window to make room for it. In the front room the



parents sleep with the two youngest children. The man is a hawker, and states that his average earnings are £2 a week or less.

"The daughter works at an A.B.C. and earns 22s. 6d. a week. She is very much ashamed of the house, and cannot bring her friends there. The mother is disheartened and miserable, and says she is so worn out with struggling in these wretched rooms that she has lost all her energy."

"No. — *Wiltshire Row.*

"This is one of a row of 4-roomed cottages, facing the canal, all of which are old, dilapidated and verminous.

"The cottage is very overcrowded. On the ground floor-front and back are 2 couples. In the back-room on the first floor are a woman, a boy of 16 and a girl of 4. All sleep in one small bed.

"In the front room on the first floor are a man, his wife and 4 boys of 17, 10 and 4 years, and a baby boy of 9 months.

"One little girl died a few months ago, and another has just been taken to a home, as she does not grow.

"The father and mother and 2 boys sleep in one bed, and the boys of 17 and 10 sleep in a chair-bedstead, which is made up every night; the elder boy suffers from a loathsome internal disease, and the mother frequently has fits. The man is out of work, but earns good wages as a french polisher during the winter months as a rule. The room is terribly verminous, dilapidated, and damp; it is often smelly, and the roof leaks badly over the bed, though it has recently been mended. Cats crawl in at night and keep them awake by fighting on the stairs."

#### ISLE OF DOGS

<i>Address.</i>	<i>No. in Family.</i>
	First Family
A house in Crewe Street, Poplar	Man and wife, 1 boy (at work), 3 girls.
	Second Family.
	Man and wife.
	Boys—8 and 4 years.
	Girls—11 and 10 years.
	Baby—4 months.
	Total . . . . . <u>13</u>
Ground Floor Back . . . . .	Walls soaking, floor-boards give under foot.
Ground Floor Front . . . . .	Ceiling broken by floor-boards above.
Passage . . . . .	Walls damp. Plaster broken.



First Floor Front . . Ceiling patched, still leaking. Rain comes in all round windows.

*Bugs.*

Very bad smell of drains, said to be from cesspool under yard.

*Second Family*—First Floor Back—Ceiling in bad condition.

*Bugs.*

*At high tide always a large pool of water and oil under house.*

<i>Address.</i>	<i>No. in Family.</i>
	First Family
A house in Milwall .	Man and woman. Boys—16, 14, 12 and 3 years. Girls—10, 8, 6 and 4 years and 10 months.
	<i>Second Family.</i>
	Woman and man (18 years). Boy—10 years. Girl—7 years.
	Total . . . . . <u>15</u>
Ground Floor Back .	Walls very damp. Holes in floor. Window-frames very weak.
Ground Floor Front .	Walls damp and plaster falling.
First Floor Front .	Ceiling leaking. Outer wall damp. Large holes in floor.
Passage. . . . .	Large holes in ceiling. Flooring in holes.
First Floor Back .	Ceiling leaking. Walls in very bad condition.
First Family . . . .	Man, wife and baby all sleep in Ground Floor Front. All other 8 children in First Floor Front. Would like to have whole house but cannot get other family out.
Second Family . . . .	Father and elder son have left on account of overcrowding, all being in one room.

#### SALFORD

“An extremely common defect is lack of water-closets. In one court, a single closet serves six houses. One of these has a tap for cold water only, behind a chair in the living-room. In a neighbouring street, three houses, with several families in each, share one water-closet, one dust-bin and one tap. In the same street one closet serves four houses as well as customers of a public-house. Airless rooms are common owing to very narrow entries, lack of yards, and to overshadowing by the high



walls of factories. In one house adjacent to a foundry it is necessary to keep the gas alight all day. Near-by a court surrounded by high buildings has a back entry only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft. wide. All along the side of one street the entry is only 2 ft. wide."

In these days of food regulation, when inspectors are daily protecting the public from food unfit for human consumption, it would be strange if some action were not taken to ensure that houses are fit for human habitation.

The specific enactments that protect the working classes are those contained in the Housing Acts. They should ensure one thing: that the working-class house of to-day is reasonably fit for human habitation.

"Reasonably" is a good word, the last refuge of the practical man against the idealist. It is based on some well-founded assumptions: one, that which most people think, is reasonable; another that any judgment given is likely to be that of the average man, and the average man will take a view much more moderate than those who demand perfection.

For these reasons the word is a favourite one with legislators, is to be found in many important statutes and, on the whole, works fairly.

Whatever view may be held on its justice, it is now settled that the landlord is liable for repair to the working-class house. The Rent Restriction Act has finally recognised this, though at the same time, the fact, that, while the landlord must do repairs, the tenant must pay for them.

Unhappily this is a world where many of us do the things we ought not to do, and leave undone the things that we ought to do; and some landlords do not do the repairs that are necessary.

Not many landlords perhaps; certainly not wise landlords. "Early repairs often avoid extensive and expensive renewals at a later date." So says the Property Owners' Handbook, and as wisely that "in all repair work strength and permanence should be arrived at."

Not all landlords follow these counsels of perfection, though where they are neglected it does not follow that it is through callous disregard of private comfort and public



health. There are doubtless many cases where the landlord himself is little better off than the tenant, has no margin of income which can be applied to the maintenance and renewal of his property, and defaults in his duty not for want of will, but for lack of means.

It is bad law however that legislates for hard cases, so we are told, and who shall deny it? In the eyes of the law all landlords are one; there is no distinction between rich and poor, and the steps provided to compel the landlord to the discharge of his liability may now be examined.

To set the law in motion there must first be a discovery of defect.

This may arise in the performance of the duties of the medical officer, or by a complaint addressed to him.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that it is the duty of the Local Authority to inspect, and make itself acquainted with the conditions of every working-class house in its area.

That this is not completely done, is due to a variety of reasons: it is an expensive task, demanding a considerable staff; it is a disagreeable task giving rise in many cases to conflicts with interests, which may strongly influence the authority.

Both of these causes are potent. In addition there may be apathy or indolence, and last of all a reliance on the occupier, based on the belief that if there is a nuisance or state of disrepair injurious to health, he will himself raise the question.

However that may be, Parliament has done all it can to secure that there shall be no unfit houses, and the responsibility for their existence must be shared between the owners, the occupiers and the authorities.

The defect having been discovered, the next responsibility rests on the Medical Officer; he must record, report and represent to the authority what in his opinion is the state of affairs.

This is a heavy responsibility. It calls for both judgment and courage. The representation may be challenged, and the Medical Officer may have to support the representations he has made before an official enquiry.



Human nature is human nature. It has its limits of energy and endurance. The life of a Medical Officer is full of exacting duties, many of them of a dull and dreary nature. These have to be performed if administration is to continue, and chaos is not to supervene.

The pursuit of an active policy of housing repair and reconstruction, involves an immense amount of additional work, for which it may be there is no additional staff.

There is first the careful collection of data both by inspection and research.

There is the relating of the records of birth, death and disease to the area in question. There is the careful weighing of borderland cases, the attendances and discussion with committees, the conflict with interested parties, and finally the preparation for the enquiry that may follow.

The Medical Officers of the country are a magnificent band of men, whose labours have been invaluable in their effect on its life and well-being, but in the absence of a determined policy on the part of the authorities, they cannot be expected to devote more than a certain proportion of their often meagre staff to the task of remedying the housing conditions of their areas. The records of their action show an increasing activity. There is every evidence that as a body they are fully alive to the need: it only requires sufficient public interest to provide them with the necessary staff and backing, to secure an even greater advance in this part of the great field in which they operate.

The Medical Officers having reported, it is then for the local authority to take such action as the Housing Act, 1930, enjoins upon them to take.

Where a house has been declared unfit for human habitation—if it is situated in a clearance area, that is an area in which *all* the houses are declared to be unfit for human habitation—an order will be made by the authority for its demolition, and that order must be complied with before the expiration of six weeks from the date on which the building is required to be vacated or is actually vacated. If the owner fails to do this, the authority may do it



and recover from the owner the net cost incurred, if any.

If it is situated in an improvement area—that is, an area in which only some of the houses are declared to be unfit for human habitation—it is treated in the same way as a house which is in neither area and as follows.

The owner is required to put it into repair within twenty-one days of receiving the notice so to do. Within that period the person receiving the notice may appeal to the County Court. The County Court Judge must, if required, make an inspection and his judgment is final on questions of fact. On a question of law the case may go to the Court of Appeal, whose judgment is to be final on points of law.

The operation of the law in matters of repair has been very much speeded up by the Housing Act of 1930, and it is not easy to see how any of the stages set out above could be omitted.

As it stands, however, they are all of them a cause of work and worry to those engaged in the administration of the laws and it is perhaps not wonderful that progress in the past, when the stages were more numerous, has been slow.

This need be so no longer. The Housing Acts of 1925 and 1930 have immeasurably strengthened the hands of local authorities as the following résumé will show.

The Housing Act, 1925, makes it a condition that houses let to the working classes at or below a rental of £40 in London and £26 elsewhere must be kept during the tenancy by the landlord in all repairs reasonably fit for human habitation.

The same condition applies to houses occupied by workmen engaged in agriculture.

Its provisions are in the main superseded by those of Part II of the Housing Act, 1930, with which the following paragraphs deal.

If the owner fails to keep the premises fit, the local authority may enter the premises and repair them.

If the houses cannot be made fit without reconstruction, the owner may close them, and the local authority may then acquire them.



The authorities may make bye-laws for the purpose of securing the objects aimed at, and may impose upon the owner the duty of executing any work necessary to comply with the bye-laws.

The duty of inspecting the district is imposed on the local authority, and that of representing to the local authority any dwelling-house which appears to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation devolves upon the Medical Officer.

The Medical Officer may be called on to do this duty by any Justice of Peace or Council for the district, or by four or more local Government electors.

If the opinion of the local authority concurs with that of the Medical Officers, the local authority may make a closing order, and penalties are imposed if a dwelling-house is relet after such an order is made.

After the premises have been closed for six weeks they may be demolished, if the continuance of the building is a nuisance or danger.

Back-to-back houses are prohibited from being built, and rooms partly or wholly underground are, with certain reservations, prohibited from being used as a sleeping-room.

In addition to dealing with unfit houses, obstructive houses may be removed under Part I of the Housing Act, 1930.

Compensation is payable in the case of the removal of obstructive buildings.

Powers are given to the Minister of Health and to County Councils to act in default of negligent authorities.

Such is a brief résumé of the powers that may be exercised under the Housing Acts, 1925 and 1930, to deal with the unfit houses.

It is difficult to suggest any way in which they can be supplemented. Viewed as a process they appear to be complete.

They begin with the letting of the homes. The tenant must be informed of the name and address of the owner and the Medical Officer of Health before a penny of rent can be demanded of him. With this information he can



set the whole machinery of the process in motion by bringing the state of the property to the notice of either—

A Justice of the Peace,  
The Council of the District,  
Four Government Electors, or  
The Medical Officer.

This done and the case proved, the local authority must act as before described.

It is said that where there is a will there is a way. The state of housing suggests that the converse is not true, and that a way may exist without the will to walk therein.

We have seen what powers the Housing Acts give. Let us look at those derived from the Public Health Acts.

In these days when we hear so much of towns and boroughs and counties, the fact that the whole country is divided into sanitary districts tends to be obscured.

The real basis of local government, however, is sanitation, and to this all other matters of local concern are added.

The first duty of every local authority is to abate the nuisances within its district.

All premises, pools, ditches, gutters, water-courses, privies, urinals, cesspools, drains or ashpits in such a state as to be a nuisance or injury to health are to be dealt with summarily.

Houses without sufficient drainage, closet accommodation, or receptacles for refuse are to have these deficiencies made good.

Drains and privies are to be examined.

Houses are to have a proper water supply.

The use of cellar dwellings and underground rooms is to be restricted or prohibited.

Other powers exist such as—to require the proper paving and drainage of yards, the provision of water-closets in place of other forms of closet, to lay drains, to require the provision of sinks, to deal with domestic water cisterns and defective gutters, drains, etc.

Where the owner will not carry out the requirements of the local authorities, the authority may do the work and charge it.



There would seem to be little wanting, but if there were, additions have been made to these powers so recently as 1925 in the Public Health Act of that year.

The truth is that legislation has outrun administration. More powers exist than are exercised, and the improvement of housing conditions in so far as the making fit of existing houses is concerned rests rather with the local authorities than with Parliament: which means it rests with those citizens who care.

It is perhaps as well however to emphasise that Housing Reform rests on public health as well as on private good.

It is really a branch of public health, and derives a good deal of its vitality from that fact. It is not for nothing that the person to raise the question of unfitness is not the Surveyor but the Medical Officer. The former comes in only to remove the conditions detected by the latter.

Yet though we insist on the part that health considerations have played in Housing Reform, it is not to say that moral and ethical considerations do not also come into play. The complexes of life are not so separable as that. Hobbes may put all our action down to self-love, and Hutcheson to benevolence. The truth lies between. If no ill effects followed on insanitary conditions it is likely that public health legislation would have been meagre. It is because private neglect becomes public nuisance that men are stirred to action and reform takes place.

It is saner to realise that while the initiative to action comes from emotion, its continuance or cessation comes from the conviction that benefit or injury will follow.

When the conviction deepens that proper housing conditions are profoundly associated with social well-being we may expect the present spasmodic efforts to become continuous and concerted.

At present, it is disease and not discomfort that is the effective lever in dislodging bad housing conditions.

When the soul of society is so sensitive that discomfort is as infectious as disease, one will be as vigorously combated as the other. Till then we must be content with what progress we can get. Statesmen drive society always



with an eye on the pressure-gauge. If that register safety little else matters.

. Their attitude is not unjustifiable. If people have the government they deserve, presumably they have the houses they deserve. If they have not it is certainly not for want of power to get better.

The question of repair has perhaps been sufficiently stressed. There follows on it the necessity of seeing that in the provision of new houses such types should not be erected as will easily fall into disrepair and insanitary condition. The outstanding example of this is the back-to-back house. It is the subject of a separate section, No. 17, of the Housing Act of 1925, and may therefore be the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

### BACK-TO-BACK HOUSES

THE provision of new houses formed the subject matter of my book on *Housing, the Facts and the Future* and will not be referred to here at any length. It is, however, an essential part of the slum problem and follows naturally on the subject matter of the last chapter.

Repair must be followed by replacement. Repair cannot for ever maintain a dwelling in habitable condition, and this fact alone necessitates a continuous programme of rebuilding. There is in addition to this, losses by fire and absorption by business, which further diminish the number of existing houses. Last of all there is the increase of population.

There is at times evidence of a conflict of opinion between housing reformers. Some insist that slum areas may be left, and that the slum problem will solve itself if there is a sufficient number of new houses built. Others there are who think the provision of new houses for the ordinary working class may be left to private enterprise and that all housing expenditure by the State should be on the provision of houses for the very poorest classes.

The truth as ever lies in the mean. "This ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone." Of the type of housing that falls to be done under Part III of the Housing Acts of 1925 and 1930, I will say no more, but in this place something may usefully be said of a type of house which has been prohibited under Section 17 of the Housing Act, 1925—the back-to-back house.

It may be said "Why bother, if no more are to be built?" This is not the view of those best qualified to judge. The



back-to-back house, despite its non-construction to-day, is more than an academic problem.

Some forty years ago an interesting enquiry was made into the question on behalf of the Local Government Board by Dr. Barnby and Mr. P. Gordon Smith who, reporting in February, 1888, modestly said :

“ Without assuming from our report that it finally decides all questions that may arise concerning the construction and wholesomeness of the class of houses, we submit as the general outcome of the inquiry that the Board should refuse their sanction to any bye-laws which would permit the erection of back-to-back houses, and that they should discourage by all means at their command the erection of such houses.”

(1888 to 1925.—Thirty-seven years before back-to-back houses are prohibited !)

The mischief has, alas, been done. Difficult as it is to get houses erected to-day, it has always been easier to get them up than to pull them down.

Lancashire, the Potteries and the Black Country, though they discontinued this form of construction earlier than most, still suffer from its effects ; while all the large manufacturing towns of Yorkshire which persisted in their erection have now to carry a heavy burden of houses below the modern standard.

In looking through this forty-years-old report which covered Halifax, Morley, Todmorden, Stainland, Keighley, Leeds and Bradford, one is struck with the almost devilish ingenuity of the planning.

The type of planning precluding the disposition of the sanitary arrangements at the rear of the premises, all sorts of alternatives had to be devised.

In some cases any direct connexion with the house was frankly abandoned. A space would be left between two blocks of such houses and occupied by a range of privies for the use of the inmates of all the houses, with a large ashpit for the common use of all filling up the space at the back of the privies.

An advance upon this was to form a narrow fore-court through which the door leading to the living-room was



approached, and to occupy a part of the fore-court with a privy and ashbin.

A further advance, at all events from the point of view of appearance, is a cellar reached by a stair from the living-room with the ashbin discreetly placed in the fore-court at a lower level than the street.

Later the fore-court being prolonged sufficiently to merit the euphuism of "garden," the conveniences were placed in a basement extending into the garden and reached from same.

Midway between the first and second type described were those in which the houses being built in blocks of eight, a space was left between the adjoining ends of each block which space was occupied by privies or w.c. or ashbins.

In the course of time most of the privies have been replaced by w.c's, and in a good many cases through ventilation obtained by turning two houses into one, but much remains to be done before the survivors can be brought up to modern standards.

While many of these houses are occupied by tenants whose standard of life is far removed from that of slum dwellers, they do by their planning tend to create insanitary areas, and this fact has long been recognised, and led in some progressive communities to their construction being forbidden as far back as 1860. They still remain, however, to create special conditions and problems in many towns, and it is difficult to suggest any method of dealing with them satisfactorily short of complete clearance.

Complete clearance is only possible by demolition, and demolition raises problems connected with the acquisition of, and the compensation for, the property involved. These we pass to in the chapter that follows.



## CHAPTER VII

### ACQUISITION AND COMPENSATION

HAVING diagnosed our slum area, reduced the virulence of its condition by improved transport facilities, isolated it by zoning barriers, lowered the inflammation of the surrounding parts and stayed the spread of the disease by an adequate repair policy—we are now ready for the operation itself, and need not minimise its difficulties. Prominent amongst these, and the first claiming our attention, is that of the acquisition of and compensation for the properties involved in the treatment of the area.

This particular phase of the problem has always been a highly controversial one. We came across it in the account of the Royal Commission of 1885 and heard the views of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on it. It will be remembered that in his view the whole question turned on the direction to be given to the arbitrator responsible for the fixation of the amount to be paid as compensation.

The direction which he desired, but thought impossible at the time, has now been given and is embodied in the Acquisition of Land Act, 1919.

The Housing Act of 1925 went a step further and in Section 46 laid down rules for compensation which, while not original to the Act, being imported from the 1919 Housing Act, remained as then drawn.

They determined in effect that property which would itself not have been the subject of an order of demolition, being in good order and repair was, because of its situation within a slum area, to be regarded as a cleared site and its demolition compensated for on that basis. A difficult rule to justify.

This difficulty is got over in a most ingenious way in



the Housing Act, 1930. The ingenuity was displayed in the passage of the Bill through Committee. As the Act is now passed, a clearance area cannot be declared where there is a single house which is fit for human habitation, so the lines of clearance areas will have to be drawn so as to dodge all premises that are in decent repair. An area of insanitary property may surround but not submerge islands of premises which have been kept in proper repair.

If these islands are to be purchased they must be either by agreement, or under the terms of the Acquisition of Land Act.

This provision should largely, if not entirely, meet the objections raised to this provision in the 1925 Act in respect of compensation.

Further, a discretionary power is given to authorities under Section 41 of the Housing Act, 1930, to make such allowance as they think fit for removal expenses or for loss of trade.

All this is to the good, though I am not sure that a good general rule could not be framed that would obviate the need for discrimination in the principles of compensation.

In my book, *Housing, the Facts and the Future*, speaking of compensation I used words which later were quoted by a prominent member of a Property Owners' Association as a perfectly fair formula. They were as follows :

"Give to the owner the uttermost farthing of the price he could obtain from any private person or body working for profit, but add nothing to that price of an amount which he could obtain only from a public body under the stress of public need."

I think there would be little difficulty in devising rules to give effect to this formula, and if they were devised, there would be no need to discriminate between compulsory purchase under clearance schemes from that under improvement schemes, or indeed between compulsory purchase by public authorities for any purpose whatever.

I desire this because I am of the deep conviction that we shall never get a real move on in the matter of slum clearance till we are prepared to make wholesale acquisition of land, erring on the side of too much rather than too



little. If the State is to do anything really substantial for the tenant, it cannot do it vicariously through the private landlord, it must become the landlord itself and so acquire and exercise the powers that go, always have gone and always will go with that status. The intolerable vista of contention and legislation which lies before the present piecemeal operation should be terminated by a wholesale acquisition of all property included either in a clearance or an improvement area. It would be cheaper in the long run and the run would not be half so long. Such an acquisition of insanitary property coupled with the establishment outlined in my pamphlet, *A National Municipal House-building Programme*, would bring the solution of the slum problem within measurable distance.

Let us now assume we have acquired the area and cleared it. What are we going to put on it? The answer may be "Nothing, leave it an open space." A good answer in many cases.

Architect though I am, I am not sure that grass is not the best covering for land, and anything else at its best a poor substitute.

Be this as it may, it must sometimes be built on, and if so, what shall we build, cottages or higher buildings? Cottages by all means if we can, but sometimes, and indeed inevitably in great centres of population, higher buildings must come. It would be well if we could avoid useless and unnecessary controversy in this matter, and to this end the next chapter dealing with higher buildings is devoted.



## CHAPTER VIII

### HIGHER BUILDINGS

IN considering this question the Unhealthy Areas Committee, whose excellent work cannot be too highly commended, have done both more and less than justice to the proposals to use higher buildings as one means of re-housing the population of insanitary areas in the Central London Borough.

In so far as they present them as an alternative to garden cities, they do them more than justice. Higher buildings are no alternative to garden cities. In the true sense of the word there is no alternative to garden cities. Given the choice between garden city development and any other proposal for housing humanity, no sane man would hesitate in his choice. There *is* no alternative to garden cities, there are only substitutes. Substitutes are only accepted when the desired object cannot be attained. The choice is not between garden city and any other form of development, but between one substitute and another : not whether we are to have garden cities in the built-up London Boroughs, but what kind of substitute is to take its place. If we are clear on that we shall avoid entangling ourselves in an entirely unnecessary controversy, which can only divide our ranks and delay the consummation we all devoutly desire. Let it be generally agreed that the long view in housing is to improve and cheapen transport in every direction—railways, tubes, roads, omnibus and tram services—so that those whose occupations are in Central London, may have their houses in garden cities. Further, the same view will remove those industries which need not be in London to satellite towns, ringing London around, with islands set in a green sea of fields and gardens.



These are the great aims to be pursued unflinchingly and unwaveringly. These things we must do: are we to leave other things undone? Are the unhealthy areas of London to remain untouched until the happy day when we have set a Welwyn Garden City at every point of the compass?

Let us see what this would mean. In 1911 Sir Shirley Murphy, the Medical Officer of Health to the L.C.C., scheduled 1,965 areas as being insanitary. Colonel Levita, the Chairman of the L.C.C. Housing Committee, in a most informative lecture on Slum Areas in London delivered to the London Society in the early part of 1924 (from which much that is quoted hereafter is taken), referred to a similar survey recently made, which showed that the number of insanitary and congested areas approximated 1,900 groups, containing 25,000 houses inhabited by about 195,000 persons.

The picture is painted in even darker shades by Mr. Herbert Jennings, Secretary of the Unhealthy Areas Committee, in his most interesting appendix to their Report. Taking 20 houses per acre as a maximum average standard, he estimates that there are 92 wards in London with a population of 1,654,319, of which 995,817 must be displaced if that standard is to be attained. Nearly 1,000,000 people must go out of the areas in which they are at present living. Many of them must go out of the County of London altogether, because it is calculated that their re-housing would require 9,958 acres, while in the whole of the county there are only 7,900 acres available. If the standard is to be 12 houses to the acre, 16,596 acres are required. To use his own words—

“as there would be only room inside the county upon this basis of density for 474,000 out of the 995,817 dis-housed persons, it means that there is a surplus population of 521,817, which number represents over 11 per cent. of the entire population of London. More than half a million people must go out of London altogether before the standard of 12 houses to the acre be reached.”

The average number of persons from insanitary areas re-housed during the last forty years being less than 560



per year, the prospect of re-housing all the 195,000 persons seems remote enough, while it looks as if the 995,817 would have to wait till the Greek Kalends.

It is hoped to accelerate the figure to 2,500. How far this hope is justified is doubtful.

Even if it were realised, it would take nearly eighty years to provide for the 195,000, while if we think of the 995,817 it is like gazing into infinity.

It is clear that neither centrally nor in the outskirts is there any real prospect of re-housing, within any measurable distance of time, those whose misfortune it is to live in insanitary areas. What is to be done about it? Are we to say that these 1,900 groups, with their 195,000 persons, are to go on stewing in their own juice until provision is made for them outside the county? We cannot say it. To quote again: "The reconstruction of some 550 areas containing some 45,000 people brooks no delay." We cannot wait. We must do what can be done now. We must face this fact of density. What are we going to do about it? If no re-housing scheme in built-up boroughs is to be accepted that gives a density of more than 100 per acre, let us be honest and admit that for a long time to come the result must be that of increasing the density in adjoining areas. People must shelter somewhere; if they are cleared out of one insanitary area they will go into another. We shall only remedy slum conditions in one area by intensifying them in others.

A well-known Medical Officer writes:

"Under existing circumstances it is to be feared that the condition of the displaced tenants is not infrequently worsened. For not only do they move into other houses sanitarily little, if any, better than those from which they remove, but owing to housing shortage, they aggravate the crowded conditions of these tenements, or cause overcrowding in other tenements, due to accumulation of a class of poor people for whom no additional accommodation is provided."

There are those who frankly recognise this and say:

"Leave the slums alone, it is folly to touch them, concentrate on providing new houses in un-built-on areas. In the course



of time the movement of population from Central London to the outskirts will drain off the slums, leaving only such remnant of population as can be rehoused at the standard density within the area."

This may be a cold-blooded view, but it faces the facts. Let us test, if we can, what its acceptance would mean. The census figures help us to a conclusion. In a London Borough, one of the first four in point of high density, the population has been reduced during the last thirty years by about 39,000 persons, or 11,500 families, an average of 384 families per year. Eleven thousand five hundred families less should have eased the housing situation, one would think. What is it now? With less than 28,000 houses there are nearly 56,000 families in the Borough.

On a non-parlour basis the existing houses, if converted and equipped with adequate conveniences, would provide separate dwellings for 41,000 families, or 15,000 families less than now inhabit them. Those who put their faith in filtration must wait for many years before the housing accommodation of this borough would be adequate to its diminished population. Even then, such faith must be based on the belief that none of the existing houses will be demolished, and their sites used for industrial and commercial purposes. They must further expect that the rate of diminution will continue unchanged. By no means a safe reckoning. There are many factors to render it inaccurate. The necessity to live near their work, the cost of travelling, attachment to the neighbourhood, all these resist the centrifugal movement of population. This particular borough offers the strongest support to the filtrationist; we have seen how slender it is. We cannot wait for filtration to do its lingering work. If that is agreed, it is common ground that while we are pressing forward on lines inseparably connected with the Garden City movement, there is at least a minimum amount of slum clearance we must do. Some measure of what must be done in London has been given. Let us look at the conditions of the task.

There is the cost. The situation has curiously altered



in this respect since the War. The cost per room of dwellings in central areas was about 25 per cent. more than in suburban areas. To-day the cost is about the same. The comparison is between five-storey blocks in central areas and two-storey cottages in the outskirts. If the number of storeys in the central area buildings were increased, presumably the cost per room would then be less in the central areas than in the suburbs. This is of course due to the fact that the cost of building has increased more than the cost of land. To complete the comparison, the cost per room of housing in two-storey cottages, on central sites, is estimated at 30 per cent. more than in five-storey buildings. In other words, 130 families can be housed in the latter for the same cost as for 100 families in the former. This fact cannot be disregarded. In itself it makes housing on garden city lines, within central areas, impracticable, and invites consideration of the further reduction in cost which increase in height may offer.

Then there is the condition of time. To again quote from the lecture referred to :

“ It is estimated that the larger areas require some ten years’ work in addition to the time absorbed by legal formalities, which are both complicated and prolonged. It is impossible to do more generally than clear the site by sections and by decanting groups of inhabitants, prepare location for tenements in succession. This method of process is not only slow but extremely costly.”

It is obvious that the smaller the proportion of those displaced who are re-housed on the site, the longer the time occupied in the completion of the scheme and the smaller the result. How difficult it is to find alternative accommodation for those displaced I have already shown. At the present moment it is impossible. It must be provided ; and the main part of any slum clearance scheme is first to find a “ decant ” on which to house the people first displaced. It is like the vacant hole on the solitaire board, it must be there before you can play the game.

Even when the “ decant ” is provided, if it is not in proximity to the area, difficulties are not at an end.



Attachment to locality has to be overcome—how strong it is only those engaged in slum clearance know.

One writer says: "Each area is a little community or congeries of communities," and another: "They consist of small closely-knit communities who are little likely to avail themselves of housing accommodation which will involve their separation from their kinsmen and friends."

In respect of the borough already referred to it is fair to assume that not more than 300 out of the 15,000 families needing homes have found them at Becontree during the last four or five years.

The reason is not far to seek. As has been shown, the weekly cost of travelling, assuming a workmen's ticket and travel to the terminus in London by the cheapest means of transit available, is over 5s. per week, and it is said that the outgoing in respect of rent, rates and travelling to a tenant of a five-roomed house at Becontree is between 23s. and 24s. per week. Such outgoings cannot be met unless there is a continuous weekly income of £4 per week, if a normal working-class family has to be provided for. How many of the dwellers in central areas have such an income.

The reasons that keep people rooted in central areas are both sentimental and economic, and both must be reckoned with. In pre-war days, when the cost per room in central areas was greater than the cost on the outskirts, the cost of travelling was, at least in part, offset by the reduction in rent. To-day this cannot be said, and the increased cost of travelling adds to the difficulties of slum clearance.

The conditions in respect to labour and material are also of moment. Quite rightly, more importance is attached to the provision of new houses than to the replacement of old houses, and the insufficient supply of labour and material are jealously regarded by those who find them all too inadequate for normal housing schemes. From this point of view there is additional argument for higher buildings which present opportunities for the employment of methods of construction making a minimum demand on bricklayers and plasterers and the materials they employ.



We have now some measure of the problem. It is clear that if slum conditions are not to be intensified we must at the beginning confine schemes to those which will re-house practically the whole of the displaced population within the insanitary area. This means that only large areas can be dealt with. Many areas, by reason of size, shape and situation render it impossible to provide either for re-housing or for open spaces.

On the basis of five persons per dwelling, fifty to sixty dwellings per acre must be provided where the density is from 250 to 300 per acre, if the population is to be rehoused inside the area. Such a suggestion arouses natural opposition and an instinctive reaction, but we must be honest and face the consequences of rejecting it. We may passionately rebel against conditions that do not give every family a cottage set in a garden, with the income to maintain it and the leisure to enjoy it, but because these conditions do not exist are we to refuse to do what we can under the conditions that do obtain. At all events, we must explore every suggestion whereby every family may at least have a separate dwelling if they cannot get a separate garden. In that spirit let us ask, what other substitute there is for garden city development in central areas. What is there to satisfy those who feel they cannot go into an area, and say to one family "We will re-house you," and to another, "You must take your chance." Men who, in a seaworthy boat, have to beat off the hands of those struggling in the sea, so that they themselves may be saved, have no happy task; and those who undertake slum clearance where only partial provision for re-housing is made, have one hardly less intolerable to perform. What does the proposal to put sixty dwellings to the acre involve? If they are put side by side the space between the rows at back and front could not exceed 12 feet in width. Such a lay-out cannot, of course, be considered. What is the alternative? *To put them one above the other.* The Manual on State-aided housing schemes laid down a limit of twelve dwellings to the acre. Accepting that limitation at the ground-level



to get sixty dwellings to the acre we must put five houses one above the other. If each have two storeys there will be ten storeys in all, two being in the roof.

What is the alternative? Nobody dreams of self-contained two-storey dwellings twenty to the acre.

The question resolves itself into this. Are we to take the limit of five storeys set by the London County Council when re-housing in insanitary areas, or, may we increase that height? There is no particular sanctity attached to the number five in this respect, and the cardinal point to remember is that once you adopt a class of building in which dwellings have to be entered otherwise than from the ground level, as far as the separate dwelling is concerned, it is immaterial whether it is entered from the second or the ninth floor. The plan of the dwelling itself can be the same on the higher as on the lower.

It seems clear that there is a relation between the heights that are possible for buildings and the size of the area that is being replanned, due to the altitude of the sun. There is also the question of the physical exertion needed to reach the higher floors. The coupling of the fourth and fifth storeys in the five-storey blocks, is no doubt due to the fact that tenants will not readily climb higher than the third floor, and small wonder. When we think of tired men and women at the end of a long day confronted with the ordeal of climbing six flights of stairs to reach their homes, one can understand that the limit of human endurance has been reached. If dwellings are to go higher than the third floor, lifts must be provided. For my part, I should want them to the first floor. I should grumble at the third flight and groan at the fourth. When lifts are provided, all floors are on one level and it matters little on which one dwells. The introduction of lifts, however, adds expense, and if it is to be kept to a minimum it must be spread over as many dwellings as possible. This consideration invites an increase in the number of storeys, as each additional storey lowers the amount debited against each dwelling. What is then to limit the number of storeys? The London Building Act will not permit a



greater height than 80 feet at the eaves. Let that be the limit.

Here then between the Manual for the Preparation of State-aided Housing Schemes, with its limit of twelve houses to the acre, the London Building Act with its limit of 80 feet to the eaves, and the altitude of the sun, we have our three dimensions. Such dimensions are in themselves restrictions and within and under them, those who are anxious to further the wide and sound views for which the Garden City movement stands, may safely work while at the same time giving such relief to the inhabitants of insanitary areas in the cities as these abnormal times will allow.

There are no virtues without defects, no advantages without discount, but at least this can be said, that where insanitary areas of sufficient size are to be found, the best return for the time and money that must be spent, and the materials and labour that must be employed on them, will be obtained by some such scheme as is adumbrated in these pages, while if to some of the dwellers in these homes is denied the pleasure of a separate garden they may look out on wide spaces, reach and enjoy them with little exertion and share in a communal life not without its attractions.

We have to house all sorts of people, under all sorts of conditions, and if the scheme outlined meets a special need, in special times, in special places, it need not be feared that its adoption will stem the full tide of housing reform in which the great idea of the garden city is moving to its bourne.

The Housing Act of 1930 recognises that in central areas where land is dear higher buildings must be erected and in its financial provisions takes this into account.

Section 26, Subsection 3b has a proviso to the effect that if it is necessary to provide housing accommodation in houses of more than three storeys on land costing more than £3,000 per acre the contribution of the Treasury will be increased from two pounds five shillings to three pounds ten shillings per person displaced.

The increase is dependent on the approval by the Minister



of the building, and this may be accepted as a safeguard against the abuse of the provision by erecting higher buildings where there is no need for that course to be taken.

Whatever buildings are erected, whether they are high or low, a standard of accommodation is of importance and to it we turn our attention in the chapter that follows.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE STANDARD

DISRAELI, in one of his jibes, said that Gladstone always traced back the steam-engine to the tea-kettle. A jibe natural to a man whose claims did not rest on pedigree, but a method not without its interest and use. I am tempted to pursue it, though the temptation comes from the Imp of the Perverse.

It may seem a little mad to approach the standard that should replace the slum, by a disquisition on the "English Gentleman's House," but there is a little method in the madness. After all, the rich man's provision is but the poor man's appetite—satisfied. Kindly scientists, to enable us to appreciate the common flea, or rather its structure, show us that industrious if irritating insect magnified many times. The microscope adds nothing but size, but the addition is useful because it is revealing and turns ignorance into information.

Be that my excuse. The poor man is the genii in the bottle, the rich man the genii no longer so limited. However vast and ramifying the structure he piles up around him it is but to give room for appetites to which poverty does not deny access but only satisfaction. Is it work, is it leisure, is it sleep? Would we feed, would we play, would we rest? The scale on which actions are performed, the elaboration and complexity which surrounds them should not obscure the fact that the source from which all spring may be laid in a manger and housed in a hovel. Poverty contracts, prosperity expands, but the material is the same. From the cradle to the catacomb man is housed in infinite variety, but is everywhere the same man.



What chance decides how vast a field in which human desire may be displayed, or how "cribbed, cabined and confined" it is to be, who shall say?

For those who would replace chance by choice it will not be lost time if we seek the minimum through the maximum, and fix the narrow bounds within which the poor must live after we have seen how wide a space a dwelling may demand.

We will take as companion in our little tour *The English Gentleman's House* written in 1865 by one Robert Kerr, architect, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and Professor of the Arts of Construction in King's College, London, etc., and for comparison with it the Interim and final Reports of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Advisory Council to the Ministry of Reconstruction published in 1918 and 1919.

Professor Kerr's book is an old favourite of mine. His world is a world in which there are statics but no dynamics. A happy, peaceful world.

He writes in 1865, with the most delightful detachment from the real world around him. London had just gone mad over Garibaldi. Bismarck was stripping from Denmark the provinces which, with those later taken from Austria and France, were to build up the German Empire. The railings of Hyde Park were soon to go down before the pressure of people whose aspirations and achievements have made almost impossible the kind of life for which he sought to provide.

Of the time in which he lived and which was to come, the good professor shows neither comprehension nor apprehension.

He saw himself the successor of John Thorpe and Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren and John Vanbrugh, of Kent, and Adams, ministering to the requirements of a social life as dignified and decorous, abiding and secure as that in which they had lived.

Yet he has both an admirable philosophy and technique, is at the same time an historian and logician, and if the life for which he wrote is fast fading away there is much



of what he says that is pertinent to the life which is replacing it.

I will pray his aid at once on the matter of the theme of this chapter.

"The reader who desires to learn how to plan a small house must be asked to take the same course as if he wished to deal with a large one—the principles are the same."

"The principles are the same." A Kerr come to judgment, and so let us proceed.

I like this, from the "Preface to the First Edition."  
"It is well known that there are few good things so good, and therefore so well worth describing as a good English house."

Well said; may it some time be said of all English houses as well as of *The English Gentleman's House*.

"When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman."

Listen to this passage:

"No question of mere magnitude is involved; no degree of embellishment; no local or personal peculiarity; but there is an entire class of dwellings, in which, notwithstanding infinite variety of scale, the elements of accommodation and arrangement are always the same; being based, in fact, upon what is in a certain sense unvarying throughout the British Islands, namely, the domestic habits of refined persons. To put the case familiarly, there are houses in which the accommodation is of the smallest, and the expenditure the most restricted, whose plan nevertheless is such that persons who have been accustomed to the best society find themselves at ease; and there are others upon which ample dimensions, liberal outlay, and elaborate decoration have entirely failed to confer the character of a Gentleman's House.

"There arise, therefore, certain general maxims of design, which, for the sake of these important qualities, may be laid down as beyond appeal. They form, in short, taken as a whole, the test of A GENTLEMAN'S HOUSE. Some of these we shall now examine and illustrate, under the following heads, namely:

Privacy.

Comfort.

Convenience.

Spaciousness.

Compactness.

Light and air.

Salubrity.

Aspect and prospect.

Cheerfulness.

Elegance.

Ornament."



Is it too much to ask that some trace of these qualities should be found even in those dwellings the subject of this book?

They are difficult to obtain. Professor Kerr knew that, and put it into language that was as admirable then as it may seem to be both amusing and appropriate to-day.

"How objectionable it is we need scarcely say when a thin partition transmits the sounds of the scullery or coal-cellar to the dining-room."

"But in its larger sense comfort includes the idea that every room in the house, according to its purpose, shall be so planned as to be in every respect a comfortable room of its kind."

Avoid all outlook upon unpleasant places.

"The chief element of cheerfulness is the sunshine. To produce in the house at large, therefore, a cheerful effect, it becomes obviously desirable to dispose the rooms and thoroughfares so as to receive the sunshine according to their several requirements, not too much, but not too little."

These are some of the qualities that should mark the English gentleman's houses. What of the quantities?

Professor Kerr is not only an idealist but a realist. He is more, to a certain extent he is a formalist. He sees his houses as surely graded as the people who occupy them. The relation of the accommodation to the cost is almost mathematical. He tabularises it from a house costing £1,250 to a house costing £40,000; from a house with 13 rooms for the family and 13 rooms for the servants, to a house with 100 rooms for the family and 97 rooms for the servants!!!

With this let us leave him and turn to the women who, in April, 1918, took their places on the Women's Housing Sub-Committee.

The fisherman in the fairy tale in his efforts to get the genii back into the bottle, had no such difficult task as fell to them. They lacked the technical and expert knowledge of architecture which was possessed by Professor Kerr. They had this, however, in common with him, they were considering the requirements of family life. True not a family life which could expand to the use of 100 rooms with the pro-



vision of 97 more for servants, but still a life which claimed something of those qualities of privacy, comfort, convenience ; all the long list at which Professor Kerr had aimed.

Into what minute compass could that be packed ?

Theirs not the casting of some colossal sculptural group, theirs to carve the cherry stone.

Plucky women, but even their hearts failed them and they record :

“ Something may be effected by better internal planning, but it is impossible to secure the reforms for which the demand is most insistent, i.e., bedrooms of adequate size, and separate bathrooms unless the superficial area of the house is increased.”

More than a decade has passed since they reported and official standards have been fixed. Not less than 650, not more than 950 feet—a little more than the library and a good deal less than the drawing-room provided by Professor Kerr for that other family.

And Lord Mayors of provincial cities are now agitating for smaller houses !!!

So much for the size of the house, what about the number of the rooms ?

They say :

“ We regard it as essential that each house should contain as a minimum three rooms on the ground floor (living-room, parlour and scullery) and three bedrooms above—two of these being capable of containing two beds. A larder and a bath-room are essential.”

Note the word “ essential ” is duplicated. They seem to be digging their heels in as if they found themselves being dragged from their positions, and well they might. They must have had some premonition of the “ parlour ” fight that was to ensue, and of the preference to be given to the “ non-parlour ” house. How they plead for the parlour !

“ The demand for the parlour has been widely expressed and this is likely to increase as the standard of living rises. Excellent reasons are put forward for the need of it. An extra room is required in which the children can do their lessons, visitors be entertained and books and other possessions be kept out of



harm's way. Where a member of the family is an official of some organisation, the room may often be wanted for the purpose of an interview or meeting. Moreover, an emergency may arise which makes the extra room a necessity rather than a luxury. Where a parlour is lacking we note a tendency to use the scullery as a living-room. Our attention has been called to a case where a large number of newly built houses had to be remodelled at considerable expense to meet the demand for the additional room."

These are not architects but housewives, and they are not governed by the abstract considerations that influence their learned predecessor. Their arguments are much more intimate even when the subject of discourse is the same as his.

They talk of aspect, of privacy, of comfort as he does, and here are some of the things they say:

*Aspect.*

"The importance of a good aspect for the living-room often appears to be overlooked. It is here that the woman and her children spend the greater part of their lives, and if it is necessary to choose between giving a north or north-east aspect to the living-room or to the parlour, the latter should be the one to be sacrificed."

*Privacy.*

They have their anxiety on this, but it is on a point that did not present itself to Professor Kerr as giving cause for anxiety. It is for the privacy of the bath!!! They ask:

"That complete privacy should be secured by a separate bathroom.

"Where the bath is downstairs, even on modern estates it is frequently placed in the scullery; no partition is provided, although the scullery itself may serve as a passage-way. To ensure privacy suggestions have been made that a movable partition should be provided; although this would be some improvement upon the unscreened bath there are obvious drawbacks, and there would be a tendency to dispense with the use of any partition the fixing of which entailed trouble."

Some of the recommendations are pathetic in their revelation of what has been missing from the Home.



*Entrance.*

"The front door should open into a lobby."

*Living-Room.*

"As the living-room is invariably the room which is in most common use, it is important that it should be as large as possible, even though this may involve cutting down the size of the parlour. The arrangements of the windows, door and fireplace should also be carefully considered. It is essential that persons should be able to sit on either side of the fire, out of a draught, and in a good light. The living-room should contain one closed-in dresser."

*Scullery.*

"The scullery is to an increasing extent the working centre of the house, and the place where most of the cooking is done. It must be of a size capable of holding the necessary fittings and utensils and at the same time of giving the housewife space in which to move about at her work. It is unanimously agreed that the sink should be deep and fitted with a waste outlet and plug. A draining-board should be placed at one or both sides of the sink.

"A plate rack also is desirable."

*Hot Water, etc.*

"It cannot be too strongly emphasised that a regular and efficient hot water supply is a *sine qua non* from the point of view both of personal cleanliness and of labour saving. The extra time, trouble, and expense involved when water must be heated in kettles, and carried to the bath, washtub or sink, is a serious addition to the housewife's burden. A great part of the everyday work of the house, as well as the laundry work, is doubled by the lack of a proper supply of hot water. The extra strain on the woman's strength, coupled with the waste of time, leaves her without either the opportunity or energy to attend to other household tasks or to secure any form of recreation for herself."

*Larder.*

"We are glad to observe that increasing attention is being given to the position and size of the larder. It should be well lighted and ventilated by a window on an outer wall. The area should not be less than 15 square feet. It should contain a slab of stone, slate or other suitable material, and adequate shelving."



*Coal Storage.*

"The coal store should be reached under cover. When it is inside the house, a shoot from the outside can sometimes be arranged, and in any case it should be possible to stock it without it being necessary for the coal to be carried through the living-room."

*W.C.*

"The desire for an additional w.c. upstairs is frequently expressed, but we realise that this is difficult owing to the expense involved and lack of space.

"The most satisfactory position of the w.c. downstairs is in a back lobby, provided that this is well ventilated. When this is not practicable, it should be outside, approached under cover, adequately screened from observation, and in any case it must have a window."

*Bedrooms.*

"The relation of the doors, windows and fireplaces should be so arranged that the window may be open without the head of the bed being in a draught."

*Fittings.*

"The provision of more fitted cupboards and shelves than are usually to be found is of importance from the housewife's point of view. A wide, strongly made shelf for saucepans, etc., should be fixed in the scullery. Either a dresser or cupboard for china, etc., is also required. Where cupboards are fixed in the living-room, these should not be placed on both sides of the fireplace, so that access to them is impossible without disturbing a person sitting by the fire.

"In at least one of the bedrooms a hanging cupboard should be fixed."

What shall we say of these demands? Are they extravagant? Are we not amazed at their moderation? What are we to say of dwellings of which such recommendations require to be made?

Happy people who spend their holidays in old parts of France and Spain are sometimes shown in towers or keeps, spaces in which wretched men have suffered a living death—contracted to a span—where they could neither stand upright or lie at length. Spaces to be viewed and left with a shudder. In some future day will men



shudder at the amount of space which to-day is thought to be adequate for the framework of family life?

However that may be we cannot yet congratulate ourselves even on having reached that standard, indeed we might almost say we have definitely abandoned it.

The parlour has gone, even the women on the Housing Sub-Committee have had to offer it as a sacrifice: first, if needs be, to aspect; next, to the size of the living-room.

The non-parlour house itself has not yet arrived at the minimum standard of a living-room and three bedrooms. The absolute minimum that decency, comfort and convenience demand for a family where the children are more than two, more than twelve years old, and both boys and girls.

Lord Shaftesbury was concerned seventy years ago with the conditions of families living in single rooms. Will someone be concerned about them to-day?

We have seen what things these women concerned themselves about, and not only for new homes but for old ones formerly occupied by one family and later converted for the use of more than one family. On these they ask Parliament:

"To consider, in relation to the conversion of middle-class houses into tenements for the working classes, the requirements which are necessary to secure that the health and convenience of the tenants are properly provided for.

"For this purpose an investigation was undertaken in a London district where the majority of the houses were built originally for middle-class tenants, but are now, almost without exception, occupied by working-class families. This alteration in use has resulted in a deplorable state of affairs which is typical of many other districts in London and other large towns. In almost every case a separate family lives on each floor and this change from house to tenements has been made without any kind of structural conversion of the buildings. The most glaring short-comings in this type of housing are an inadequate supply of water-taps, sinks, etc., insufficient scullery and w.c. accommodation, and an entire absence of baths. One house visited had only one w.c. for four families; there were four taps, one on each floor, either on the landing, in the area, or in the back yard, but there were no sinks. Further, there is grave



overcrowding (none of it illegal) through lack of sufficient bedrooms, coupled with inadequate living-room accommodation.

"In conclusion, our investigations into this subject convince us of the necessity for certain legislative reforms to which we would call attention:

"(1) The compulsory published registration of landlords.

"(2) Some system of sanitary certification by the Medical Officer of Health before a house designed for one family is allowed to be occupied by more than one."

I turn back to Professor Kerr's book and I re-read his list of accommodation for the English gentleman's family:

*The Day Rooms*—The Dining, Parlour Dining-room, Morning, Breakfast or Luncheon, Drawing, Boudoir, Library, Billiard, Business-room, Study, Saloon, Private Family Suite, House Conservatory and Winter Garden, Smoking-room and Gentlemen's Odd-room;

*The Sleeping Rooms*—The ordinary Bedrooms, Dressing-rooms, Family Bedchamber Suite, Guests' Suites, other Special Bedchambers, Miscellaneous Bedchambers, Miscellaneous Bedrooms;

*The Children's Rooms*—Nurseries and Suites, Schoolrooms and Suites;

*The Supplementaries*—Cloak-room, Lavatory, etc., Bathroom, Plunge-bath, etc., Water-closets,

and it encourages me to set out as the absolute minimum standard for the English working man's family this modest list:

*The Day Room*—A Living-room.

*The Sleeping Rooms*—Three Bedrooms.

*The Supplementaries*—Scullery, Bath, Larder, Coal Store and W.C.

The Housing Act of 1930, for the first time in any Housing Act, lays down a standard of accommodation per person, though other Housing Acts have contained standards of area.

In Section 37 it is enacted that in calculating accommodation a house containing two bedrooms shall be regarded as providing for four persons, a house with three bedrooms for five persons and a house with four bedrooms for seven persons.

This is a great advance, a real step on. But assuming



a family of four, a father and mother with a boy and a girl past the stage of puberty, two bedrooms would not give separate accommodation for the sexes if the father and mother are to occupy the same room.

Still it is a great advance, and administration may in the selection of families avoid the perils against which legislation has failed to provide.

Surely it cannot be long before it is enacted that no house is adequate for the normal family that does not provide three bedrooms.

The Act in Section 46 provides for the two-roomed house for aged persons, but for contribution purposes regards such a house as being only two-thirds of a house, which is a useful safeguard against too wide an application of this Section.

We are now prepared to get on with our job. We have acquired an area, determined the type of building, settled the standard of accommodation—nothing more seems to be necessary before a start.

Alas, our difficulties are only beginning. We have been dealing with paper, we have now to deal with people. Our area is already built up—there are houses already there: there are people in them who must be provided for elsewhere while we rebuild. Where are they to go? How are they to be got to go? The process has been picturesquely described as “Decanting”—the putting of old wine into new bottles. It is a problem, and to this problem the next chapter is devoted.



## CHAPTER X

### OLD WINE INTO NEW BOTTLES

THE Act of 1930 makes two conditions precedent to the setting on foot of a clearance scheme. The authorities must be satisfied first that it has sufficient resources to carry the scheme through and, next, that it can provide accommodation in advance for those persons whom the scheme will displace.

Perfectly proper conditions.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundations and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

With the first condition another chapter deals.

The second condition is equally proper. People cannot be turned into the streets.

It raises, however, some of the most difficult problems in practice with which the local authority has to deal, particularly in the built-up areas where slums are thickest.

In such areas there is no available accommodation for the people who are to be displaced, and as we have seen, such accommodation is a condition precedent to carrying out an improvement scheme.

Accommodation then must be found either inside or outside the area. Our story has told us how neglect of this in the past has led to the clearance of one slum area being the begetting of another, and if we are to avoid this there is, in the face of the shortage of housing accommodation, no escape from the obligation.

Accommodation outside the area can be found by the development of Housing Estates, and in London this work



is being done by the County Council, who allot quotas of such accommodation to the several Metropolitan Boroughs.

Excellent as this is, it is found to be all inadequate. We read in our story something of the difficulty raised by travelling, and this is felt in its full force in this connexion. There is the difficulty of getting the people to go, and over and over again the experience of finding them return on the plea of expense.

To find accommodation inside the area is still more difficult and results in this, that it is not possible in any case to wholly clear an area and proceed with the erection at one time of the whole of the new houses.

The work has to be done in instalments—bit by bit. It is like a game of draughts or solitaire—there must be room on the board for the first move—the rest will follow on that.

The first move in this case is the provision of a “decant” block. “Decant” is a cant phrase for the process of getting the slum-dweller out of his old dwelling into his new. The old wine into the new bottle.

Decanting involves the breaking up of the scheme of new buildings into blocks, which are proceeded with as it becomes possible to pull down and clear away in successive portions the old buildings over the whole of the clearance area.

To get a start it is necessary to provide a “decant” block giving accommodation to the families living in the buildings which are first to be demolished. The trouble is to find the land for the decant block, and this difficulty has held up many a scheme, or if not entirely held it up, delayed its operation.

This has arisen from two causes. The reluctance of the authorities to acquire land for this particular purpose and so be involved in claims for compensation and the opportunity it gives to those members of local authorities who have no sympathy for Housing to place obstacles in the way.

The difficulty is not insuperable, indeed it is often exaggerated. There are few districts in which there are not



derelict or redundant industrial premises the sites of which would serve for the purpose.

A vigorous and determined search will reveal these and other available sites, and this has been demonstrated recently in Liverpool where, under the direction of my friend, Sir Thomas White, to whom Liverpool owes so much of her great housing achievements, sufficient accommodation was found to enable perhaps the largest improvement scheme to be initiated since that carried out by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham.

Where there is a will there is a way. Mr. A. C. Bossom has drawn attention to a result that would follow the electrifying of the railways that enter London. Clear of soot and smoke, he suggests they could be boxed in and the area occupied by them built over. He estimates that this would give London 350 acres of land available for building. It is ingenuity of this kind that requires to be applied to that part of the problem which involves a search for sites, and I have little doubt of the result.

The same adaptability in building also requires to be shown as is shown in the erection of new business premises in the main streets of towns. There business is carried on during rebuilding, and the new premises are erected before the old ones are wholly demolished.

There are many cases where by a little ingenuity in planning and execution the new buildings can at least in part be erected before demolishing the old.

It only wants the determination to get on ; there is plenty of skill and ability both to conceive ideas and to carry them out if the policy is determined on and the provision made.

There still remains however the reluctance of the slum dweller to move at all.

It is a natural reluctance ; a human reluctance.

A notable instance during the last few years arose in connexion with a proposal for an improvement scheme in the Limehouse area of Stepney.

The following extract from a leading daily paper of that period shows the feeling we are considering and how



formidable such a feeling may be to the progress of a scheme.

“ ‘If you offered me a palace and it hadn't a back-yard I would not change it for the house I've made my home these last thirty years.’

“During the three hours I spent roaming round about the 9½ acres of properties under the Council's ban, I heard the same sentiments over and over again in different words.

“ ‘It makes me nearly cry when I go to the office where I work in the city and hear the things what they are saying about our houses being insanitary and unhealthy. Why, everyone says there is no air so good as here.’

“Again I encountered forms of protest other than the domestic side. There, at the back of some houses is carried on the remnants of the fish-curing industry established 150 years ago.

“Over a hundred families are engaged in this pursuit, one that their fathers and their grandfathers carried on before them.

“ ‘What can I follow if this trade goes out?’ a woman of 62 asked me. Another told me she kept five children and an invalid husband—‘ill through an accident, not through living here,’ she was quick to add.

“Lower down I came across the tail-end of a meeting. Some 120 men were waxing indignant at a circular sent out during the week by a firm of local house agents, proposing to send a representative to the area to offer expert advice during the morning on the subject of whitewashing, removing bed bugs, renovating broken glass and cleaning windows in order to impress the Ministry of Health's representative when he begins his inspection.

“ ‘That's what we get when our wives spend their days on their knees scrubbing the floors,’ remarked one. ‘We don't want any interference by foreigners,’ I heard another say.

“That word ‘foreigner’ gave me the whole secret of the situation. Tucked away behind boundary lines of railways and a canal, it is nothing more or less than a village community lost in a city. Everyone knows everyone who lives there, and anyone who comes from over the borders is regarded as a foreigner.”

When all allowances are made, however, for the views so voiced in these paragraphs, they cannot be allowed to stand in the way. When a scheme has been decided on it must go through, and vested interests no matter in whom they are vested must not be allowed to stop it or delay it.

Force, they say, is no remedy: happily it is not the only



recourse here. The methods of Miss Octavia Hill come to our aid. There is no reason why these methods—now mainly employed after the slum-dweller has become a tenant—should not be employed before, and their suasion prove potent in overcoming the very real difficulty we have been discussing.

These methods as related to the management of working-class property we pass to in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XI

### MANAGEMENT

IF we have carried out our programme, we have now got decent houses for people to live in. Are we going to get decent people to live in them?

Clearing our minds of all cant, we have got to admit that many of the people our programme is intended to provide for need some training before they will live decently in our decent houses. How are we going to help them?

A growing recognition of the duty to help them is one of the happiest features of housing activity. Quite reverently it might be said of this matter that Octavia Hill could now see of the travail of her soul and be satisfied. The little seed she planted is becoming a great tree. Housing authorities on the one hand, and the private owners of large numbers of working-class houses, are beginning to see that house management is as important as house manufacture. The results are seen to be not only ethical but economical.

The general question cannot perhaps be better brought before the reader than by giving extracts from a paper published by the Association of Women House Property Managers, 3, Bedford Square, London; and written by A. Churton, the Secretary, on the management of working-class house property.

“The importance of management in connexion with working-class house property can hardly be exaggerated. Both for old and new houses efficient management is equally essential. Neglect of efficient management, combined with the lack of proper planning and allowing houses to be huddled together into courts and back yards has brought about the inheritance of slums with which we have to deal to-day. Besides the con-



ditions familiar to us as 'slums' there is the ordinary deterioration of house property with which the local sanitary authorities have to deal by means of notices to owners, not always received in a friendly spirit, and carried out, if at all, often grudgingly. What a different atmosphere can be produced by putting the houses under efficient management, those who have had intimate and first-hand experience of both conditions know well.

"The question of efficiency enters into every branch and detail of the work of management, of which the following gives a brief outline:

"1. *Collection of Rents.*—To do this efficiently the manager must call regularly on every tenant, prompt and regular payment being accepted on both sides as one of the conditions of tenancy. If this condition is generally observed the vicious system by which the thrifty are made to pay for the thriftless is abolished. This weekly or fortnightly visit is important, not only on account of the rents, but as giving an opportunity of getting a personal knowledge of the tenants, hearing any complaints they may have to make and dealing with them on the spot. Their complaints may relate to some condition in the house which needs attention, or difficulties may have arisen with their neighbours or may be due to some industrial trouble or to illness. The efficient manager must be prepared to deal with all these and that with promptitude, for the rent collection must be got through within definite hours and only a fraction of time can be allotted to each visit.

"2. *Repairs.*—Constant attention to repairs is an essential part of good management. The frequent and regular visits for the rent give an opportunity for noticing the necessity for external and internal repairs and getting them done without delay, thus keeping the houses up to the mark. We see the effect of the neglect of small repairs in the gradual deterioration of much house property, and as the houses have been allowed to go downhill, the occupants are apt to go down with them. Whereas where there is prompt payment of rent on the one hand and prompt attention to the necessary repairs on the other, there is also the right kind of give and take between landlord and tenant.

"3. *Payment of Rates and Taxes, and Attendance at Assessment Committees.*—This is all part of the work of an efficient manager. The management on some estates hold very strongly that rent and rates should be paid by the tenant as separate items and have carried out this system, the rates being collected weekly with the rents and entered in a separate column in the rent-books. It is obvious that this arrangement increased the work of accounts and bookkeeping, but it is more satisfactory for the tenant and from the point of view of citizenship. The



tenant knows how much he is paying in rates, takes an interest in what they represent and in their rise or fall.

"4. *Selection of New Tenants.*—Although at present, owing to the provisions of the Rent Restrictions Act, the manager has little to do under this head, under normal conditions it is a part of the work in which the efficiency of the management is especially tested. A visit to the home of the prospective tenant is very important, together with accurate knowledge as to the number and ages of the family with a view to the prevention of overcrowding. References given must be taken up. In these interviews judgment and experience are very necessary, for without going to the extreme practice of Holland, where special blocks are set apart for the undesirable, care should be taken that the incoming tenants are likely to make good neighbours to the occupants of the adjoining tenements.

"5. *Prevention of Overcrowding.*—The prevention of overcrowding, touched upon in connexion with incoming tenants, is in normal times a constant part of the efficient manager's work. Under present conditions, until more houses are forthcoming, it cannot be satisfactorily dealt with. As an example, on an estate recently placed under good management, a case was found of a family of six, with the mother suffering from cancer, living in one room. The congestion on this estate was so great that it was ten months before a move could be arranged which would give the family two rooms, one of considerable size.

"6. *Keeping Accounts and Sending in a Quarterly or Half-yearly Account to the Owner.*—It is obvious that this part of the work must be done with accuracy and clearness, and that in these days especially it calls for good business qualities.

"To sum up this brief outline, efficient management implies general supervision of the property with a view to the best interests both of owner and tenant, by persons possessing both those traits of character which will render them naturally fitted for such work and the special training essential to prepare them for it.

"The Report of the Unhealthy Areas Committee (1921) of which Mr. Neville Chamberlain was the Chairman, recommends 'That pending reconstruction local authorities should be encouraged to purchase areas declared by resolution to be unhealthy, and to improve the housing conditions therein by alteration and repair in accordance with a scheme approved by the Ministry of Health, collecting rents and managing the property on the Octavia Hill system.'"

These extracts need no gloss. They present in a simple, sane way, at once the problem and its solution.

Let us hope that, with the development of this side of



the Housing problem we shall hear the last of the "Pig and Sty" controversy and settle in the happiest form the relationship between landlord and tenant.

But where is the money to come from to do all this? Let us see.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE RESOURCES

Who pays the piper calls the tune. And under Section 1 of the Housing Act, 1930, the local authorities are prohibited from calling the tune unless they are sure they can pay the piper. In sober language, an authority may not pass a resolution declaring an area of unfit homes a clearance area unless they are satisfied that their resources are sufficient for the purpose of carrying the resolution into effect.

How conscientiously many local authorities will obey this prohibition—how little like Mr. Micawber they will be in their view of their resources. But of course, very proper.

What resources will be required?

In the financial Memorandum to the Bill, Paragraph 8, a calculation is made on the basis of the displacement of 100,000 persons, 20,000 of whom are re-housed in tenement buildings provided on the cleared site of unhealthy areas, and a cost of £250,000 a year is estimated, increasing by the same amount each year while the rate of displacement continues.

In view of the fact, put before Mr. Baldwin on his reception of the deputation from the London Council of Social Service in November, 1927, that in the fifty-two years from the passing of the Cross Act to the then time the average number of persons displaced in London did not amount to more than 1,300 a year, the estimate of 100,000 persons per annum would appear to be a little optimistic.

That such a rate of progress, however unlikely, would be justified by the needs cannot be doubted.

The measure of the problem is very difficult to get. In the 1921 Census the questions were: How many structurally separate dwellings in the country are unfit? How



many not reasonably fit for human habitation? These are two very difficult questions to answer. Each local authority is supposed to have a record for all the houses in its area, but the facts do not coincide with the supposition.

The Ministry of Health publishes an annual report of the returns made to it, but these are not complete, and presumably there is no power to make them so.

Such a state of things is very annoying to a statistician, but very understandable. The maxim "let sleeping dogs lie" is nowhere so well observed as in local administration.

A vigorous housing policy involves some addition to the rates, and the possible addition looms much more largely than it would really prove to be.

Some day it may seem worth while to spend money on housing, but till then the survey of housing deficiencies goes on a limping leg. In the absence of an authoritative and official survey all that can be done is to make a rough estimate and apply a rough check.

One may start with the theory that Housing should be based on a programme of renewals—as a railway estimate is framed. The Railway Companies estimate the life of a locomotive at  $33\frac{1}{2}$  years, of a railway carriage at from 30 to 40 years, of a goods wagon at from 30 to 40 years. On this they frame their estimates and year by year build up a fund to replace their rolling stock. Every year 3 per cent. of their locomotives are replaced, and similar ratios of their carriages and wagons.

Some of these days housing will be so dealt with and we shall get a steady building programme that will solve the difficulties in respect of both labour and materials. Let us see what it would mean in the way of replacement.

What shall be estimated as the life of a house? Let it be taken at 100 years. This is a larger life than any prudent adviser in municipal finance would take for a sinking fund provision, but it will at least keep our estimate moderate.

Let us look at the census figures of house building over the last 100 years. In 1821 there were 2,088,156 houses which had increased in 1831 to 2,481,544, an increase of



290,632, which must on the theory be replaced in the decade 1921-31. Without unduly exaggerating our figures these might be taken at say 30,000 a year. This figure does not take into account the replacing of any part of the 2,088,156 houses existing in 1821. It assumes that they may have been demolished during the last century. It is possible to believe that this has been done. There are no figures of any exactitude as to the number of houses demolished by business and other enterprises, but such figures as are available tend to show that some of the houses in existence in 1821 must still remain. The figures for the five cities given hereafter, applied to the whole country, would show demolition during the decade 1901-11 to the amount of 22,590 per annum, a number which, if maintained throughout the century 1921-2021 would be sufficient. It is doubtful, however, if this has been achieved.

The number of houses requiring replacement will increase year by year, so that in the year 2021 we should on the theory be replacing 70,000 to 80,000 per year. The figure of 30,000 is roughly 4 per cent. of the number of existing houses, and this figure receives support from several quarters. In 1911, a very full survey of London revealed 1,944 insanitary areas, in which 26,000 houses were ready for closing. This was rather more than 4 per cent. of the existing number of houses. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne rather under 3 per cent. were scheduled as requiring replacement. In the five cities of Manchester, Bradford, Newcastle, Leeds and Sheffield already referred to, in the decade 1901-11 a little more than 4 per cent. of the houses existing in 1901 were demolished. On the other hand, the figure given in the Housing Survey of 1919 of houses required to replace houses which fell definitely below a reasonable standard was only 104,442, or about 1½ per cent. of the total number of existing houses. This figure may have been influenced by the objection felt against any proposal to demolish existing houses until the shortage had been made up. This view is strengthened by the figures showing action taken under the Housing Acts in the years 1920-4, as compared with that taken immediately before the war.



No figures are available prior to 1883, but everything points to the early years of the century having been barren of effort in the direction of housing replacement. During the six years 1883 to 1888 only 1,227 demolition orders were carried out, and during the years 1898 to 1924 inclusive, closing orders not determined only amounted to 42,747.

The marked use of the years 1910-13 both in the number of authorities taking action and the number of closing orders made was probably due to the new powers given under the 1909 Act, and the falling off in the year 1920-4 to the conditions of "shortage" obtaining after the War.

While there has been a considerable reduction in the number of cases pressed to the point of closing or demolition, there has been a very large number of cases of action taken under the Public Health and Housing Acts on the point of repair.

The fact that somewhere about 1,200,000 or 15 per cent. of the houses in existence attract the attention of the Sanitary Inspector, and that some 500,000 or 40 per cent. of those inspected are the subject of notices, indicates that if the standard of fitness were pressed, the figure of 30,000 per year due for replacement would soon be reached and passed.

If these be calculated at the rate of 4.5 persons per house we get 135,000 persons per annum in place of the official calculation of 100,000, or a yearly increase of £337,500 per annum, in place of £250,000. Frankly I do not see even the lower figure being reached for years to come if administration is left in the hands of local authorities unless a more defined obligation is put upon them than is contained even in Section 25 of The Housing Act, 1930.

However that may be, it is clear that the removal of the slum at any rate of progress will be an expensive operation and it must in my opinion ultimately involve a much larger contribution by the State than is provided for in the 1930 Act.

There is general agreement that the housing problem is now mainly that of providing for the lower-paid members of the working classes.



Each Housing Act drives its shaft down to a lower strata of the population.

Despite all its excellence there is no reason to believe that the Housing Act of 1930 will reach the lowest seam.

In the exercise of its discriminative powers lie the potentialities of much discontent, to say nothing of the opportunities it will give of favouritism and even corruption.

It sets up an artificial inequality that cannot long be maintained—minima become maxima—the rent fixed for a few will become the standard for the many.

Wise Chancellors of the Exchequer will turn their attention to new sources of revenue and I make them this suggestion.

The additional revenue required should be derived from a tax on site value. Nothing could be more appropriate than the ear-marking of such revenue for housing. It is a revenue derived entirely from the pressure of population and should properly be appropriated to the need that arises from such a pressure, and of these none is more crying than that for proper housing.

We have ample precedent for the proposal in the application of the revenue derived from motor vehicles to the provision of the roads.

Much of the growth of slums has been due to the cost of land, and it would be poetic justice to cure the bite with a hair of the dog that bit.

A new Valuation Bill has been introduced without any intimation as to the purpose of the valuation.

At the same time proposals are made for the expenditure of vast sums on roads, railways, docks, harbours and other similar undertakings.

If the country is regarded as one estate, it is evident that this expenditure is increasing the effective Capital Value of the estate and will reflect itself in an increased Annual Value.

The two things should be linked up and the Bill amended so as to declare the object for which it is to be used, and that object should be to find the necessary funds to provide adequate housing for the nation.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE AUTHORITY

SOMEWHERE it is said that the day will come when no man will say, "Know ye the Lord," because all men will know the Lord; and it may be that some day Society will not need the pressure of authority upon authority, and authority upon individual to secure that the elementary laws of health are obeyed.

At present, however, it seems necessary to frame our system of Local Government on the inverse method to that described in the verse which says:

"Big fleas have little fleas,  
Upon their backs to bite 'em,  
And little fleas have lesser fleas  
So on *ad infinitum*."

In English Local Government it is the big fleas that bite the little fleas and the biggest flea of all is the Ministry of Health in Whitehall.

"'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis true."

There are some who believe that the wisdom of the world is to be found in nursery rhymes and fairy tales passed on from one generation of children to another; that these preserve an esoteric doctrine upon which in the long run all depends.

Without committing myself to the fascinating theory I cannot help noticing with what fidelity the method of the old woman whose difficulty with her pig was a matter of such concern to us in childhood, is followed in the framing of our permissive legislation. After all, "County Council beat District Council, Ministry beat County Council," is a difference of degree, not of kind from the "Dog, dog, bite



pig. Stick, stick, beat dog," of our childhood, the main difference being that the application of the method in Local Government Administration is not always attended with the same success as in the nursery rhyme.

We saw in the course of the Story of the Slum, the supersession of one authority by another : the Commissioners of Sewers giving way to the Board of Works, and that in its turn giving way to the London County Council. We noted the pessimistic view entertained by Miss Constance Cochrane of the Parish Council and even of the County Councils, and the desire for a central authority expressed by Alderman Thompson. The Act of 1930 has given rural housing over to the "constant regard" of the County Councils and has strengthened the powers of the Minister in case of default, and in the requisition of programmes.

All to the good and all progress no doubt, but still insufficient. We shall not get where we want to be until we have a body in England as directly charged with the provision of adequate housing as the Electricity Commissioners are charged with the provision of adequate electric current.

In the development of an administrative machinery, housing must be disentangled from the Ministry of Health, as Mining and Railways have been from the Board of Trade.

The question is too much linked up with local and vested interests to be left in the hands of the local authorities.

They might perhaps be left to administer Part III and deal with the provision of new houses, but this business of dealing with built-up areas requires to be in the hands of men unconnected with and uninfluenced by any local interest.

Housing Commissioners with a definite obligation and a sufficient standard, backed up by earmarked resources, would, with some extension of the powers already enacted, give us well within a generation the solution of the slum problem.



## JOURNEY'S END

WE have come to the end of our journey.

I do not apologise for the long road we have travelled. I am doing service when I show how old a trouble this is, and how great a task. I am doing better service when I show that we have made much advance, and have little further to go.

There are two theories of human origin ; one that begins with Eden and another with the primeval slime. The one expresses its belief :

“ That what began best can't end worse  
Though a wide compass round be fetched.”

The other more shortly says :

“ The best is yet to be.”

Both are true and despite our worst slums there *has been* general progress in the housing of the working classes.

The kraal of the Zulu, the teepee of the Indian, the hut of the Australian aborigine, the igloo of the Esquimaux, all exist to show us to what conditions of shelter humanity can adapt itself ; after two generations of Public Health Acts some of us are apt to forget that the larger part of the world still lives without benefits of bye-laws.

The fo'c'sle, the canal boat, the gypsies' caravan, to say nothing of the shacks that litter the Surrey Downs, are still with us to show what dwellings may be.

It is true that they have such sweet things as the sun and the rain, and the wind on the heath to set off against their confinement, but they may remind us of the variety of dwelling in which men may exist.

We are moving to an ideal of light and air and sunshine



which is as compelling as the magnetic pole, but there is a wide range through which the needle can swing.

There is an indisposition to-day to travel to any social goal unless it can be reached at once. The reformer who cannot promise that heaven is just around the corner will not lead a great crowd. Would Moses ever have got a move on if the Israelites had foreseen those forty years in the wilderness? I wonder.

Dash and daring are attractive qualities: plod and persistence not quite so much in the movie spirit, and it is perhaps a little disheartening to have to admit that slums have taken some making and will take much removing, but so it is.

Where men and women permanently congregate sanitary questions always arise which unsolved raise the problem of slums.

The people who concern themselves about slums belong as a rule to one or other of two schools. One sees in a slum nothing but bad buildings; the other nothing but bad tenants. They are usually successful in turning any discussion on slums into a variant of the famous discussion on the priority of the hen or the egg, with equally profitable results.

For my part I am quite prepared to admit that if a slum were cleansed, scrubbed, whitewashed and painted, with such structural repairs as are required, and tenanted by cultured people with a passion for cleanliness, it might take on a picturesqueness that would lead to its retention rather than its clearance.

The truth is that imperfection as an environment is suitable only for perfection, a gaol is not a suitable dwelling for anyone but a saint. Only he who has equipped himself by a life of meditation should be made the tenant of a solitary cell, and only those whose love of beauty and cleanliness is as austere as that of the Samurai should be permitted to dwell in an area of which the narrowness, closeness and bad management is incontestable.

But such people do not live in slums; if they did they would not be slums, and we have to deal with things as



they are. That is not to say we are to obscure the facts by nonsense, to believe or pretend to believe that the transformation of the character is to be effected by the transportation of the body: that people who are filthy in one room would be clean in two.

The most that can be said, and it is sufficient for any Housing Reformer, is that they will have a better chance of being clean.

Meantime, there is a phase of this problem—the management of slum property—which does concern itself, and that vitally and fundamentally, with the transformation of character, and which might take as its motto Tennyson's words to the evolutionist:

“The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man.

And the man said: ‘Am I your debtor?’

And the Lord said: ‘Make it as clean as you can

And then I will let you a better.’”

Any legislation on the question to-day that faces the facts must recognise that there is a dual obligation, first the provision of a sanitary and adequately equipped dwelling, this rests upon the landlord; next its maintenance in a cleanly condition, this rests upon the tenant.

Both must be enforced, that of the tenant equally with that of the landlord, and no sentimental nonsense should be allowed to relieve the one or the other of the duty properly laid on either.

A distinction can be drawn and a distinction must be drawn between insanitary conditions produced by bad design, worse construction, insufficient repair, and that produced by the destructive and dirty habits of a tenant.

It is the easiest thing in the world to shriek at the landlord or abuse the tenant: what is wanted is a calm appraisal of what is to be properly expected from each, and an equally calm and unimpassioned demand for the fulfilment of these expectations.

This is not to say that the same standard of judgment is to be applied in both cases. Account must be taken of the opportunities open to each and the penalties for neglect fixed accordingly.



When courage can be found, on the one side to deal with the bad landlord, and on the other side to deal with the bad tenant, we shall cease to drift and shall get somewhere.

The bad landlord must, however, be admitted. There is a legend, not without a substantial stratum of truth, of the industrious, thrifty citizen who, denying himself and incidentally his family of most of the small pleasures of life, amasses an amount which he invests in small house property. This he carefully tends and manages, keeping in proper repair and sanitary condition, and maintaining cordial relationship with his tenants.

In many cases the picture is not overdrawn, but it is not the picture of an owner of slum property. Such ownership is not an investment, it is a speculation and draws to it a different type.

I venture to say that, if an investigation were made, it would be found that in every town the main part of slum property was in the ownership of a comparatively small number of owners who squeeze their rent from it as a lemon is squeezed of its juice, to the last drop. To use a phrase which has become a classic, they make even the pips squeak. The rents are at their maximum, the repairs are at their minimum and only such as the sanitary inspector demands. Such owners are the rag and bone merchants of housing, the chiffoniers of shelter. They are the pickers-over of the debris of tenements, and must not be expected to be too fastidious or dainty in their methods.

It is not to be supposed that anybody ever set out to create a slum, but if a slum is there and offers the chance of a 10 per cent. return on capital, why not take it?

After all, the poor must be housed, and those who provide for them must have their reward.

It would, perhaps, take a Browning to pen an apology for the slum-owner, but I have no doubt he could do it, and frame a portrait that might well hang in the same gallery with Bishop Blougram and Mr. Sludge.

It is not necessary to assume that those who do wickedly



are themselves wicked. To be wicked people must have at least some imagination, and wicked things are mostly done because people have none. Life is not yet clear of the primeval slime and a good deal still clings to it. That does not excuse us from the cleansing process—indeed makes it the more imperative—but the remembrance of it may perhaps relieve us of a little indignation.

There is nothing more delicious than denunciation, and perhaps the people who enjoyed themselves most were the Minor Prophets, but it does not get anyone very far.

To see life red is not to see it whole, and to be afire with indignation is not the best way to keep cool.

Not that I would underrate emotion; nothing is more potent, if the necessity is "to shatter it to bits," but when it comes to "rebuilding" something cooler is required.

The temperament of the scientist must supplement that of the socialist if we are to get beyond phrases.

Erasmus, I think, must succeed Luther and the Humanist replace the Protestant. A mild but inflexible spirit must be that of the housing reformer; he must know the cause if he would essay the cure; history must enlighten him; knowledge must direct him; faith and sympathy inspire him to pursue.

Apart from structural conditions the main cause of the slum, ancient and modern, is poverty.

Wealth will overcome even structural conditions. The country is full of instances where old property which in poor hands would be a very perfect example of an insanitary dwelling, is acquired, made structurally safe, and with the least possible alteration, and the simplest decorative repair, occupied by persons of means and taste.

Winding old staircases, uneven floors, ill-fitting doors and windows, which in Poplar or Whitechapel would make the hair of a zealous housing reformer stand on end, are not only endured but delighted in.

Walls and ceilings with bulging plaster, covered with nothing more than a distemper, are accepted as the sufficient surround for Persian rugs or modern carpets.

It is poverty without taste or knowledge that tells.



The slum problem is a double one: it raises at one and the same time a double query. To preserve or demolish—that is the question.

Whether it is better to patch and paint, or with a gang of house-breakers to end it all. To de-house perchance to re-house.

After demolition what difficulties may come? Consider them and how great they appear. It is no longer a question of building 500,000 houses to remedy a shortage, but of making a survey of 8,000,000 houses. It is not now a question of numbers but one of standard. A double standard, of repair and accommodation.

The task is something more than applying this double standard to this great mass. There is another question to be asked of hardly less importance. It is not "Are they in proper repair?" "Have they adequate accommodation?" but "Are they in the right place?" Are they obstructive to light and air, to transport and open spaces?

One does not need to be a Swedenborgian to appreciate the idea that the external world is an extension of man. The things he makes, including towns, certainly are, and like him they are passing through stages of evolutionary development. At first primitive organisations, they are now developing a complex organic system.

The bony skeleton of the roads have added to them the intestinal system of the sewers, and are covered with the flesh and blood of buildings. What are telephones and cables but the replica of a nervous system; gas and water mains but arteries, and open spaces but lungs, ill-developed perhaps, but vital to the town as their prototypes are to the citizens.

Too fanciful an analogy maybe, but true in this at least, that it conveys the platonic "idea," out of which the science and art of town planning materialises.

It is true to say that the plan of the town is the beginning of housing; most true of the phase of housing that is dealt with here.

The survey preliminary, either to preservation or



demolition, is an integral part of a Town Planning Scheme.

This is not only sound but sense. Nothing would be more absurd than to re-build houses where they would obstruct a necessary improvement, only less absurd to repair houses that are due for demolition.

It is one thing, however, to demonstrate the sound principles on which policy should be based and another to secure their acceptance.

What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve for—a proverb coined by one cynic and passed into circulation by others.

Whatever may be said of town planners of the past, they were adepts in civic veneer.

In few towns is there any difficulty in pursuing the pleasures and even the business of life without contact with its squalor. There is generally a pleasant way from the West End to the City. If curious people will dive into courts and alleys they are only finding what they look for.

The demonstration of our common human nature is more insistent every day; books, papers, cables, wireless make it more and more insurgent. The exclusive enjoyment of certain social advantages becomes increasingly impossible. Motor-cars would be impossible if there were no charabancs. It is only the gallery that allows the stalls to exist. This participation is not extorted, it is acquiesced in, not entirely wholeheartedly, perhaps, but with the conviction that it makes for social stability, and this conviction is extending to the view that housing conditions must make, in the same relative way, an acknowledgment of our common humanity.

Town planners, however, will have their critics. It has been wickedly suggested that Ahab was the first town planner, and that Naboth but met the deserts due to the obstructive opponent of an improvement scheme; while Caiaphas is pointed to as the first apologist for promoting public welfare at private expense.

In the transformation of an insanitary area into an



area covered with decent dwellings we have seen that there are several stages. You are first, acting on the advice of Mrs. Beeton, to catch your area. In more prosaic language, the approval of the Ministry of Health must be obtained for an improvement scheme. The first step is the representation made by the Medical Officer of Health.

Medical Officers are wisely put beyond the reach of their employers. No Medical Officer can be removed on the ground that he is too zealous. Zeal, however, is a virtue that receives little encouragement as a rule. For zeal is generally directed towards change, change is irksome to the gods of things as they are, and in the majority of cases these gods are enthroned.

An improvement scheme is rather all-embracing, it does not allow for the subtle discrimination that might otherwise measure the sanitary condition of a property by the status of its owner. To put it through, the Medical Officer needs to take his courage in both hands. He is assured of outcry and clamour, of wire-pulling and intrigue. He will have to face enquiry, to be confronted by Counsel, to have his statements challenged, his facts contradicted. Not every man is born for contention and some reluctance to loosen this avalanche of trouble may be expected.

That it should be done at all is a tribute to the courage and spirit of this body of public servants.

Immediately an area is represented, all the threatened interests are aroused. All the people who manage the property, collect the rents, order the repairs, see their occupation disappear when the dwellings on which they live vanish into thin air.

The inhabitants, moreover, they do not want to go. Surprising, is it not? All the delights of separate dwellings, of open spaces dangle in front of them in vain. They are there. "*J'y suis, J'y reste*," is the motto of them all. Is it surprising? We are extraordinarily conservative, all of us, with a profound capacity for rooting. Life becomes routine amazingly soon. The corner we sit in, the bed we sleep in. Where our clothes are. The shops we buy at. The place of our pleasure. In and out like a door



on its hinges. And it does not matter a pin what grade we are in. A ride in the Row or a stroll to the street corner, it is all one. A rut in the road of life in which, springs or no springs, the vehicle easily moves. So in court and alley as in villa and mansion, people are content, do not want to be disturbed, have got used to it, want to be left alone. If they are moved and opportunity is given they will squeal and if they squeal enough may get some notice from the Press.

So it goes, and Medical Officers representing insanitary areas may well be regarded as "asking for it."

If they are to speed up this work they must be supported and find that support outside the body that employs them.

I wonder how many Medical Officers have ever had the initial push of a complaint from four local government electors. This, however, they ought to have and would have if there was a real public opinion on this matter.

We must call in a new world to redress the balance of the old, and the *ad hoc* bodies which have disappeared or are disappearing must find their successors in organisations of private citizens intent on the carrying out of definite programmes of reform.

The never-ending somnolence of elected persons must be rudely broken by the clamour of public opinion, and for that public opinion must be provided with a voice. That voice should be the voice of those who speak with authority because they speak with knowledge. Nothing will be known of slums except by those who penetrate them, and to that penetration this need calls, as the mainspring of activity if the slum is to be no more.

The scheme having been approved, the local authority is put into possession of an order, and plans, setting out the classification of lands for compensation purposes, detailing what housing accommodation is to be provided, and how the cleared areas are to be treated.

With this preparation can be made for actual work on the site. Then the trouble begins.

The process picturesquely described as decanting has to be performed. The old wine has to be put into new bottles,



and the bottles must be provided before the process can begin. In other words, before you can pull old houses down new houses must be ready. This in effect means the work must be done a bit at a time. There may be, if the luck is in, a piece of clear land actually in the area on which some dwellings can be erected. If this is so it is a piece of good fortune, as the people who are being de-housed can be re-housed as near as may be to their original dwelling-place. It all requires considerable finessing. Legally the authority has power to take over the whole of the property within the area, but "wise and prudent" authorities do not so act. In the first place it would make an increased demand on their staff and lead to congestion in their departments. In the next place, haste would tend to increase compensation by not giving sufficient time fully to test claims. Even more objectionable is the fact that the authority would have on its hands a great deal of insanitary property occupied by many undesirable tenants over whom it would be difficult to exercise supervision and control. No authority likes to be the owner of insanitary property. It gives private owners the chance of making unpleasant and in some cases justifiable criticism.

From the point of view of the acquiring authority the ideal arrangement as regards economy is to acquire only so much of the necessary property as is required to provide the site on which the "decant" is to be built. The acquisition is timed so as to get the land cleared just at the moment the contract for the "decant" building has been made, and the builder is ready to proceed.

The next thing is to arrange the acquisition of the next block of property so that the contract for new dwellings on it will be signed and the site cleared as the "decant" block comes into hand. The tenants of the old buildings will then be transferred to the "decant"—if they will go—and that is not altogether a sure thing. Indeed it may be taken as certain that a proportion of the tenants will only be got out after cajoling, bluff and bribing have all been employed. Few housing reformers recognise how much human nature is to be reckoned with in these matters.



Public meetings, housing programmes, conferences and committees can all form a triumphant progress towards a Parliamentary measure, but in the long run it comes down to Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith going quietly out of their one room or more. Eviction has never been a pretty or popular sight in Ireland or elsewhere, and a housing authority uses the process no more than it can help.

"It may be housing, but ain't it slow?" It is pretty easy to saunter into a committee room and ask why things are not getting on, but it is not so easy for harassed officials to explain. The task wants persistence, good humour and above all "tack."

So the clearance goes on little by little, dwelling by dwelling. It is a bit of human underpinning. No "hustle" methods any good here. If there is one thing that slum clearance tells us it is to make haste slowly. All the moves are pawn's moves on this chess-board. There is seldom even more than a vacant square ahead. The only way to get a move on is to get a lot of moves on. None of them can go quickly, but all together they might go far. That is the only expedition possible. The only real hope of substantial progress being made in one generation is by the simultaneous movement of many schemes. We must move in line and not in file.

Here we come on another difficulty. When a property is included in an improvement scheme as a red property and the owner knows he is going to be paid only for the cleared site, it is human nature for him to stop all expenditure on the buildings that will yield him no return. It is equally human nature for a local authority to feel reluctance in enforcing demands for repairs on owners in such a position. So the last state of the wretched inhabitants is worse than the first.

There is then on the one hand a desire to delay the acquisition of the insanitary premises as long as possible, and on the other hand a reluctance to enforce a standard of repair for the time during which the properties remain unacquired.

It is a dilemma. If the authority acquires the property



before it is ready to pull down, it is burdened with supervision and repairs. If it leaves it to be taken progressively some owners in the area continue to draw rack rents, while refraining from the proper repair maintenance of the property.

The proper course is for the authority to face the music, take over the property, setting off the rents against the repairs.

If this course were adopted in a large number of areas :

It would increase the number of slum clearance schemes that could be carried out.

It would put the insanitary property within these areas into sanitary condition with less cost to the community.

It would remove the iniquity of receiving income from buildings for which no compensation is paid.

History shows a progressive movement from the cleansing of the vicinity to the improvement of the dwelling itself. The last stage is made possible by that provision of the 1919 Act, which requires separate conveniences for the use of each separate family to be provided for food, fuel and washing.

The task for the future in slum as in suburb is the provision of the separate dwelling for the separate family complete with sanitary and other convenience.

For this task we were equipped by the 1919 Act with new powers. Bye-laws may now be made :

“for requiring provision adequate for the use of and readily accessible to each family of :

- (1) closet accommodation ;
- (2) water supply and washing accommodation ;
- (3) accommodation for the storage, preparation and cooking of food :

and, where necessary, for securing separate accommodation as aforesaid for every part of such house which is occupied as a separate dwelling.”

This is the key to the door of the slum. Enforced in addition to other powers the slum will disappear.

A slum materially considered is nothing more and nothing



less than an aggregation of ill-planned dwellings from which these conveniences are absent.

The authorities may now provide them if the owners fail to do so. There is no question of power, the question is of will. The power to remove the slum is there, the will alone is wanting. Where there is a will there is a way; not a cheap way, not a rapid way, but a way. A way must be found and a way will be found. What that way is the 1919 Act indicated.

Shaftesbury has had many followers in the last few years and without staying their pace, the disciples of Torrens and Cross must now have their chance.

Up to the 1930 Act the beggarly sum of £200,000 a year only was available for the replacement of existing dwellings, and no effort can pretend to any sincerity which does not begin by greatly augmenting this.

We have been advancing on the slum position in file, we must advance in line.

There is a definite limit to the speed at which a single slum clearance scheme can progress, and as long as slum clearances proceed on the lines of completing one scheme before starting another so long will progress be inadequate.

In any event, however, the wholesale replacement of insanitary areas must be long delayed, and meantime insanitary dwellings continue and separate families lack separate dwellings.

With whatever reluctance, the fact must be faced that private owners will not make the alterations which the new powers demand when they know that the life of their property, however improved, is limited.

The present method of dealing piecemeal with insanitary areas is not only intolerably slow but is inequitable. Some slum owners are dispossessed without compensation, others are allowed to remain in full enjoyment of their unjustifiable incomes.

There is only one way, and that is for local authorities to put into force the bye-laws requiring the provision of separate conveniences for each separate family, and having done that to acquire such property as does not comply



with the requirement, at a price which takes into account the cost of bringing it up to this standard. Having acquired it they must comply with their own bye-laws, pending the clearance, if that should be necessary, of the entire area in which the property is situated.

This work can be done by each local authority within its own area. It means management and supervision. It involves those questions of labour and materials that lie behind all housing efforts, but it raises the question of land and transport only in a lesser degree. These latter questions can only be settled by a combination of local authorities dealing with a wide area.

Tremendous advances have been made since Chadwick and 1838. There is no reason why in 1931 we should not begin the "one fight more," the last and the best that will add to the clean street, the separate dwelling and make the English house the English home.

I do not think we have been seriously applying ourselves to this problem. Our movements have been spasmodic, they depended on the amount of sob-stuff that came across.

When we have decided that housing is as important as education, we shall do what they did in 1870—we shall make permissive legislation compulsory. In that year was enacted, in respect of education, the following provision :

There shall be provided for every school district a sufficient amount of accommodation in public elementary schools (as hereinafter defined) available for all the children resident in such district for whose elementary education efficient and suitable provision is not otherwise made, and where there is an insufficient amount of such accommodation, in this Act referred to as "public school accommodation," the deficiency shall be supplied in manner provided by this Act.

I want to see Sections 25 and 32 of the Housing Act, 1930, replaced by a section in some such words as follow :

There shall be provided for every housing district a sufficient amount of accommodation in separate dwellings (as hereinafter defined) available for all the families resident in such district for whose housing efficient and suitable provision is not otherwise made, and where there is an insufficient amount of such



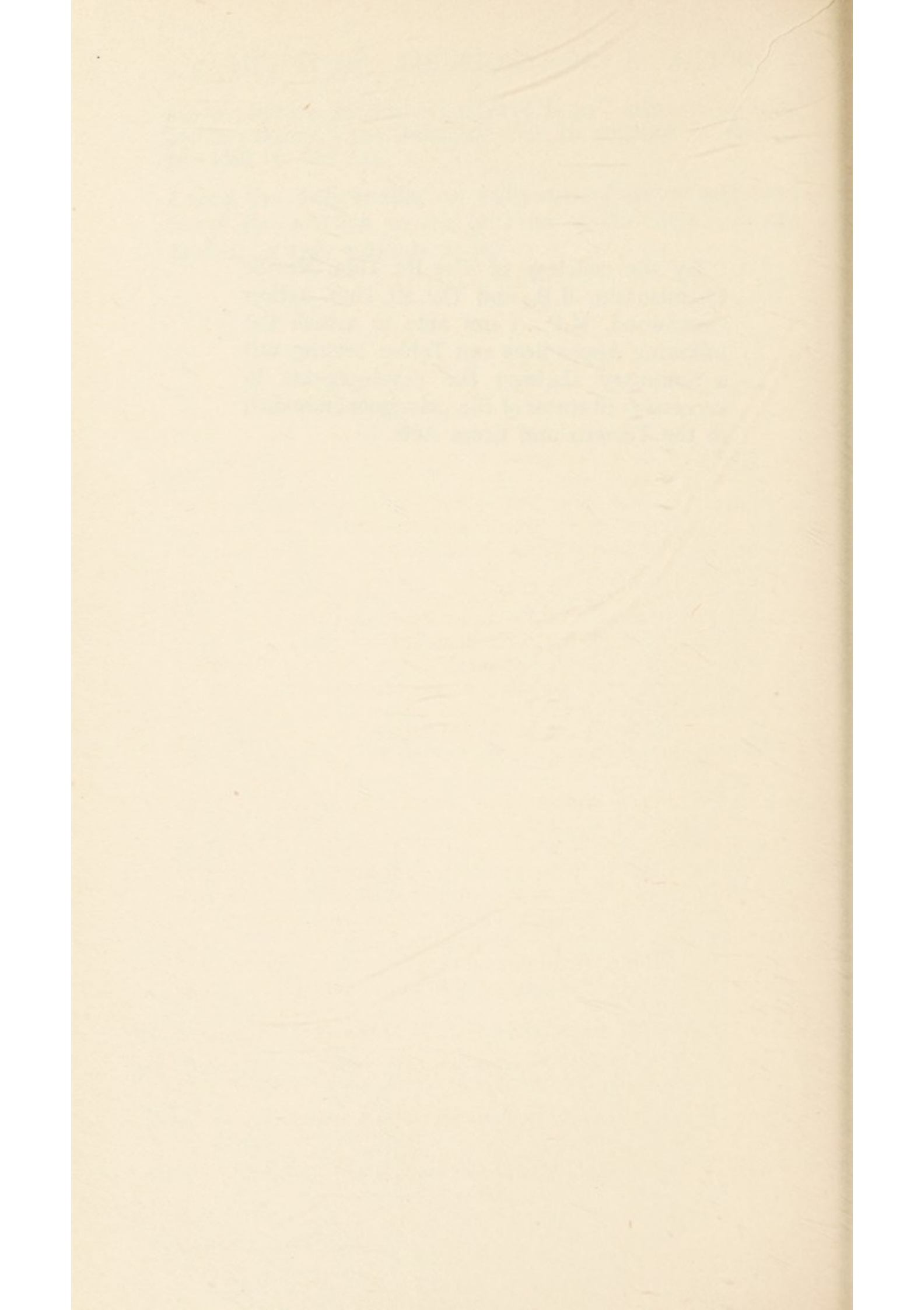
accommodation, in this Act referred to as "separate dwelling accommodation," the deficiency shall be supplied in manner provided by this Act.

I shall then believe that we really mean business and have found the solution to the problem of the Slum. *It can be done, it only needs to do it.*



By the courtesy of The Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., and The Rt. Hon. Arthur Greenwood, M.P., I am able to attach the following Appendices and Tables setting out a Summary showing the developments in successive Statutes of the principles embodied in the Torrens and Cross Acts.







## APPENDIX I

### THE TORRENS ACT

THE first public general statute dealing with houses in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation (so far as it was distinct from the sanitary law contained in the Public Health Acts, the Nuisances Removal Acts and the Metropolis Management Acts) was an Act passed in 1868 <sup>1</sup>—The Torrens Act.

Its operation was limited to individual houses, themselves in a condition dangerous to health, and was restricted to London and urban sanitary districts outside London with a population of 10,000 and upwards.

It gave powers to local authorities to make orders requiring such alterations or improvements as would make the houses fit, or, if necessary, requiring their demolition.

The appeal of an aggrieved owner lay to Quarter Sessions.

The limitation as to population was removed by an Act of 1879,<sup>2</sup> which also provided that an owner of premises which were the subject of such orders might require the local authority to purchase the premises. (This latter power was taken away in 1885.)

A drafting error in that Act was remedied by a short amending Act <sup>3</sup> passed in the following year.

The limitations of the above-mentioned Acts to houses which were, in themselves, in a condition dangerous to health was extended, by Part II of an Act of 1882,<sup>4</sup> to include "obstructive buildings" (i.e. buildings not in themselves unfit, but, by their proximity, rendering other buildings unfit). This Act also included a few other small amendments of previous provisions.

Some further modifications of procedure were made by an Act passed in 1885.<sup>5</sup>

The Acts of 1868, 1879, 1880, Part II of the Act of 1882 and

<sup>1</sup> Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act, 1868 (31 and 32 Vict. c. 130).

<sup>2</sup> Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act (1868) Amendment Act (1879) (42 and 43 Vict. c. 64).

<sup>3</sup> Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act (1868) Amendment Act, 1879 Amendment (43 Vict. c. 8).

<sup>4</sup> Artisans' Dwellings Act, 1882 (45 and 46 Vict. c. 54).

<sup>5</sup> Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885 (48 and 49 Vict. c. 72).



the Act of 1885, so far as it amended those Acts, were commonly called the Torrens Acts.

In 1890 the then existing housing legislation was consolidated and amended. Part II of an Act<sup>1</sup> of that year re-enacted, subject to many important modifications of procedure, the provisions of the Torrens Acts. It extended those provisions, as modified, to all rural sanitary districts, and expressly declared it to be the duty of every local authority to cause their district to be inspected periodically, in order to discover and deal with all unfit houses. (It was already their duty under the Public Health Acts to arrange periodical inspections to ascertain the existence of "nuisances.")

Procedure was not, however, to be by order of the local authority, as previously, but if after serving a notice on the owner or occupier, the premises were not rendered fit, by obtaining from justices in petty sessions a "closing order," to be followed, if the defects were not remedied, by an order of the local authority for the demolition of the house.

The owner retained the right of appeal to Quarter Sessions.

A few minor alterations in procedure were made by an Act passed in 1903,<sup>2</sup> one being the discontinuance of the necessity for serving a notice on the owner or occupier before obtaining a closing order, but, in the main, the provisions of 1890 continued in force until 1909.

In that year a further Act<sup>3</sup> was passed which extensively supplemented and amended, but did not entirely supersede the Act of 1890. It simplified and extended the powers of local authorities to deal with unfit or obstructive houses.

Among other provisions it did away with the necessity for a closing order to be made by a Court of Summary Jurisdiction, and substituted an order of the local authority.

In the case of small houses included in contracts for letting made after the passing of the Act, it further empowered local authorities, if such houses were not kept "in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation," but were not so unfit as to render a closing order, in their opinion necessary, to require repairs by notice on the owners.

It also provided for appeals from aggrieved owners to the Local Government Board instead of to the Courts.

An Act of 1919<sup>4</sup> extended the powers of local authorities in respect of houses not in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation, to apply to all such houses irrespective of the date of the contract for letting.

<sup>1</sup> Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 (53 and 54 Vict. c. 70).

<sup>2</sup> Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1903 (3 Edw. VII, c. 39).

<sup>3</sup> Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909 (9 Edw. VII, c. 44).

<sup>4</sup> Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1919 (9 and 10 Geo. 5, c. 35).



An Act of 1923 <sup>1</sup> modified the machinery for dealing with the houses referred to in the preceding paragraph.

The current consolidating Act <sup>2</sup> re-enacts the provisions of the Act of 1890 subject to the amendments of and additions to them made by the subsequent Acts already mentioned.

The Act of 1930 has further amended previous Acts.

<sup>1</sup> Housing, etc., Act, 1923 (13 and 14 Geo. 5, c. 24).

<sup>2</sup> Housing Act, 1925 (15 Geo. 5, c. 14).



## APPENDIX II

### THE CROSS ACTS

THE first attempt to deal by public general Statute with the problem of slum areas was made in 1875. Earlier Statutes, enumerated in the first section of this memorandum, had been designed to deal with unfit dwellings by means of proceedings against individual owners in respect of particular houses. The Act of 1875<sup>1</sup> was framed for the purpose of dealing with whole areas where a complete scheme for rearrangement and reconstruction of streets and houses in the area was necessary.

The powers to frame and take steps for carrying into execution schemes, under this Act, for the improvement of unhealthy areas, were confined to London and to urban sanitary districts containing populations of 25,000 or upwards.

(In 1885 these powers were extended to all urban sanitary districts. Under an Act of 1890<sup>2</sup> they were further extended, for small schemes only (i.e. "reconstruction schemes" under Part II of that Act) to all rural sanitary districts. This distinction still continues. Current legislation does not apply to rural districts so far as "Improvement Schemes" (i.e. schemes relating to large areas) are concerned, but does apply so far as "Reconstruction Schemes" (i.e. schemes relating to small areas are concerned).)

Before any such scheme made by a local authority became operative, it had to be submitted, in the case of a local authority acting for an area in London, to a Secretary of State (in practice the Home Secretary) and, in the case of a local authority acting for an area outside London, to the Local Government Board, by either of whom a Provisional Order was required to be made and confirmed by Parliament.

(The requirement that a London authority should submit their scheme to a Secretary of State continued until 1903, when power was given to assign, by Order in Council, to the Local Government Board the powers and duties in this respect pre-

<sup>1</sup> Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act, 1875 (38 and 39 Vict. c. 36).

<sup>2</sup> Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 (53 and 54 Vict. c. 70).



viously vested in a Secretary of State. All such powers and duties were so assigned by Order in Council dated 27th February, 1905.

The requirement as to the necessity for the confirmation by Parliament of a Provisional Order in these cases, remained in force, as regards the majority of such schemes, until 1909. By the Act of 1890, already referred to, however, a "reconstruction Scheme" became operative on the issue of an Order of the Local Government Board, without confirmation by Parliament, except so far as it provided for the taking of land otherwise than by agreement, and unless a petition was presented to the Board against the Order within two months of its publication, and was not subsequently withdrawn.

In 1903 this provision was extended to "improvement schemes" also.

In 1909 it was unconditionally provided, in effect, that an Order of the Local Government Board sanctioning either a "reconstruction" or an "improvement" scheme should take effect without confirmation by Parliament.)

When the scheme was confirmed, the local authority might either purchase the lands included in it, and sell or let them to persons willing to carry it out, or they might contract with the owners or with other persons to carry it out, but they might not themselves, without the express approval of the Local Government Board, undertake to rebuild the houses or carry into execution any part of the scheme, except as regards the demolition of buildings and the laying out and completion of the necessary new streets.

In any case in which the local authority themselves, acting under such approval, erected any dwellings for purposes of re-housing in connexion with a scheme, they were required to sell and dispose of them within ten years from date of completion. This requirement remained in force until 1909.

The Act of 1875 was the first of a series of Acts passed during the period 1875 to 1885, and commonly called Cross's Acts,<sup>1</sup> which all deal with this problem.

The last Act of this series, that of 1885, which gave effect to

<sup>1</sup> The other Acts, or parts of Acts, included in the series bearing that name were :

Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement (Scotland) Act, 1875 (38 and 39 Vict. c. 49).

Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act, 1879 (42 and 43 Vict. c. 63).

Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement (Scotland) Act, 1880 (43 Vict. c. 2).

Part I of the Artisans' Dwellings Act, 1882 (45 and 46 Vict. c. 54).

Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885 (48 and 49 Vict. c. 72) so far as it amends the previous Acts in the series.



several of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes which was appointed in the preceding year, laid it down in express terms (without much immediate practical effect however) that it shall be the duty of every local authority to put in force the powers with which they are entrusted in this and other matters.

London authorities and a few of the more progressive local authorities outside London took action under these Acts, but from a variety of causes the number was very limited. One hindrance lay in the complication of procedure, partly caused by the number of the Acts, and the cumulative mass of amendments which they introduced in the practice as originally laid down.

Similar conditions existed as regards other housing legislating which was then current, and a consolidating Act was accordingly framed and passed in 1890,<sup>1</sup> Part I of which consolidated, with amendments (but not numerous amendments), the combined provision of Cross's Acts, and Part II of which, in amending and consolidating the provisions of the Torrens Acts referred to in the first section of this memorandum, introduced a somewhat simplified machinery for dealing with the smaller improvement schemes which were thus differentiated, under the name of "reconstruction schemes," from the larger ones dealt with in Part I.

This Act remained in force (with the amendments contained in Acts passed during the period 1894 to 1903)<sup>2</sup> until 1909, in which year a further Act<sup>3</sup> was passed with the object of simplifying and extending the statutory powers previously in force, as regards England and Scotland, and proceeded, so far as Parts I and II of the Act of 1890 were concerned, chiefly by way of amendments of the provisions of those Parts.

Further considerable amendments, and some important additional clauses relating to the schemes in question, were contained in an Act passed in 1919.<sup>4</sup> In particular, this Act provided for the first time for a contribution out of moneys provided by Parliament towards any loss incurred by a local authority in carrying out such schemes.

An Act passed in 1923<sup>5</sup> modified the basis of such contribution, and in other respects amended the machinery for carrying

<sup>1</sup> Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 (53 and 54 Vict. c. 70).

<sup>2</sup> These Acts were:

Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1894 (57 and 58 Vict. c. 55).

Housing of the Working Classes, 1890, Amendment (Scotland) Act, 1896 (59 and 60 Vict. c. 31).

Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1903 (3 Edw. VII, c. 39).

<sup>3</sup> Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909 (9 Edw. VII, c. 44).

<sup>4</sup> Housing, Town Planning Act, 1919 (9 and 10 Geo. V, c. 35).

<sup>5</sup> Housing, etc., Act, 1923 (13 and 14 Geo. V, c. 24).



out such schemes. One considerable amendment which it effected was an assimilation of procedure as regards schemes under Parts I and II respectively of the Act of 1890, such procedure having previously been divergent in certain particulars.

The current Act<sup>1</sup> consolidated the unrepealed provision of Parts I and II of the Act of 1890, and the numerous additions to and amendments of these provisions which are contained in the later Acts already mentioned.

The Act of 1930 has considerably amended previous Acts.

<sup>1</sup> Housing Act, 1925 (15 Geo. V, c. 14 .



## APPENDIX III

THE list of schemes put into operation under the various Housing Acts, as set out in this Appendix, is mainly interesting as showing first, the limited number of areas which have vigorously operated the Acts, and second, the acceleration which followed upon the War.

### PROVISIONAL ORDERS RELATING TO IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES UNDER THE ACTS OF 1875 TO 1885 CONFIRMED BY PARLIAMENT

- 1876. Birmingham.  
Liverpool.  
Nottingham.  
Swansea.  
London, Whitechapel (Royal Mint Street, etc.) and Limehouse (Brown Bear Alley, etc.).
- 1877. Norwich.  
Walsall.  
Wolverhampton.  
City of London (Golden Lane, etc.).  
London, Whitechapel (Goulston Street, etc.).  
    " Southwark (Elizabeth Place, etc.).  
    " St. Martin-in-the-Fields (Bedfordbury).  
    " St. Giles-in-the-Fields (Great Wild Street).  
    " Clerkenwell (Pear Tree Court).  
    " St. Lukes (Whitecross Street).  
    " Islington (High Street).  
    " Westminster (Old Pye Street).
- 1878. Devonport.  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.  
London, St. Marylebone (Bowman's Buildings).  
    " Islington (Essex Road).
- 1879. Derby.  
London, St. Giles and St. Pancras (Little Coram Street).  
    " Poplar (Wells Street).  
    " Westminster (Great Peter Street).
- 1882. Nottingham.
- 1883. London, St. George-in-the-East (Tench Street).  
    " Limehouse (Brook Street).  
    " Lambeth (Windmill Row).  
    " Greenwich (Trafalgar Road).



- 1885. London, Deptford (Hughes Fields).
- ,, Newington (Tabard Street).
- 1887. London, Limehouse (Cable Street).
- ,, St. Giles (Shelton Street).
- 1890. Manchester.
- Brighton.

PROVISIONAL ORDERS RELATING TO PART I IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES  
UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CONFIRMED BY PARLIAMENT. (PERIOD  
1891 TO 1903)

- 1891. Salford.
- Brighton.
- London, Bethnal Green (Boundary Street).
- 1893. Plymouth.
- Stretford.
- 1894. Portsmouth.
- Sheffield.
- Sunderland.
- Wigan.
- 1895. Birmingham.
- Southampton.
- Leigh.
- 1896. Birkenhead.
- Leeds.
- 1897. London, St. Pancras (Churchway).
- ,, Strand (Clare Market).
- 1898. Devonport.
- Sheffield.
- 1899. Brighton.
- 1900. Bath.
- London, St. Luke (Garden Row).
- ,, Clerkenwell and Holborn (Aylesbury Place, etc.).
- ,, Poplar (Burfords Court, etc.).
- ,, Southwark (Webber Row, etc.).
- ,, St. Marylebone (Nightingale Street).
- 1901. Birkenhead.
- Leeds.
- Prescot.
- 1902. Birkenhead.
- Bradford (Yorks).
- Liverpool.
- London, Poplar (Providence Place).
- 1903. Bolton.

PART I IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CONFIRMED  
BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD. PERIOD 1904 TO 1915)

- 1906. Richmond (Surrey).
- 1907. Liverpool (Burlington Street, etc.).
- 1908. Liverpool (Saltney Street, etc.).



- 1911. Exeter.  
Portsmouth.  
London, Southwark and Bermondsey (Tabard Street).
- 1912. Barnes.  
Nottingham.
- 1913. Liverpool (Prince Edwin Street).
- 1914. Norwich.  
Wakefield.
- 1915. Hartlepool.

PART I IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CONFIRMED BY MINISTER OF HEALTH (OR IN 1919 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD). (PERIOD 1919-1925)

- 1919. Eccles (South-East Eccles).
- 1922. Sheffield.  
West Bromwich.  
Chesterfield.  
Portsmouth.  
London, Shoreditch (Ware Street).  
City of London (Hutchingson Street).
- 1923. Carlisle (Rigg Street, etc.).  
Carlisle (South George Street, etc.).  
Rotherham.  
Sheffield.  
Wakefield.  
Scarborough.  
Middlesbrough.  
Kingston-on-Hull.  
Manchester.  
Stoke-on-Trent.  
Wolverhampton.  
Lincoln.  
Brighton.  
London, Bermondsey (Hickman's Folley).  
" Stepney (Bell Lane, etc.).  
Hitchin.  
New Windsor.  
Aylesbury (Whitehall Street).  
Aylesbury (Upper Handreds).
- 1924. Hartlepool.  
Wallsend.  
Durham.  
Gateshead.  
Tynemouth.  
Sowerby Bridge.  
Keighley.  
Bradford.  
Barnsley.  
Doncaster.  
Liverpool.  
Burnley.



1924. Rochdale.  
Widnes.  
Lancaster.  
Liverpool.  
Wallasey.  
Nottingham.  
Mansfield.  
Bristol.  
Brighton.  
Hastings.  
London, Stepney (Prussom Street).  
„ Stepney and Poplar (Baker's Alley, etc.).  
Oxford.  
Ipswich.
1925. Newcastle-on-Tyne (Pilgrim Street).  
Newcastle-on-Tyne (Prudhoe Street).  
Newcastle-on-Tyne (Liverpool Street).  
Stockton-on-Tees.  
York.  
Chester.  
Oldham.  
Rawtenstall.  
Darwen.  
Worcester.  
Cheltenham.  
London, Islington (Georges Road, etc.).  
Banbury.  
Hitchin.  
Norwich.

IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1925 (WHICH RE-ENACTED CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF PART I OF THE ACT OF 1890), CONFIRMED BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH DURING THE PERIOD 1926 TO 1929 INCLUSIVE

1926. Halifax.  
London, Deptford and Greenwich (Watergate Street).  
London, St. Pancras (Ossulston Street).  
Welshpool.  
London, Stepney (Limehouse Fields).
1927. West Bromwich.  
St. Alban.  
Barking Town.  
Torquay.  
London, Lambeth, Camberwell and Southwark (China Walk, etc.).  
Norwich.  
London, Camberwell (Basing Place, etc.).  
Sunderland (Area No. 2).  
Sunderland (Area No. 3).  
Ramsgate.
1928. Salford.



1928. Wigan.  
 London, Chelsea (World's End Passage).  
 Leeds.  
 Knaresborough.  
 Wednesbury.  
 Preston.  
 Rochdale.  
 Exeter.  
 Liverpool.
1929. London, St. Marylebone (Carlisle Street).

PROVISIONAL ORDERS RELATING TO PART II RECONSTRUCTION  
 SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CONFIRMED BY PARLIAMENT.  
 (PERIOD 1891 TO 1909)

1895. London, Limehouse (Queen Catherine Court).  
 1906. St. Pancras (Chapel Grove, etc.).

PART II RECONSTRUCTION SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CON-  
 FIRMED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD. (PERIOD 1891 TO  
 1915)

1891. Manchester.  
 1892. Darwen.  
 London, Holborn (Brooks Market).  
 1893. Lancaster.  
 London, Southwark (Green Street).  
 " " (Gun Street).  
 1894. London, Deptford (Mill Lane).  
 " Poplar (Ann Street).  
 " Islington (Norfolk Square).  
 " Shoreditch (East Road, etc.).  
 1895. London, St. George-in-the-East (London Terrace).  
 1897. Leeds.  
 1898. London, Southwark (Falcon Court).  
 1899. Poole.  
 London, Limehouse (King John's Court).  
 1900. Tamworth.  
 Hereford.  
 London, Rotherhithe (Fulford Street, etc.).  
 1902. Eccles.  
 1904. London, St. Pancras (Prospect Terrace, etc.).  
 1908. Bolton.  
 Hereford.  
 1910. Poole.  
 1913. Alnwick.  
 London, Paddington (Cirencester Street).  
 1915. City of London (Cloth Fair).

PART II RECONSTRUCTION SCHEMES UNDER THE ACT OF 1890, CON-  
 FIRMED BY MINISTER OF HEALTH. (PERIOD 1919 TO 1925)

1921. London, Stepney (Dupont Street).  
 1922. London, Poplar (Lower North Street, etc.).



- 1922. London, Bethnal Green and Stepney (Brady Street).  
       "      Bethnal Green (Diss Street).  
       City of London (Queen's Court).  
       London, Hammersmith (Southern).  
       Wednesbury.
- 1923. Scarborough.  
       Dewsbury.
- 1924. London, Battersea (Plough Road).  
       Atherstone R.
- 1925. London, Bermondsey (Salisbury Street).  
       "      St. Pancras (Somers Town).  
       "      Poplar (Gale Street, etc.).  
       Bath.  
       Poole.

RECONSTRUCTION SCHEMES UNDER PART II OF THE ACT OF 1925  
 (WHICH RE-ENACTED CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF PART II OF THE  
 ACT OF 1890), CONFIRMED BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH DURING  
 THE PERIOD 1926 TO 1929 INCLUSIVE

- 1926. Rotherham Rural District.  
       Oldbury.  
       London, Finsbury (White Horse Alley).  
       Sheffield (Duke Street, etc.).  
       Sheffield (Matthew Street, etc.).
- 1927. Otley.  
       Bristol.  
       Sheffield (River Lane, etc.).
- 1928. Horsham.  
       Oldbury.  
       Sheffield (Lambert Street, etc.).  
       Brampton Rural District.
- 1929. Nil.



## APPENDIX IV

THE tables in this Appendix serve to give some picture of the extent to which attention has been directed to the Slum houses.

The necessary extent may be best realised by a comparison between Tables A and D.

Table B, in comparison between the years 1910-13 and the post-war years, gives a startling indication of the damping down of action owing to the scarcity of houses that existed in the last-named years.

Tables C and D invite some statistical reflections on the comparative constancy of the numbers inspected, the notices that ensued and the action taken ; these I will leave to others to make.

### TABLE A

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS RE UNFIT HOUSES UNDER ARTISANS'  
AND LABOURERS' DWELLINGS ACTS, 1868-82

*Urban Sanitary Districts with population not less than 100,000  
at last Census*

Year.				Reported Unfit by Medical Officer.	Repair or Demolition Orders.	Orders Carried Out.
1883	.	.	.	574	354	337
1884	.	.	.	520	302	304
1885	.	.	.	124	145	147
1886	.	.	.	242	240	242
1887	.	.	.	99	99	109
1888	.	.	.	102	87	88
Total	.	.	.	<u>1,661</u>	<u>1,227</u>	<u>1,227</u>



TABLE B

## SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS RE UNFIT HOUSES UNDER HOUSING ACTS

*Unfit Houses*

Year.	Local Authorities taking Action.	Representations Made.	Closing Orders.	Demolition Orders.	Made Fit without Closing Order.	Closed or Demolished without Order.	Closing Orders Determined.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1898	*334	3,631	514	214	1,935	292	—
1899	421	4,478	667	68	2,861	720	—
1900	430	5,715	610	115	3,807	489	—
1901	369	4,770	579	92	2,927	856	—
1902	420	4,427	636	81	2,301	791	—
1903	427	5,829	504	52	3,402	1,139	—
1904	389	5,343	781	126	3,069	1,057	—
1905	404	5,461	1,135	168	2,736	1,241	—
1906	404	4,938	734	223	2,759	990	—
1907	456	6,803	679	440	3,272	1,659	—
1908	458	6,312	587	196	3,731	1,510	—
1909	474	6,399	1,511	170	3,056	1,389	—
1910	850	19,208	4,870	495	7,042	1,419	732
1911	1,192	34,861	9,761	1,423	13,417	1,935	2,108
1912	1,268	44,070	10,853	2,266	18,194	2,317	2,952
1913	1,341	43,081	11,262	2,477	16,193	2,079	3,285
1920	Smaller	3,189	1,808	595	—	597	754
1921	Number	2,965	2,291	546	—	640	527
1922	Sending	3,155	2,331	558	—	734	640
1923	in	2,549	1,821	608	—	597	644
1924	Reports	2,677	1,913	497	—	543	458
1925	—	3,141	2,287	549	—	678	443
1926	—	4,215	3,009	752	—	621	486
1927	—	4,601	4,077	1,106	—	1,050	732
1928	—	5,042	4,433	1,115	—	1,186	753
	9,637	236,860	69,653	14,932	90,702	26,529	14,514

\* 1898-1900 figures exclude London.



TABLE C

## UNDER HOUSING ACTS

*Houses Not Reasonably Fit*

Year.	Notices Served.	Made Fit by Owner.	Made Fit by Local Authority.	Closed by Owners.
1	2	3	4	5
1910 . .	18,927	—	—	—
1911 . .	43,781	31,289	176	—
1912 . .	52,670	42,630	107	—
1913 . .	53,809	47,356	231	—
1920 . .	30,147	19,631	801	425
1921 . .	39,212	30,319	1,025	623
1922 . .	30,597	25,108	853	504
1923 . .	25,939	21,150	530	421
1924 . .	28,870	22,916	934	553
1925 . .	24,369	18,961	785	463
1926 . .	31,053	20,929	817	675
1927 . .	28,830	21,905	866	841
1928 . .	32,409	24,493	1,490	918
	<u>440,613</u>	<u>326,687</u>	<u>8,615</u>	<u>5,423</u>

TABLE D

## PROCEEDINGS IN RESPECT OF UNFIT OR DEFECTIVE HOUSES

*Revised 1920-28*

Year.	Inspected under Public Health and Housing Acts.	Inspected under Housing Regula- tions.	Made Fit without Formal Notice.	Notice Served under Public Health Act.	Made Fit by Owners.	Made Fit by Local Authority.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1920	1,084,859	306,727	180,699	254,749	218,873	7,931
1921	1,174,334	427,657	250,702	289,167	259,800	2,789
1922	1,115,364	409,111	268,571	268,548	246,787	1,515
1923	1,112,228	395,218	280,430	279,514	258,009	2,398
1924	1,138,389	410,327	272,509	272,534	239,331	1,512
1925	1,114,504	428,625	279,407	278,894	225,058	4,285
1926	1,164,875	427,226	302,739	296,012	255,636	3,488
1927	1,227,663	415,051	298,301	290,783	255,070	3,146
1928	1,165,551	397,229	302,373	260,495	222,503	2,770



## INDEX

- Acquisition of Land Act, 1919, 207, 320  
 Acquisition of Sites, *see* Sites  
 Administrative Authority, 358  
 Agricultural Labourer, "The Pig and the Sty," 65  
 Allbutt, Dr. Clifford, 304  
 Allotments, 77  
 Althorp, Lord, 35  
 Arnott, Dr., 39, 40, 52  
 Artisans Dwellings Act, *see* Cross Act  
 Artisans, Labourers and General Dwellings Company, 1867, 107, 129  
 Ashley Cooper, *see* Shaftesbury, Lord
- Back-to-Back Houses, 317 *et seq.*  
 Baldwin, Stanley, 259, 268, 353  
 Ball, Decimus Alfred, 181  
 Barnby, Dr., 318  
 Barnes, Major Harry, 265, 268, 271  
 Battersea Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 275  
 Becontree Estate, 291  
 Bermondsey Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 273  
 Bethnal Green Housing :  
   Enquiry, 1887, 216, 223 *et seq.*  
   Medical Officer's Report, 272  
 Bethnal Green Housing Association, 224  
 Birdbrook, Essex, 247  
 Birmingham Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 280  
*Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 160, 168, 177, 180
- Block Dwellings, 209  
 Booth, Charles, 7, 18  
   Life and Labour Enquiry, 1886-1900, 232  
 Boscawen, Sir A., 21  
 Bossom, A. C., 346  
 Bradford Demolitions, 1901-11, 355  
 Bristol Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 280  
 Broadhurst, Henry, 213  
 Building Materials, prices of, 267  
 Buildings, Private, 209 *et seq.*  
 Burns, John, 151, 251  
 Bye-laws under Housing Act, 1919, 371  
 Byles, Samuel, 43
- Camberwell Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 275  
 Cellar Dwellings, 87  
 Chadwick, Edwin, 12, 44, 46, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 98, 175, 185  
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 175, 197, 203, 205, 320, 346  
 Chamberlain, Neville, 259, 268  
 Cheap Trains Act, 1883, 293  
 Cholera Epidemic, 1849, 98  
 Churton, A., 349  
 Clearance Schemes, 344 *et seq.*, 370, 371  
 Clerkenwell :  
   Mansion House Council Enquiry, 216, 218  
   Vestry, 1885, 180 *et seq.*, 190  
   "Climbing Boys," 94  
 Coal Commission, 1921, 291



- Coal-whipping, 79  
 Cochrane, Constance, 240, 246, 359  
 Collings, Jesse, 175, 193  
 Common Lodging Houses, 85 *et seq.*  
 Common Lodging-Houses Act, 1851, 110, 113, 122, 133, 134, 136  
   Brothel Case, 1857, 119  
   Hay's Report, 112, 116  
 Common Lodging-Houses Act, 1853, 102, 103  
 Compensation :  
   Acquisition of Land Act, 207  
   Cross Act, 205 *et seq.*  
   Standing Orders, 253, 320 *et seq.*  
 Compton, Lord William, 180, 190  
 Compulsory Vaccination Act, 103  
 County Councils, Housing in Rural Districts, 247, 249, 359  
 Cross, Sir Richard Assheton, 45, 134, 157, 158, 160, 161, 175, 195, 203 *et seq.*  
 Cross Acts, 16, 17, 18, 20, 113, 134, 135, 139, 157, 174, 200, 201, 380 *et seq.*  
 "Decanting," 327, 343, 345 *et seq.*, 368  
 Default, action in cases of, 138  
 Defective Conditions, definition, 138  
 Defective Houses, Proceedings, Tables, 392  
 Definition of Slum, 7  
 Dehousing and Rehousing, 170, 257, 258, 344 *et seq.*  
 Demolition :  
   Compulsory Closing Orders, 245, 320  
   Powers, 139, 252  
   Report, 1919, 171  
 De Morgan, William, 151  
 Deptford Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 276  
 Dickens, Charles, 58  
 Dickinson, Lord, 264, 269, 270  
 Displacement, 105, 253, 254, 327  
 District Auditors, 37, 90, 91  
*English Gentleman's House*, 1865, 334  
 Estcourt, Thomas Southron, 120  
 Expenditure, Recovery of, 139  
 Factories and Mines, cleanliness in, 81, 83  
 Farthings Act, 1858, 293  
 Feudal System, birth of Slums, 1 *et seq.*  
 Financial Resources, 353 *et seq.*, 372  
 Fulham Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 276  
 Garden Cities, 323  
 Glasgow Corporation and Standing Orders, 257  
 Graham, Sir John, 49  
 Granville, Lord, 163  
 Greenwich Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 276  
 Ground Landlords, 180 *et seq.*, 192  
 Guinness Housing Trust, 1889, 127, 128  
 Hackney Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 271  
 Haggard, Rider, 240  
 Hampstead Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 278  
 Haweis, H. R., 151  
 Hay, Police Commissioner, 112, 178  
 Health, Ministry of, 1919, 32  
 Health of Towns, Royal Commission, 1844-5, 13, 57, 59 *et seq.*, 89



- Hicks-Beach, Sir Michael, 175  
 Higher Buildings, 323 *et seq.*  
 Hill, Miss Davenport, 148  
 Hill, Octavia, 45, 132, 142 *et seq.*, 175, 185, 188 *et seq.*, 196, 198, 199, 203, 349  
   Evidence before Royal Commission, 1885, 191 *et seq.*  
 Hopley, Thomas, 121  
 "House," definition in Standing Orders, 256  
 Housing :  
   Displacement, 105, 253, 254, 327  
   Legislation, origin and development, 133 *et seq.*  
   Main facts of, 133  
   National Conference, after the War, 129, 260  
   Powers, 137 *et seq.*  
   Private Enterprise, 129  
   Standing Orders Committee, 1912, 253 *et seq.*  
 Housing Acts :  
   Cross Acts, *see* that title.  
   London Enquiries, 1885-90, 216  
   Torrens Acts, *see* that title  
   1885, 109  
   1890, 19, 135, 204, 240  
   1919, 67, 135, 251, 320, 356, 371  
   1923, 1924, 260  
   1925, 260, 287, 312, 313, 316, 317, 320  
   1930, 22, 135, 242, 243, 285, 288, 311, 312, 313, 317, 321, 331, 353, 356, 372, 373  
 Housing Acts Amendment Bill, Report of Committee, 1906, 239, 249 *et seq.*  
 Housing Associations Conference, 1929, 129, 260 *et seq.*  
 Housing Commissioners recommended, 359  
 Housing Limited Liability Companies, 128  
 Housing Reform, History of, 1913, 21  
 Housing, Royal Commissions :  
   1844-5, *see* Health of Towns  
   1885, 48, 89, 109, 157, 160, 168, 172, 174, 180 *et seq.*, 204, 230, 264, 265, 320  
 Housing Societies, 128  
 Housing Trusts, 127, 128  
 Howard, John, 52, 53  
 Huddersfield, Lodging-Houses, 1875, 122  
 Hunt, Frank, 266  
 Improvement Schemes, 139, 159, 384 *et seq.*  
 Inspection, powers of, 138  
 Irish families, Housing, 113, 176  
 Irish Labourers Act, 1883, 242  
 Isle of Dogs, Slum Conditions, 1930, 307  
 Jennings, Herbert, 324  
 Kay, Dr., 39, 40, 41  
 Kensington Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 278  
 Kerr, Robert, 334, 335, 336, 342  
 Labourers Dwelling-houses Acts, 1866 and 1867, 135  
 Labourers Dwellings Improvements Acts, *see* Cross Acts  
 Labourers Friend Society, 1842, 95  
 Labouring Classes Lodging-houses Act, 1851, 14, 45, 110, 196, 197  
 Lambeth Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 278  
 Lampson, Sir Curtis, 212  
 Leeds :  
   Demolitions, 1901-II, 355  
   Slum conditions, 1868, 304  
 Levita, Colonel, 324  
 Lewis Housing Trust, 1906, 127, 128



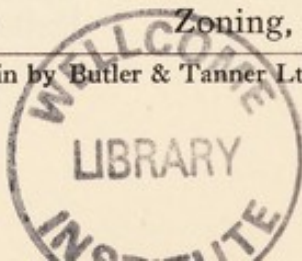
- Liddle, Dr. John, 166  
 Life of a House, 354  
 Limited Companies, Standing Orders, Model Clause, 255  
 Liverpool Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 281  
 Local Authorities, Duties and Powers, 287, 288, 311  
 Lodging Houses :  
     Common, *see* that title  
     Houses let in lodgings, 279  
     Model, 97, 99, 100, 101, 115  
 Lodging - houses (Labouring Classes) Act, 1851, 14, 45, 110, 196, 197  
 London Council of Social Service, 264, 353  
 London County Council :  
     Housing Committee Report, 1927, 260, 261  
     Origin and Work of, 169 *et seq.*  
 London Government, Royal Commission, 263  
 London Housing Enquiries, 1885-90, 216  
 London Housing Society, Ltd., 128  
 London, Sanitary Conditions Report, 1838, 39 *et seq.*  
 London School Board and Standing Orders, 256, 257  
 London, Rehousing in Unhealthy Areas, 324, 325  
 Lymington, Lord, 211, 212, 213, 214  
  
 Management, 349 *et seq.*  
 Manchester :  
     Demolitions, 1901-11, 355  
     Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 282  
 Manning, Cardinal, 175, 176, 177, 211  
 Mansion House Council, 1880, 217, 218, 225, 264  
 Marr, T. R., 19  
 Mears, Rev. Andrew, 177  
  
 Medical Officers, Duties and Powers, 288, 310, 311  
 Metropolis Management Act, 1855, 165  
 Metropolitan Association, 1847, 13  
 Metropolitan Board of Works, 159, 161, 165 *et seq.*  
 Mile End Old Town Housing Enquiry, 1886, 216, 220  
 Model Bills and Clauses, 254  
 Modern and Ancient Slums, distinction between, 5  
 Monck, Mr., on good housing conditions, 75  
 Morden Estate, 291  
 Morley, Samuel, 178, 179  
 Mulhouse, *Cité ouvrière*, 48  
 Murphy, Sir Shirley F., 167, 168, 171, 180, 201, 202, 215, 216, 227, 324  
  
 Nettlefold, J. S., 19, 240, 244  
 Newcastle-on-Tyne :  
     Replacements, 355  
     Slum Conditions, 1928, 282  
 Nichols, Daniel C., 215, 216, 220 *et seq.*  
 Nicholls, Sir George, 124  
 Northampton, Marquess of, 180  
 Nuisances Removal Act, 1855, 138, 165  
  
 Open Spaces, 151  
 Overcrowding, prevention, 351  
 Owen, Robert, 13  
  
 Paddington Housing, Medical Officer's Report, 278  
 Parliamentary Trains, 293  
 Peabody, George, 15, 45, 123 *et seq.*, 127, 210  
 Peabody Donation Fund, 1862, 127, 128  
 Peabody Trust, 159, 160, 192, 210  
 Plague and Pestilence, 30



- Poor Law Board, 32  
 Poor Law Inquiry Commission,  
   1832-34, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38  
 Poor-rates, district auditors, 37,  
   90, 91  
 Privies, separate provision, 67,  
   115  
 Provincial Enquiry, 1842, 49 *et*  
   *seq.*  
 Provisional Orders for Improve-  
   ment Schemes, 139, 159,  
   384 *et seq.*  
 Public Health Acts :  
   1845, 304  
   1848, 5, 58, 98, 119  
   1868, 304  
   1875 Consolidation Act, 11,  
     16, 136, 157  
 Public Utility Services, 209 *et*  
   *seq.*
- Railway Companies :  
   Cheap Trains Act, 1883, 293  
   Destruction of Houses, 101  
   Housing and Railway fares,  
     214 *et seq.*, 328  
   Model Dwellings Enterprise,  
     215  
   Rehousing, Standing Orders,  
     254, 255  
   Workmen's fares, 293  
 Railways Act, 1844, 293  
 Rates and Taxes, 350  
 Reconstruction, Ministry of,  
   Women's Housing Com-  
   mittee, 1919, 334, 336, 337  
   *et seq.*  
 Reconstruction Schemes, Pro-  
   visional Orders, 388, 389  
 Regional Planning, Cross Act, 18  
 Rehousing and Dehousing, 170,  
   257, 258, 344 *et seq.*  
 Rent Restriction Act, 22, 279,  
   309, 351  
 Rents, collection, 350  
 Repair and Renewal, 302 *et seq.*,  
   350
- Repairs, Compulsory, 250  
 Replacements, 354 *et seq.*  
 Revenue for Housing, 353 *et*  
   *seq.*, 372  
 Rickman, Edwin S., 178  
 Rosebery, Lord, 162  
 Rotherhithe Housing Enquiry,  
   1889, 217, 225 *et seq.*  
 Rowton House Company, 14  
 Rural Districts Housing, 288  
   *See* Cochrane, C.  
 Ruskin, John, 144, 150, 151  
 Russell, Lord John, 38, 49, 97
- St. James and Pall Mall Elec-  
   tric Lighting Bill, 1899, 256  
 St. Marylebone Housing, Medical  
   Officer's Report, 278  
 St. Pancras Housing, Medical  
   Officer's Report, 271  
 Salford, Housing Conditions,  
   1930, 308  
 Salisbury, Marquess of, 172, 192,  
   206  
 Sanitary Conditions, London,  
   Report, 1838, 39 *et seq.*  
 Selection of Tenants, 351  
 Sewers, London Improvement  
   Scheme, 158, 159, 161  
 Shaftesbury, Lord, 12, 14, 45,  
   57, 58, 93 *et seq.*, 120, 175,  
   341  
 Sheffield, Demolitions, 1901-11,  
   355  
 Sheffield, Lord, 175, 200, 212  
 Shipton, George, 212  
 Shoreditch :  
   Housing Enquiry, 1890, 217,  
     227  
   Slum Conditions, 1930, 306  
 Shuttleworth, Sir A. Kay, 157  
 Sims, G. R., 179  
 Single Rooms Occupation, 119  
 Sites, Acquisition, 139, 167, 267,  
   320 *et seq.*, 369  
   Housing Committee, 1906, 249  
   Peabody Trust, 159, 160



- Slum Clearances, 170, 171  
 Slum, definition of, 7  
 Small Dwellings Acquisition  
     Acts, 135  
 Smith, George, 175  
 Smith, P. Gordon, 318  
 Smith, Southwood, 12, 13, 41,  
     55 *et seq.*, 62, 63, 98  
 Southwark :  
     Housing, Medical Officer's  
         Report, 278  
     Slum Conditions, 1930, 305  
 Speenhamland Wages Scale, 32,  
     33  
 Standards, Housing, 333 *et seq.*  
 Stepney Housing, Medical Offi-  
     cer's Report, 272  
 Stoke Newington Housing, Medi-  
     cal Officer's Report, 279  
 Standing Orders :  
     Committee of 1912, 253 *et seq.*  
     Definition of "house" in, 256  
     Evasions, 255, 256  
     Statutes, Old, and Modern  
         Slums, 24 *et seq.*  
 Sutton Housing Trust, 1900,  
     127, 128  
  
 Tabard Street Scheme, 169  
 Thompson, Alderman W., 19,  
     240, 241  
 Thompson, D., 230  
 Tied Houses, 71 *et seq.*  
 Torrens, W. T. M., 45, 129, 130  
     *et seq.*, 134, 175, 195, 198 *et*  
     *seq.*  
 Torrens Act, 1868, 15, 113, 132,  
     134, 138, 141, 156, 165, 200,  
     201, 377 *et seq.*  
 Town Planning :  
     Byles, S., letter, 43  
     Powers, 295 *et seq.*  
 Town Planning Acts :  
     1875 Cross Act, 18  
     1909, 251  
     1925, 262  
 Toynbee, Joseph, 63, 69  
  
 Transport and Travel Charges,  
     290 *et seq.*  
  
 Underground Rooms, 277, 280  
 Unfit Houses, Proceedings in  
     respect of, Tables, 390, 391,  
     392  
 Unhealthy Areas Committee,  
     1921, 263, 295, 323, 324, 351  
 Unhealthy Houses, Report, 1919,  
     171  
 United States, Town Planning  
     and Zoning, 296, 298  
 Unwin, Raymond, 298  
  
 Vaccination Act, 103  
 Values, Transfer of, 299  
 Van Dwellers, 175  
 Vestries, 165, 180 *et seq.*, 190  
  
 Wages, Speenhamland Scale, 32,  
     33  
 Walsham, Bishop, 177  
 Water :  
     Deficient Supply, 69  
     Metropolis Water Act, 1853,  
         103  
 Waterlow, Sir Sydney, 192, 211,  
     212  
 Watling Estate, Hendon, 291  
 Welby, Lord, 199  
 Welwyn Garden City, 324  
 Westminster Housing, Medical  
     Officer's Report, 280  
 White, Sir Thomas, 346  
 Women House Property Mana-  
     gers' Association, 349  
 Women's Housing Sub-Commit-  
     tee Report, 334, 336, 337 *et*  
     *seq.*  
 Woolwich Housing, Medical Offi-  
     cer's Report, 279  
 Workhouses, Ireland, 199  
 Workmen's fares, *see* Railways  
  
 Zoning, 295 *et seq.*





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