

Speech ... in the House of Lords, on Friday, the 26th of July, 1844, on moving an address to the crown on the sanatory condition of the people / [Constantine Henry Phipps Normanby].

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PHIPPS, Constantine Henry 1st Marquis

S P E E C H

OF THE

MARQUESS OF NORMANBY

IN THE

HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON FRIDAY, THE 26TH OF JULY, 1844,

ON

MOVING AN ADDRESS TO THE CROWN ON THE
SANATORY CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

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S P E E C H

OF

THE MARQUESS OF NORMANBY.

I HAVE now to call your Lordships' attention to a subject, in my opinion, of unequalled importance. It is true that I do so when the session has almost run its weary length. It is not for me on this occasion to criticise the comparative value of its other labours, but I must remind you that at the very earliest moment when the forms of the House permitted, after the meeting of Parliament, I put a question to my noble friend opposite (the Duke of Buccleuch)—the Chairman of a Commission appointed by the Government to inquire into this subject—whether we might expect any remedial measures during the present session? On various occasions, during the progress of public business, I have with diminishing hopes repeated the same question; and I own that it is now with deep disappointment I feel myself obliged formally to bring the subject before you, with a view at least to extract a pledge from this House that here these evils shall not another year be treated with continued neglect.

The subject itself is so comprehensive in character, branching into so many details, that, however much on former occasions I have felt myself enabled, from the interest naturally excited, to keep your attention alive, I should fear that I might exhaust your patience if I did not confine myself as much as possible to the leading practical points—which are these:—whether the evils I have formerly depicted are still existing without mitigation, and whether—if they cannot and will not be cured without legislative interference—the question is not rather why this was not applied before, than why it should be applied now.

I must revert for a few moments to the state of things as described when I first brought this subject to your notice, now nearly four years ago. I then proved to you that there had been in the course of the last forty years a greater internal migration from one part of the country to the other than had ever before taken place in any civilized society. Since the commencement of the present century the proportions of agricultural and manufacturing population have been exactly reversed. At the commencement of that period the agricultural population was to the manufacturing as two to one, now the latter is to the former in the same proportion of two to one. With this there has been a concurrent increase of national wealth, but there has been *no* addition to the comforts of the people—*no* provision for guarding their health—*no* care to raise their condition. Look, for instance, to the town of Manchester and its neighbourhood—not cited invidiously, but named naturally as proudly boasting to be the emporium of new-made wealth. It has also become the seat of disease, and the spirit of health has winged its way to those comparative solitudes which the most enterprising portion of the population had left. This was not always so: this same locality was formerly famous for its longevity. In a calculation which I cited in a former speech, upon the authority of Sir Gilbert Blane, the deaths in Manchester were stated at the beginning of the century to be one in fifty-eight, or considerably below the national average. In 1811 he mentions them as only one in seventy-four, which seems so extraordinarily low as to make one believe there must have been some mistake; but it shows that, at any rate, the fact must have been remarkable on the favourable side. It is a sad truth that the mortality there now is about one in twenty-eight.

I have upon other occasions alluded to a fact since stated in Mr. Chadwick's Report, that 50,000 persons die annually from diseases which might be prevented by proper sanitary regulations. This was a fact which made a very general impression, not only from its startling

character, but from its accessible position, being stated in the third or fourth page of that voluminous Report, which, most valuable as it was, I fear shared the fate of many of these laborious inquiries, stretching to too great a length to be willingly mastered by the general reader. I can, however, state from my own experience, that there is hardly a page in it which does not contain something of which no public man ought to be wilfully ignorant. It was said, though by those who only heard the result stated, that 50,000 were thus swept away annually—that faith could not always be placed upon calculations founded on statistics: but this was no speculative deduction; these were the results derived from the returns of the medical officers actually attending the parties thus afflicted. But since then this statement has been amply confirmed. The Commission appointed last year selected fifty towns, which some of the Commissioners personally visited, and to which they also sent queries on particular points. In the Appendix to the Report which I hold in my hand, it is stated, that in those towns the deaths in three years from fevers and contagious disorders were 63,000, or 21,000 annually; but the population in these towns is now 2,051,799. If we take the population of the metropolis and its suburbs at 1,800,000, that would make up nearly the 40,000 annual deaths; and we have therefore, in order to verify Mr. Chadwick's estimate, only to distribute the other 10,000 deaths amongst the other 12,000,000 of the population—or, in other words, to suppose that three-fourths of the population may at least contain one-fifth of the number of deaths. Is it not much more likely, therefore, that this Report from the Poor Law Commission, for which we are indebted to Mr. Chadwick, has but inadequately called our attention to the extent of the evil, than that it is guilty of any exaggeration? Let it always be remembered, too, that not only Scotland, but unhappy Ireland, are left out of these calculations—in both the evil exists in at least as great an extent, and to both the remedy must be applied.

I am not exactly aware why these fifty towns were

selected by the Commissioners; probably because there there may have been a greater proportionate increase. The general increase since 1801 has been in the proportion of 7 to 4; in these fifty towns it has been as 5 to 2. And why did these towns increase in this degree? Because money was there to be made by the application of capital, and labour was therefore tempted from other quarters; and wealth has been made, and capital has been doubled; and this, because with enterprise there has been economy in all things *but one: of human life there has been a constant waste*, sinful, because unnecessary. If you read the answers from almost every one of the fifty towns to the queries sent by the Commissioners, you will see there has been a total absence of all proper precautions. And can you expect the victims of this state of things to help themselves unless you interpose? They remove from their own neighbourhood because they expect better wages. Grant that in good times they succeed in higher nominal wages. Who, in too many cases, benefits by the difference? Why, the owners of these disgraceful dens, which are a necessity to the labourer, who must live within a certain distance of his work. Hence the combined evils of over-crowding and extortion; and, in too many instances, the emigrant from the rural district finds that he has to add the cost of certain disease to the rent of the wretched room, already three times the amount of that of the garden cottage he has left. Again, I ask, is this necessary? Mr. Austin states in his evidence before this commission, that for the existing rents he could undertake to raise new buildings, returning 10 per cent. on the speculation, with perfect drainage, self-acting water-closet, water laid on each floor, and an annual supply secured; and the cost of all this calculated to include the ground-rent. If this is so, to what extortion must all those be helplessly exposed who are doomed to the dwellings I have lately visited: and with such evidence why is there any delay in applying an adequate remedy?

Can there be any doubt that all these evils now exist

without the slightest mitigation? I have within the last few days convinced myself of the painful fact by ocular demonstration. I have also availed myself of the more general means of information, on these points, of a friend of mine, a gentleman whose name is already known in connection with these subjects, as applying the powers of an acute mind, enlightened by science, with constant devotion to the purposes of active benevolence. I mean Dr. Southwood Smith. From a mass of most interesting information furnished by him in connection with his experience at the London Fever Hospital, I shall trouble your Lordships with two cases, as bearing directly upon the question whether legislative interference is necessary; but I should premise that I gather from him that at no period was the general character of the fever more malignant than it has been within the last year.

“10. From No. 24, Crown-place, Soho, nine persons have been received into the hospital; that is, two, three, and four, from as many different families residing in this filthy den. The following remarkable fact may be mentioned in connexion with this house:—About five or six weeks before the admission of the nine individuals just mentioned, three persons had been sent to the hospital from this same house labouring under fever. For want of room in the hospital no more could be admitted at that time, although it was stated that several others were ill of the disease. Of these some were sent to the St. Giles’s workhouse, and others it is believed to the Middlesex Hospital. The house was then shut up. After the house had remained shut up for about a fortnight, the landlord, without adopting any cleansing or purifying measures whatever, let the house to some other tenants; among whom were the unfortunate creatures (nine) received into the hospital on this second occasion of the breaking out of fever in this pest-house. It was now again shut up, but this time the parish-officers, whose attention was directed to the matter, thoroughly cleansed, lime-whited, and purified the house, as well as the adjoining tenements; since which no case of fever, it is believed, has occurred in this place; at all events, there has been no application for the admission of any patient into the fever hospital.”

“11. In Friday-street, Cheapside, there is a small court called Star-court, three houses forming the court. From the house No. 2, no less than ten cases of fever were one after another admitted into the hospital; in fact, every inmate of this house was attacked with fever, and some of the inhabitants of the two adjoining houses were also seized with this malady. All the sick were removed, and the houses and court were thoroughly cleansed and the walls lime-whited. No cases of fever occurred for some time afterwards. At length, however, the disease again broke out in a very severe

form, and the sick, as before, were immediately removed. The court generally, and the houses in particular, underwent a careful inspection; both appeared tolerably clean; yet there was always, but more especially after a shower of rain, a most intolerable stench in the court, the source of which could not for some time be detected. At last, however, through the perseverance of the parish-officers, it was discovered that the contents of a filthy privy belonging to one of the neighbouring houses were constantly escaping, and that they had infiltrated into the stratum of earth immediately under the pavement. This privy was thoroughly repaired, and the pavement of the court was relaid; this change excepted, all the other circumstances of this locality, such as the number of inhabitants to each house, and the inhabitants being of the same class, remain as before; yet, since this change, no case of fever has occurred."—"These cases are given not as extraordinary occurrences, but as examples of what is taking place every day; and as long as the places in question remain unchanged, such cases will as surely occur daily as the sun will rise."

If such things are, then arises the question what has the Government done to remove them? That they have done *nothing* one can certainly not say with this voluminous report in one's hand. But the first question arises whether such a Commission as that from which this Report emanates, should now have been appointed. There can be *no* question that, if appointed at all, it ought to have been so a twelvemonth sooner. In June, 1842, was presented Mr. Chadwick's Sanitary Report: one should have thought that by that was sufficiently indicated the general principle on which a remedy should be applied. The causes and the extent of the evil were made clear enough. But at any rate, the last course one should have expected from any Government receiving such a Report was a twelvemonth's inaction! Every twelvemonth, the Report told them, cost 50,000 lives. In June, 1843, however, this Commission was appointed. I think a better course would have been that Government should have on their own responsibility determined the general principles on which they meant to legislate on these subjects, and then taken authority from Parliament to appoint a Commission of practical men to work out the details both with reference to drainage and building. Some central superintending authority will have to be created, referring, if necessary, to the Executive Government, but having the same sort of powers, with reference

to local bodies entrusted with the execution of the details of these measures, that the Poor Law Commissioners have with the Boards of Guardians. However, after the delay of which I complain, a different course was adopted, and this Commission was appointed. That there is much that is valuable in this their first Report, I have not the slightest inclination to deny. I think it is overloaded with much as to cause and extent which was unnecessary, except for *new men*, who, if they required this information, should not have been appointed on this Commission. I think, also, it is overloaded with scientific details, which would have been much more satisfactory if they had come from a Commission which was acting as well as enquiring. They conclude with saying they hope to have something to propose "within as short a period as may be compatible with the consideration due to so important a subject." Now this strikes me as one of those subjects on which there has already been too much consideration and too little action. They then state, "to this end we are continuing our unremitting exertions." *Unremitting exertions!* we can only judge of promises for the future by performances in the past. I find by the marginal notes to the evidence reported that this Commission has sat only eight and twenty days in the last twelvemonth. My noble friend (the Duke of Buccleuch) interrupts me with the assurance that they have sat on other days when they have not taken evidence. I am glad to hear it. Of course I can know nothing but what is here reported to Parliament, but at any rate there appears to have been an interval of six months in their sittings. Now do not let me be misunderstood. I am perfectly aware that it would be impossible for a person in my noble friend's position, with his immense possessions, and the special claim that those connected with them have upon his attention, to give up all his time to this subject even if, from his political position, he had not other public duties. But then I say, that though it is no doubt a great advantage that a person of his station and character should be at the head of this Commission, communicating directly with the

Executive Government, yet that it is desirable he should delegate to others many of its duties, as, if the necessity for his presence causes all this delay, his connection with the Commission may be purchased too dearly, zealous as I know him to be in the good cause. If there is any truth in the estimates of annual mortality occasioned by these causes, *every day's delay* costs the lives of 135 or 136 persons.

I have had, of course, some difficulty in the few days which have elapsed since the presentation of this Report, to master the whole of the evidence with its Appendix, but I think I have possessed myself of all the main facts here stated, and I have endeavoured to do so in a way that may enable me to illustrate by quotations from the evidence itself, that the question is in a state for immediate legislation, and that it ought to have been accompanied by a very different Report from this, which I cannot but pronounce as tame, vague, and unsatisfactory. Knowing how unwilling your Lordships are to listen to the reading of long documents, I shall as far as possible state from memory the facts as detailed in the evidence which bear out this conclusion, instead of asking your attention to long extracts.

The most striking fact is that stated by Mr. Hawksley with respect to the supply of water for the town of Nottingham. Mr. Hawksley is connected with the Trent Water Works, and his testimony is founded on experience. He says that at present within that borough 5000 houses are supplied with water at a weekly cost of one penny each. Formerly the inhabitants used to purchase water at a farthing a bucket, and a halfpenny if fetched from a distance. In general it was sold at three gallons a farthing. Now 76,000 gallons are sold for 1*l.*, or 79 gallons for a farthing. Mr. Hawksley also states that half the expense of laying water on is saved by constant service—not in this instance what is called high-pressure, but by the pipes always being kept full. Mr. Hawksley seems to answer in the most satisfactory manner every question as to details, and every objection which is started; and one cer-

tainly rises from the perusal of his evidence with the feeling, why is not all this already put in practice elsewhere?

The whole question of sanitary regulation seems to turn upon the treatment of those two elements, air and water; both equally necessary to the healthful course of human existence—both equally necessary in their external influence on our frame; and, in their internal use, one the primary ingredient in all human nutriment, the other the life-spring of our lungs. And yet, to apply them in perfection to their several purposes, they require precisely opposite treatment. Leave to the air its free and unrestrained course—put no artificial impediment upon its buoyant natural action; but, on the other hand, guide and direct on scientific principles, and by mechanical aid, the course of water. And by such means and in such proportion will you mitigate those “ills which flesh is heir to.”

I say that I consider these measures as most pressing, because I verily believe that there is no other industrious population in the world suffering so much misery and degradation as large masses of our fellow-countrymen. In any estimate of their relative suffering, I take into consideration the hardships of our climate. I stated that I have within the last few days again visited many of the worst districts at the eastern end of this metropolis. There had not been the slightest substantial change in their condition; but the late unusually fine weather had brought a temporary mitigation of their sufferings. The summer sun could make his beneficent influence felt even in the most confined court, the crowded inhabitants of which could for a time exchange the canopy of heaven for their own stifling roof. But, on the other hand, I am obliged to remember the negro huts in the West Indies, many hundreds of which I have visited in other days, and I feel bound to admit that, before the Emancipation Act, the greatest outcry would have been raised against any proprietor who would have lodged his slaves in such residences as those I have lately seen within a walk of your Lordships' House.

In the former Report, as well as in this, the fact is fully stated and confirmed, that the working classes would make any sacrifice to have their residences within a certain distance of their place of work. Amongst other witnesses, I would refer to Mr. Wilson of Macclesfield's evidence in the Sanitary Report on this head. It is therefore a mistake to say that the poor are free agents in this respect. The fact is that this necessity on the part of the poor gives the proprietor of these loathsome dens a command of the most he can by any means in his power extort from his tenants; and the other inhabitants of the district suffer by that also being absorbed in rent which should go in rates.

I am unwilling to trespass unnecessarily upon your patience, but I am aware of the impression which is always made by the *viva voce* testimony of an eye-witness; and therefore I cannot abstain from mentioning a few circumstances which have come under my own observation, when, within the last few days, I requested some of those active and useful members of society, the medical attendants and relieving-officers of the districts of Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, and their neighbourhoods, to accompany me to some of the worst of those localities, where the sanitary condition of the inhabitants was the lowest. One I must mention in some detail, as it seemed to me to furnish an epitome of all those evils, against which I wish to persuade your Lordships at least to attempt a remedy. In Turville Place, Turville Street, there was not a house in which fever had not raged. In one room, six weeks since, there had lived a man, his wife, and five children. At that time the husband was seized with the fever, the natural consequence of dwelling where he did. Four weeks since the wife was confined with twins, and the husband died. The water had been two years since cut off by the company from the whole of this court, in consequence of a quarrel as to payment between the two landladies who owned the houses; and during all this sickness, neither this nor any other of the wretched inhabitants of the court had any water, except

what the children begged, and fetched a distance of a quarter of a mile from Shoreditch. There was not a sewer within a quarter of a mile; and there was only one privy for all the houses in the court. This family had paid 1s. 6d. a week for rent. In the opposite house there was a room on the ground-floor not much larger than the table at which I am now standing; almost all the flooring was decayed and broken, and the tenants had in vain asked to have it repaired. In this room lived a man, a woman, and two children; two children having previously died of fever. These poor people were bonnet-box makers, and earned, they said, only 8s. a-week; they also paid 1s. 6d. a-week rent for this room. I do not cite these as isolated cases deserving of your peculiar attention, but as circumstances of such general application as to be beyond the reach of private benevolence. There is, I am happy to say, a society lately established (Metropolitan Association for improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes), to which I am a subscriber, and which I rejoice to hear is sanctioned by the government, the object of which is to furnish the poor with at least specimens of fitter buildings for their use. When this has been done, I trust that the problem will be solved, and that it will be proved that it is no longer necessary for the working man, on account of his poverty, to inhabit dwellings of this description. It was high time to ask the question, Was this a state of things that ought to be allowed to continue? It has arisen from the abandonment of its duty on the part of the legislature; and I do not believe that there is any other civilized country in which such scenes of filth and misery—arising from neglect on the part of the government—could be found. I will not attempt to describe to your Lordships the scenes of social degradation that might be found in some of these labyrinths of courts within courts, so well described—

“Where flags the noon-tide air, and as we pass
We fear to breathe the putrefying mass.”

Such scenes I have beheld in Dolphin Court, in George Yard, in New Court, New Street; in Crown Court,

Quaker Street, Spitalfields ; and many others of which I could give the names, only I should not thereby convey any definite idea to your Lordships. I will therefore merely mention two or three instances which came within my observation, where the cases were marked by some peculiar characteristic. In New Court, Mile End, I was shown a girl who had been subject to epileptic fits ; she had been removed for many months from this baneful residence, and her fits had never returned till within the last few days, when, having come back again to the same place, she had again had an attack of epilepsy. I was told by the medical men who accompanied me, that when those who were exposed to these noxious influences escaped fever, it was by no means uncommon that they paid the penalty in shape of some severe nervous disorder. In Crown Court, Spitalfields, I was shown one house where all the inmates, eight in number, had severally been attacked with fever. Your Lordships can have no idea of the want of all the common decencies of social life which must prevail in some of the low lodging-houses in this neighbourhood, from the manner in which the inmates are crowded together ; but I will not be tempted to enter upon this occasion upon that fertile field for animadversion.

In Bethnal Green, on the other hand, you see a population capable, in their present state, of better things, with tastes worthy of a happier lot. Gardens nicely cared for, and flowers cherished in a manner that shows them capable of enjoying the beauties of nature ; and yet here are this hard-working people literally poisoned by the effluvia to which they are exposed by the neglect of any of the common precautions of general drainage for which they naturally look to those above them. I will give a curious instance of the propinquity of the most culpable neglect in this respect with the appliances for *other* and what are called *better* classes of advanced civilization. Lamb's Fields already enjoyed an opprobrious reputation for the extensive pool of filthy water which stagnates one half of its extent. Through this has latterly run the Eastern Counties Railway, and the inha-

bitants hoped that they might profit by some care being extended to that portion of this space which was not required for the structure on which the daily crowds who hurried through this pestiferous space for business or for pleasure were borne along; but in this they were disappointed, and not the slightest effort has been made to make this triumph of capital and of science a benefit to the wretched inhabitants of the district through which this mighty erection passes, by mitigating the evils which spread disease and death amongst them. Another curious instance: On the way to the Bethnal Green Workhouse there is, at the back of Nassau Street, facing St. Andrew's Church, an open sewer, between which and the road there is a broad stagnant ditch; an effort had been made to run the contents of this ditch into a sewer which had latterly been constructed as far as a bridge at the corner of this piece of ground; but the landlord had dammed it up in order to make a better protection against the boys who might play in his field. So, to save him the expense of a fence, all the inhabitants of these otherwise eligible houses were exposed to this pestiferous infliction.

But enough of individual instances, which I could multiply *ad infinitum*. From all the information I have collected, either personally or from documents, it is clear to me that certain provisions must be required in any legislative measure as indispensable; that water should be constantly supplied to every house; that the refuse should be removed *by means* of water; that the drainage should always communicate with the common sewer; and that as to building regulations, the first thing is that ventilation should at once be in some shape or other required. Some other precautions are particularly required in some of the manufacturing towns, where, from the influx of additional population, houses are run up upon speculation, without the slightest attention either to security or convenience, as is stated by Dr. Holt of Manchester. Objections have been stated to the former bills on this subject which were fortunate enough to receive your Lordships'

sanction. It has been alleged by those who have produced other measures, in which all the defects of the former ones have been maintained, that all the provisions with respect to the building regulations in the bills which passed the House of Lords were found to be impracticable. As I am not now going to propose anything of a similar character for your Lordships' sanction I need only say that these measures were then submitted to the most eminent architects,—Mr. Pennethorn, Mr. Cubitt, and others, and the details were all approved of by them. But your Lordships may recollect that I then stated I thought it would be found necessary to establish some superintending machinery to work out these measures; and I am now decidedly of opinion that Parliament should not legislate upon these subjects by *clauses*, but should establish some well-considered principles upon which the public health should be cared for, and then should leave it to a competent practical authority to see that these were properly carried out in detail.

I am aware that many look upon the dreadful results I have been describing, as the necessary consequence of poverty, and therefore to be deplored, but still to be borne. This opinion is directly in the face of all the evidence collected upon any one of these results. Mr. Chadwick, in his report, proves by eminent testimony that those diseases oftenest attack those in full work, and therefore not stinted in food. Dr. Arnott, in his evidence before the existing Commission, shows that the sickness and deaths bear no relative proportion to the distress and destitution. The medical attendants in Glasgow state that it was most severe amongst those of the labouring classes who were apparently rather robust in frame, if their homes were in a state to indicate those predisposing causes to disease. And though Dr. Watt, of Glasgow, in a report which I have *recently* named, states as a reason why there was more sickness at the period of returning prosperity that private benevolence was suddenly withdrawn, yet the fact is admitted to have been still the same—that as general distress diminished sickness increased. In

Manchester the year 1841 was one of peculiar distress, but the proportion of the mortality was in the same year reduced from one in twenty-eight to one in thirty-one. In Liverpool, where there was a mixed population, and therefore no such distress from the sudden depression of manufactures, there was no corresponding reduction of mortality. This, then, is clear, that epidemic disease does not necessarily accompany poverty, but its visitation deprives a period of comparative ease and relative prosperity of all its blessings.

I have hitherto viewed this question merely as one of common humanity, but it may not be uninteresting or without a beneficial effect upon the conduct of some persons in relation to it—to look at it in a financial point of view, to calculate the dead loss, in a money value, of preventible sickness. The first compendious estimate under this head that I have seen was one given in Mr. Chadwick's Report, upon the authority of the Rev. Mr. Lewis, minister of St. Andrew's, Dundee. But I cannot mention Dundee without alluding to the satisfaction I had in presenting latterly a petition from that town on these subjects, signed by upwards of 4000 of the working classes. Nothing can be more creditable to those classes in the northern part of this island than the active movement at present going on amongst them to raise their condition in this respect. In Edinburgh, Dundee, and I believe Glasgow, public meetings have been held originating entirely with the working men, to establish public baths, and to take means for the improvement of their dwellings. This disposition has been taken advantage of by a benevolent gentleman of the name of Simpson, who has delivered lectures, at once eloquent and practical, to large assemblages in these towns. I trust that interest on these subjects will spread southward amongst the same classes. I have been diverted for a moment from the calculation of Mr. Lewis as to the cost of sickness—his calculation is founded upon an estimate of Mr. M'Culloch, that every skilled artizan had cost 300*l.*, and might be taken as worth half that sum, and taking this for the number of deaths,

and calculating also the six weeks' loss of wages by the average duration of the disease for those who survived—he makes the amount, without any allowance for orphanage or widowhood, cost 25,000*l.* annually; and this would be a dead loss, not to those actually afflicted, but to the whole population, of more than the difference in the price of corn of the dearest year and the cheapest. Mr. Hawksley of Nottingham states his calculation differently, and reckoning something for the charges of support of widows and orphans, where the head of the family was the person attacked, he makes the cost in Nottingham 300,000*l.* in six years. It is unnecessary to calculate for your Lordships the amount this must bring to bear upon the whole population. You will at once see that a greater saving might in this direction be made in the charges which bear upon the productive industry of the country, than by any other means through fiscal alteration.

But I am aware that many think those evils, however frightful, are only partial; that they visit merely those districts where, for the purposes of manufactures or other increasing employments, numbers are collected together. I wish your Lordships would carefully peruse Mr. Toynbee's evidence, the surgeon of St. George's and St. James's dispensary, where you will see that within a few yards of your Lordships' own dwellings, in the courts in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square, and other parts of the West End, precisely the same predisposing causes existed, and the same evils followed. There was also another valuable part of Mr. Toynbee's evidence as showing that the comforts of those who live by their labour did not by any means depend upon the mere money-amount of their wages. This is a point your Lordships must always bear in mind, whenever you take into your consideration that question which must force itself upon your attention—the physical and social condition of the great body of the people. Mr. Toynbee states, that he had many applications from persons in receipt of comparatively a high rate of remuneration, who were obliged by their vocations to live in particular localities, and to pay so much for rent

and for doctors' bills, that he considered them more objects of charity than the labourer who had not more than two-fifths of their earnings. He gives, for instance, the case of a policeman. A policeman must live in certain districts; being in constant work, he could not be supposed to be subject to the afflictions of absolute poverty; but the policeman to whom he alludes, out of his pay of 1*l.* a-week, had to pay 5*s.* rent, and large sums in doctors' bills, his children being all constantly ill; and consequently he was obliged to relieve this man, whom he considered a greater object of charity than a labourer at 8*s.* a-week.

Much has been said, in former discussions, of the greater hardships of the agricultural portion of the population from exposure to the weather; but in this report Dr. Guy states, that cases not only of fever, but of consumption, are much more to be traced to confinement in close workshops than to any exposure to labour in the open air. It is stated in the evidence of Mr. Coulthart, that the want of ventilation from which fever proceeded at Ashton-under-Lyne, arose from the people not being able to bear fresh air in their houses, in consequence of having been confined during the day in close manufactories. Much has also been said of the evils of overcrowding, and a striking instance was given of it in the evidence of Mr. Clay, of Preston. Preston is the town in which the population has most increased within this century, and there, according to Mr. Clay, were eighty-four instances in which four persons slept in a bed, thirty-five in which more than five so slept, three in which seven, and one in which eight slept, in the same bed. I see, by the Report of the Census Commissioners, that it is stated that within the last ten years houses have increased in a larger proportion than the population. This, as far as it goes, is satisfactory, but nothing is stated as to the size of the houses. I believe, in point of fact, in most of these new speculations in building, the houses are much smaller than formerly, and, therefore, in reality, more people are

now crowded into the same space, though, perhaps, not under the same roof.

— Before quitting this part of the subject, I cannot help adverting in a few words to the confirmation derived from the reports of Mr. Clay, of Preston, and Mr. Coulthart, of Ashton, of the impressions I have formerly urged upon your Lordships as to the effects of the over-working of the women. I readily admit that if such are to be the dwellings in which the working classes are for ever to be condemned to live, if there is to be no attempt to improve them, it would be useless to hope that any good effect would be produced by a limitation of the hours of labour either by voluntary arrangement with the employer, or by legislative interference; but, on the other hand, I am quite sure, from the evidence in this report, that until such a limitation simultaneously took place, it would be impossible to secure to the population of the country the comforts of a home. For, after all, what is a home? It is there where, in the interval between the time occupied in the labour necessary for support, and that which is equally needful as rest, should be cultivated the social relations of families, and should be practised those moral duties which belong to the character of a responsible being. How is such a home to be maintained when sleep, induced by fatigue, claims every moment not spent as a mechanical fraction of a mighty machine, whose labours are directed by a power which never tires? In the evidence of Mr. Clay it is stated:—

“ Marriages take place among the latter (the labouring classes) not merely when there is no reasonable prospect as to future maintenance—not merely at too early an age—but when neither the young husband nor wife is in the slightest degree prepared to fulfil the duties incumbent upon them: perhaps neither can read; the wife cannot prepare a meal either comfortably or frugally; she is unable to dispose of her husband's wages in the manner best adapted for the support and convenience of their home; she can neither repair his clothing nor her own: and thus good wages are often squandered by ignorance and incapacity, which, under proper management, would procure every requisite, and some luxuries, and permit a little to be placed in the savings' bank. With such unfitness for the character of a wife, in what light does she appear

as a mother? Probably she is compelled, by the necessity of her attendance at the factory, to forego one of the greatest of a mother's delights—the nursing of her child. The infant, when a few weeks old, is committed to the care of a nurse, who exposes it to cold, feeds it improperly, and drugs it with 'Godfrey,' until the little sufferer is soon removed from the world to make room for a successor doomed to the same short but miserable course. Marriages among the poor are prompted not only by thoughtlessness and mere animal instinct, but sometimes, on the part of the man, by heartless selfishness. The writer has met with several cases in which the husband was living in wilful idleness, supported entirely by his poor wife's wages, earned as a warper or power-loom weaver."

Mr. Coulthart states from Ashton-under-Lyne that the infant mortality there is greater than in any other town in Lancashire, and this he attributes to the neglect of the children forced upon the mothers by the nature of their occupation, engrossing every moment of their time; and he draws a frightful picture of the quantity sold by the druggists of that pernicious compound which is known by a hundred different seductive names, but which was equivocally called "Infant's quietness." Of this it was stated that the dose was "half a spoonful, and *more if necessary.*" If necessary! What was to be the necessity, and who was to judge of it? A person generally without the slightest natural affection for the child, and whose object was, at any risk, for her own comfort to put an end to its cries. Another picture is presented by Mr. Coulthart of the flourishing town of Ashton-under-Lyne, well worthy the serious attention of those who are so ready to boast of the advantages of the present day. Those advantages are great, but there is a dark side to the picture. Mr. Coulthart states that on searching the marriage certificates of eighty years ago, he found that there were then forty-four men and twenty-five females who could sign the marriage-certificate out of every hundred; now there were only twelve men and eight women who could do so. It is right, after detailing the want of domestic comfort and this ignorance in Ashton, arising from causes only indirectly connected with the object of our present inquiry, that we should state that here is, on the other hand, furnished a proof that many of the other evils re-

ferred to might be much mitigated by the superintending authority of the landlord. The town belongs principally to Lord Stamford, and his agent has been directed, in all leases to the under tenants, to insert such sanitary regulations as should be desirable; and the result of this is shown by a comparison of the tables of mortality at Ashton-under-Lyne with other towns similarly situated. By such comparison your Lordships will find, to a certain extent, the advantages of such interference. This could not always be done, because these tenements were too often in the hands of persons who made an exorbitant profit out of the necessities of the poor.

I own I am much discouraged as to any speedy improvement in these matters, when I read the statement of Dr. Duncan, of Liverpool, as to what occurred there forty years ago. It appears that the condition of the poor people living in cellars was at that time pressed upon the attention of the corporation, but local interests prevented attention to the judicious recommendations then offered; and the population of Liverpool, at present the most sickly in the kingdom, has trebled in amount since that period, and in 1844 we are obliged to repeat the same language which had been used by the Committee of Physicians in 1800.

There is another point to which I wish to direct your Lordships' attention with reference to those legislative measures, which I am desirous you should now encourage by an assurance of your continued anxiety to improve the condition of the poor, and that is the necessity that every measure of this nature should be taken out of local control. I do not mean the details, but that there should be a superintending central authority. Mr. Hawksley said, that in Nottingham it was the fear of suffering loss from the reduction of value in the present dwellings, which prevented the commonable lands from being applied beneficially for the erection of habitations for the poor. I know from experience how little good results, in too many cases, from the reports of medical officers to the Boards of Guardians. Boards of Guardians are too often the very persons most interested in maintaining the

present state of things, and I know that medical officers have sometimes had hints thrown out to them, that they had better not interfere with what did not concern them, when they ventured to make any suggestions as to the existing abominations.

I have now endeavoured to prove, and I hope successfully, that there ought to be no further delay—that up to a certain period there has been, on the part of the Government, a perfectly unaccountable, and, I must be permitted to add, inexcusable delay. Whatever may be the merit of the course subsequently taken in the appointment of the present commission, upon which I have my own opinion—but I will not now question what has been done in this respect—still I say the former delay was indefensible. And what do I now ask your Lordships to do? Do I ask you to pass any, the slightest, censure upon those who have been responsible for this delay? The words of the motion, with which I shall conclude, do not necessarily bear any such construction. I merely wish that the Commission of Inquiry, having first been appointed in consequence of an address from your Lordships' House, and previous to the receipt of its report, your Lordships having thought the evil so pressing that you had three times put the remedy into a legislative shape, I merely now ask that you should, after two years' subsequent inaction, shew that you have not repented of your good intentions, or lost your virtuous sympathy for the suffering poor. I am aware that this is a question which of all others must, as to the working of its details, be left to the Executive Government. An individual could not do much good by legislation, and might do harm; therefore, after calling for this expression of the opinion of the House, I am willing at present to leave the matter in the responsibility of the Executive Government.

But let them beware of further delay. We now live in times of comparative political apathy. These, as in 1830, may be followed by times of peculiar political excitement. I am far from saying, should such a change take place, that any direct danger is to be apprehended from the

sources to which I have been referring. No factious outcry is likely to affright the State from the feeble voices which crowd the wards of the fever hospitals. Such crowds are not those from the collection of which political conspiracy is to be feared; but the sick bed is the place in which there is most time to brood over neglect, or to feel gratitude for sympathy. It is an item in that account which the Legislature will one day have to render for the continued neglect of the condition of the people. If, in the midst of immense wealth and multiplying capital, there is needless misery and deep degradation amongst large masses of the population, your Lordships should feel that it depends upon you to show that that degradation is not entirely hopeless, and to hold out at least a prospect of relief.

You will be doing an act most consistent with your own former proceedings, and most grateful to your Sovereign, if, before you return to your own wide domains and splendid homes, you show that you are not unmindful of the unmitigated misery which still haunts the close pestiferous courts and their den-like abodes—if, as hereditary counsellors of the Crown, you approach your Sovereign to assure her of your sympathy for the poorest, the most helpless, the most patient, and the most suffering portion of her subjects. I have to apologize for the length to which the subject has led me, and conclude with moving—

“That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, to thank Her Majesty for the Report upon the State of large Towns and populous Districts, recently presented to this House by Her Majesty’s command; to assure Her Majesty that this House continue to feel a constant and active interest in the Sanatory Condition of the People; to express our earnest hope, that early in next Session of Parliament, Her Majesty would be pleased to call the specific attention of Parliament to a subject of such paramount importance, and to recommend for adoption some practical measure of a comprehensive character, calculated to remedy evils of such acknowledged magnitude and proved extent.”