

SLUMS AND SLUMMERS

A SOCIOLOGICAL TREATISE ON THE
HOUSING PROBLE

BY

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PREFACE

IN presenting this work, I am all too conscious of the abundance of housing literature; of the fact that in the last year or two at least a dozen books must have been written about the slums. A few months ago the subject was being sensationally featured by the daily press; the inquisitions held by the Ministry of Health, at the behest of ill-advised and illogical informers, in towns alleged to be in "default" as regards slum clearance, were given headlines on their front pages. To obtain copy, intrepid journalists, novelists and others toured the slums (bolder spirits even rented rooms in the danger zone). Numerous societies employed independent investigators and committees of inspection to view slum areas and issued lengthy reports on their findings. For a time, slums were a topic of discussion at women's clubs, luncheon parties and other social gatherings. They have, in fact, been so much inspected, investigated, examined, surveyed, reported upon, measured, drawn, photographed and filmed, that every time strangers approach these widely advertised areas, the residents look up and grin, as if to say "Here they are again!"

In short, the story of the slums has been told and re-told, but now that the blaze of publicity which ushered in the National Government's slum campaign has to a large extent faded away and the venturesome journalists and novelists have taken their pencils and notebooks elsewhere, it may be possible, without in any way decrying the laudable objects of slum clearance, to draw attention to its many practical difficulties; to tell the truth of those unfortunates who live in the slums; the fickle human element that has in the past sent many a well-organized scheme awry.

The principal object of this work is to do this frankly and without bias. It is not intended as a housing textbook or to present a solution of our housing evils. Rather is it an attempt to tell of what exists behind slumdom's foul front, to scratch aside some of the filth which hides the root-causes and, if nothing else, it may prove an antidote to the sentimental tosh preached about the subject. It comprises in a general way my own experience, what I have seen and heard over a period of many years passing in and out of the homes of the poor, together with information and help from friends and colleagues, which I gratefully acknowledge; but the opinions expressed on different aspects of the slum problem are entirely my own. I make no apology for them or for my misgivings regarding the future.

The present outcry against the slums, it should be noted, does not emanate from slum-dwellers themselves, but from those enjoying the comforts of home-life and the pleasures of a full stomach. Industrial cities have always had slums and bad housing, but in past years they had greatness, trade and wealth, and prosperity brings contentment. Acute trade depression, poverty and all the ill-health that goes with it, have drawn the attention of the general public to the slums, but the average individual has a purely sympathetic perspective, seeing only the sufferings of humanity and not its shortcomings. The slum problem is of far greater magnitude than the public believes it to be. Housing enthusiasts and all others who have turned the thing into a stunt, may run up and down the country proudly boasting to their audiences "The solution is in sight!"; but neither the five-year plan nor several multiples of it will see the land free of slums. Neither does the slum problem end when slums have been demolished and the people provided with good homes. They have got to be taught to live in them.

Industrial Britain, it must be agreed, has arrived at a stage in its history when rebuilding is urgently required. Its slums should be demolished and decent homes provided for the poor, so that they may at least have the opportunity of living clean and wholesome lives. If private enterprise cannot, or will not, build the houses, then others must, but whether present public housing is proceeding on the right lines is extremely doubtful. The principles may be right, but the campaign is being driven forward with incautious haste; its enormous difficulties are being underestimated. It would be better to adopt long-range planning, to explore more fully the resources for attacking the problem, even if it resulted in slower progress. In this highly organized country there *must* be the means of dealing with the problem, vast though it is, without imposing a large and ever-increasing financial burden upon the State and local authorities. The Church and other religious bodies, as well as philanthropic societies, should be asked to take a much larger share of the work, and greater experimental research of building materials and methods, such as is being done in Germany, Sweden and other countries, should be carried out. This would certainly reduce building costs.

A new England will arise from the social revolution in which we are now living and whether it shall be an England of wise planning and a sturdy independent people, or a legacy to future generations of mediocrity and confusion and a permanently pauperized lower class depends very materially upon how we deal with the slums.

C. R. A. MARTIN.

TANKERTON, KENT.

October, 1935.

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SLUMS AND SLUMMERS

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SURVEY

I

A HISTORICAL survey of the housing problem is a record of the many changes wrought in the life of the nation by the economic revolution of the last hundred and fifty years. There were, of course, slums before this time, viler and more pestilential than anything now existing, for the slum is as old as mankind, but they were very limited in extent. England of the eighteenth century was essentially an agricultural country and rich in natural beauty. It is recorded that in 1760 we were even exporters of agricultural produce, which makes it all the more difficult to believe that in so short a space of time (for what is a century and a half in the history of the human race?) there could have been so great an upheaval in the living conditions and social status of men. The world was indeed a great wide place before industrialism, with its mad race for gold, gripped this and other nations of the earth. The New World, except for its Atlantic seaboard, was mostly uncolonized; it consisted of a collection of townships, villages and plantations; the ocean passage took six weeks. The Orient remained invulnerable to trade assaults, and in England there were no large towns. Even London was so small that anyone could take an evening stroll from the city into rural surroundings. At least three-quarters of the country was entirely rural; small agricultural communities and unenclosed land. Of made roads and

means of transport, there were few. With the exception of the high roads, themselves nought but stony lanes which the stage coaches used, the villages were connected by narrow grass-grown tracks, foot- or bridle-paths.

The typical agricultural community consisted of a simple straggling street, or a cluster of cottages, huddled together for protection from the elements, each with a large garden; the church, the village inn, the forge, and the whole surrounded by large fields given over to the cultivation of wheat, etc., which supplied the needs of the village and non-producing element of the nation. Each village was a self-contained and self-supporting unit, almost entirely cut off from the remainder of the country by the absence of means of communication. Cottage craftsmen such as the local blacksmith, stonemason, wheelwright, woodworker, etc., supplied the constructive requirements of the community. Men, women and children were hired for land work at the seasonal fairs; of freedom, as it is understood now, they had little, but their lot was not an unhappy one. Sons followed fathers in the simple crafts that existed, evolving a standard of work the excellence of which has never since been approached, even less attained. Conditions of life in those times, although extremely rustic compared with the terrific pace of to-day, were all for fostering the inherent artistry of man; a sense that has unfortunately atrophied under the drab and desolate influences of city surroundings. Those English villages, where they remain untouched by the hand of the spoiler, are to this day regarded as perfect specimens of their kind. If closely examined in the light of modern requirements for water supplies, drainage and sanitation, some of them would most likely fail to reach the necessary standard of fitness, but the seventeenth and eighteenth century cottage environment was altogether more desirable than the depressing gloom of endless terraces of soot-begrimed

houses; a skyline framed by myriads of chimney pots; a dust-laden atmosphere, pervaded by stenches from fried fish, decaying vegetables and sweating bodies, and bedlam created by the ceaseless roar of traffic, the raucous bawling of adults and the yells and screeches of children. The old-time cottages may not have had public sewers and water services, but they had clean air and sunlight, and an overflowing measure of peace and quiet; their occupants had the chance of leading a sturdier and more independent existence than the people of to-day can ever have. The rooms were low-pitched, but comfortable; they were heated from wood fires on the hearth of the ingle-nook or chimney corner. Cooking facilities were meagre, but at least the housewife knew how to cook such food as they had.

Industrialism, which threw up so many ugly towns and villages and altered the social fabric of the whole nation, did not proceed according to plan; there was no thought given to its beginning; no co-ordination in its development. It began in localized centres which grew entirely uncontrolled, engulfing the countryside as flood waters tumble over a weir and spread haphazard over surrounding land. It was the inevitable result of an expanding population, which had in fact been gradually increasing ever since the Middle Ages. When any community outgrows its ability to feed and support itself, it must of necessity barter and sell, and the country was in this condition early in the nineteenth century. The population of England and Wales doubled in the three centuries between 1500 and 1800 and again in the next fifty years, and yet again in the sixty years between 1850 and 1910. Improved means of transport, roads and wheeled traffic, ushered in the industrial revolution, enabling fuel to be conveyed to different parts of the country. This was the beginning of the coal industry. The smelting of iron followed. Then came the invention

of machines, the general adoption of which brought in the factory system and severely handicapped the cottage crafts. The factory system began town formation, many employers building cottages adjacent to the factories to house their workers.

The employment of children in the mines, fields and factories was an incentive to large families, anything from ten to twenty children per family being the rule rather than the exception. All the time a wife was capable of child-bearing, she had a baby hanging on her breast. Child labour was the most inhuman feature of this truly barbarous period. On attaining the age of 6 or 8 years, they were sent down shafts four or five hundred feet deep, into the bowels of the earth, where they sat naked in intense heat and utter darkness, opening and shutting doors or traps for ventilating purposes, crawling about the galleries attending on hewers or helping to drag trucks laden with coal. In the fields, they worked with the women at stone-picking, gleanings, or similar tasks, and in the factory the uses to which child labour could be put were innumerable.

Very soon conditions became appalling, infinitely worse than anything existing to-day. Diseases of overcrowding, dirt and bad sanitation, such as typhus, tuberculosis, virulent small-pox, cholera, enteric, etc., became rampant. The general death-rate and the infantile mortality rate were exceptionally high. The average death-rate for the larger towns was, about the year 1830, 35 per 1,000 of the population, comparing with the 12 per 1,000 of present times, and the infantile mortality rate about 200 per 1,000 births, which meant that one in every five children born died before attaining the age of one year.

The invention of the steam engine and the development of railways was an immense impetus to industry; it created, in fact, the first great trade boom, still larger factories being built and more persons employed. As

town development increased, so agriculture and rural industry diminished and the cottage craftsmen, with their many privileges and independence, gradually disappeared, being absorbed by the factories. Trade ceased to be local and became country-wide and eventually world-wide. Joint stock companies were floated to finance factories and trade became a matter of return on capital invested.

In the rural areas, the enclosure of common and waste lands deprived the labourers of their rights of usage. Large farms were thus produced resulting in a ruling farming class, with agricultural labourers in their employ and housed in cottages built by them or their superior landlords. The lot of these labourers was no better than that of the factory workers in towns and as their wages were much lower, many of them left the land for the towns. By 1830, less than one-third of the country was used for agricultural purposes, and so urban development continued. Small towns increased in size, becoming merged with others adjacent, producing conglomerations of factories and hovels; ugly, sordid, mean and wretched in the extreme. Under these conditions the great working classes of this country were born and nurtured. Living in hovels, sweated in factories and born in a depth of misery and degradation, their early development, mental and physical, could not fail of being a reflection of such a squalid environment. Vice, immorality, drunkenness, brutality and crime among the lower classes became rife.

This period in the economic history of Britain, e.g. the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, saw the birth of the existing industrial system. It witnessed the creation of new classes in the population: manufacturers, merchants, landlords and other members of the *nouveau riche* on one side and the working people on the other. It saw the country cross the rubicon, from agriculture to industry. As has been abundantly proved

since, the industrial revolution need not have been the means of defacing the countryside, but great masses of the people for the first time tasted gold and the power its possession conferred, and everything was sacrificed to its progress. Greed, avarice, brute force and ignorance and the apathy of the then ruling classes produced the extreme conditions of filth and squalor, but it was also this appalling state of the country which created a movement for democratic government in the working people. Reformers directed public attention to the problem, now assuming alarming proportions. There was the Chartist and other similar movements. Dickens and contemporary novelists fanned the flame of public indignation. Their works described for the benefit of succeeding generations the misery, poverty and suffering of the people in this period.

Then came the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, wrested from an unwilling Government by growing strength of numbers. It was the means of granting some measure of municipal government, with certain sanitary functions, but to towns only. With the forces of reform thus marshalled and the ever-increasing power of the common people, the conditions of the working classes began to show signs of improving, until the passing of the Public Health Act, 1848. This was the result of the magnificent work of Chadwick in his Survey into the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Classes in 1842. It was the sanitarians' charter and great hopes were entertained of it by its sponsors. It constituted the first effective local government units of the country, viz. the local boards, but fifty years of the industrial revolution with the absence of any form of administrative care had covered England's green and pleasant land with a blight that could not be removed by legislation pruned and pared as was the first Public Health Act. Uncontrolled industrialism had reared a monster not to be destroyed by the

puny efforts which the first sanitary reformers were able to put forth, for, what we now know as vested interests or, in other words, corruption, had begun to make their influence felt in the nascent units of local government. The manufacturers and landlords, now wealthy at the expense of sweated labour, the truck system, rent-rolls, which were all receipts and scarcely any liabilities, and other iniquitous practices, were able to influence party tactics in the political arena and practically had an undisputed control of local boards, so that the preliminary struggle with bad housing was severely hampered by the corruptive influence of those grown rich on the unhappy conditions of the lower classes, and this permitted many squalid areas to remain. In fact, many of what now constitute our greatest housing difficulties were allowed to develop subsequent to the passing of the 1848 Act. It was during the period of the enforcement of this Act that land values began to rise, and some ingenious architect conceived the idea that if houses were deprived of backyards or gardens, more houses could be built on any site; in fact, four houses could be built in place of two and the rents received per acre would be proportionately greater. This economic system of cottage-building seemed such a brilliant one that it was very naturally copied throughout the industrial north, and ever since, men have racked their brains to devise a means of bringing light and air to the denizens of these drab rows of back-to-back houses.

With local boards controlled by industrialists and the lower classes held in a state of subjection, fearful of voicing their needs, it was only to be expected that municipal enterprise should be lacking. Systematic curtailment of even essential expenditure and the total absence of public services as we now know them were the means of creating many insanitary conditions. For example, in some of the midland towns, an insufficient

public water supply led to expedients in sanitary systems. The installation of slop closets was one of them. This consisted of a pivoted tipper which received the excreta and was flushed by slop water from the sink. Slop closets were in themselves evil-smelling abominations, but the consequent insufficiency of drain and sewer-flushing produced extremely foul conditions. In hot weather, it was not unusual for busy streets to smell far worse than present-day sewage disposal works.

Government inquiries held under the 1848 Act into the sanitation of districts make interesting reading in these days. In a report¹ of one such inquiry held at High Wycombe, Bucks, in 1849 into the need of a "sanitary system," the reformers encountered stout opposition and threats of personal injury. One of the leading citizens went so far as to state that "a water closet was an abomination." It was also reported that in seven years there had been 3,492 cases of infectious disease, and this in a small borough with a population of 3,171. The whole business created such an uproar that "witnesses were afraid to come forward and give evidence, and even medical men hesitated to attend voluntarily before the Inspector." However, well-worn grievances eventually awaken courage in every manly breast and one audacious fellow has left his mark upon the scroll of time; he penned the following epistle to the vicar of the parish and it was produced at the inquiry:—

"Sir—If you send for me when you hare redy in the town hall, i will give a true statement of the newcence of the pigsties against my house belonging to Mr. Hunt. Mr. g. Hunt told Mr. J. Hunt that i told you about the sties. Mr. Jo Hunt asked Mr. g. Hunt if I hoed him any money, if I did he would demand it, and if i dint pay it he would have a warrant of distress and take my goods, that was the

¹ From an old copy of the *Bucks Free Press*, 1849.

reson that i was afraid to say the complaint, the Lord delievered daniel from the Lion paw, and that same god is my god and he will deliever me from my henemys.

i ham your obdient servent,

John Pippin.

the rev. Mr. Paddon, Wickham, Bucks."

Complaints were also made that "human remains" were left "lying about" the churchyard.

The decade immediately following the passing of the Public Health Act, 1848, was, unfortunately for the purposes of sanitary reform, a critical one in the history of the country. The Crimean War and Indian Mutiny created acute depression with trade stagnation and shortage of food, for by this time England was gradually becoming dependent upon foreign countries for her food supplies. Old-timers are able to recall the conditions of famine, rationing of food, bread riots, shooting down of the mobs by the military, cholera epidemics, etc., which occurred during this anxious period, but this spell of depression was followed by a huge trade boom, ushered in by the opening for colonization of the great western territories of the U.S.A. and the freeing of countries of South America from the restrictive influences of Spain. Immense trade expansion resulted and English merchants were early starters in the field. With the country in the first flush of her industrial vigour and foreign competition almost negligible, an era of prosperity ensued which very largely accounted for Britain's dominance in world affairs for half a century. Parallel with trade expansion and the floodtide of national prosperity, the conditions of the working classes began to really improve. Employment became more regular, wages better. Many of the revolting alleys and courts situated in the centres of large cities were swept away by the same commercialism that had helped to create them, to make room for ware-

houses, offices and business premises. Local government bodies were able to effect certain measures of sanitary reform, which consisted mainly of dealing with the grosser evils of the day. Slum clearance did not feature in the programme of public works, however, the problems of that generation being chiefly the provision of drainage and water supply, the cleansing of streets, courts and alleys and the removal of nuisances.

(In those days, large accumulations of garbage and decaying matter around dwelling houses were a common source of illness. The occupants would cast their refuse into the back yard or centre of the court until the accumulation assumed such proportions that it threatened to engulf them, in much the same way that Ur was buried by the Sumerans beneath their own refuse some 5,000 years before, except that in the ancient city of Ur, when the accumulated refuse reached roof height the citizens levelled the whole and began building anew.)

About this time the speculative builder first came into prominence, chiefly to meet the increasing housing needs in towns developing as the result of industrial expansion. The ideas of these individuals were restricted to building as cheaply as possible, using cheap labour and materials and cramming as many houses as they could on a given frontage. It is not difficult to trace the activities of the speculative builders of the early Victorian period. Their work usually comprises the belt of narrow streets surrounding the original village or "old town." Long rows of hideous brick boxes, appearing in perspective as though cut out of cardboard, with small low-pitched rooms, frontages rarely exceeding ten feet, no forecourts, the front doors opening into the street and very little space in rear, usually a small common yard. Even in the metropolis and other large cities there was no definite building code and little administrative control. Later generations of builders have erected rows of equally

hideous dwellings, with streets a little wider perhaps and the houses a little bigger ; maybe in higher rented dwellings, an ornate façade has been superimposed on an otherwise similar structure.

This type of housing development did not relieve the situation but aggravated existing evils and multiplied the difficulties of their removal. Thus it became apparent that the Public Health Act, 1848, would not be sufficient to cope with the haphazard housing development of that period without considering the eradication of the revolting slums still existing. There were too many loopholes in the Act and it was altogether too weak a measure to fight the powerful vested interests of the day. It laid the foundation of future public health legislation, however, and the pioneer work done in its enforcement revealed the lines upon which local government should develop.

It was in 1871 that steps were first taken to set up local and central government in the form it still exists. In this year, the Local Government Board was constituted the central health authority and replaced the old Poor Law Board, and in 1875, a consolidated Public Health Act became law. This Act, despite the many shortcomings that modern conditions have revealed, constitutes the most outstanding landmark in the history of health administration as well as one of the legislative achievements of the nineteenth century. It divided local bodies into urban and rural sanitary authorities and invested them with extensive powers for improving the living conditions of the people. Much of the repair work of working-class property is still carried out by sanitary officers under its provisions. It not only effected vast measures of sanitary reform, but enabled even the worst of slum dwellings to be kept in some state of repair, with some standard of comfort, however small this might have been. Under the building bye-laws which it

empowered urban councils to make, supervision over the construction of new houses and the prevention of future evils was possible, but owing to the failure of authorities to immediately recognize the paramount importance of bye-laws and their effective application to house-building, as well as a studied indifference of anything likely to affect the pockets of landlords and builders, it was many years before the very considerable powers of the Act were appreciated and fully used. Great as the progress has been, best measured by comparison of the vital statistics and incidence of deaths from infectious diseases before the passing of the Act with the rates of recent years, like its predecessor of 1848, the Public Health Act, 1875, and its subsequent amending Acts, did not legislate for the removal of housing evils in the shape of slums. It had for its primary object the prevention of nuisances and the provision of sanitary services. Although it makes no provision for the actual clearance of slum areas and now appears to have outrun its period of usefulness, it cannot be denied that the 1875 Act has been the means of removing much that was foul and filthy from our midst. Coinciding with the rising prosperity of the nation at the close of the nineteenth century, when trade was good and there was bread and work for all, it exercised a powerful influence over the health of the people, and through its measures the slums to-day are much less fearsome and threatening and not nearly so insuperable as they appeared half a century before.

In the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, which amended and consolidated several ineffective Artizans and Labourers Dwelling Acts of previous years, we find the beginning of housing legislation proper. A few of the large cities of the industrial north and midlands had been endeavouring to remove the worst of their slums before 1890 by means of private Acts, but the Act of 1890 established methods of dealing with insanitary

property in a few respects not dissimilar from the housing legislation of to-day. Part I defined "unhealthy areas" or slums as districts where the "houses, courts or alleys are unfit for human habitation" or where "the narrowness, closeness and bad arrangement or the bad condition of the streets and houses or groups of houses within such areas, or the want of light, air, ventilation or proper conveniences or one or more of such causes are dangerous or injurious to the health of the inhabitants." The local authorities of urban districts only were given power to deal with any such areas by means of improvement schemes, provided this was "the most satisfactory method of dealing with the evils connected therewith." Although it was unnecessary to actually prove that continued ill-health existed among the population of an unhealthy area or that diseases associated with a generally lowered vitality had been prevalent from time to time and were attributable to the bad arrangement or condition of the streets and houses therein, the adoption and inauguration of an improvement scheme under the Act was an extremely complicated and expensive affair. After the Local Government Board had satisfied itself by public inquiry of the necessity, as well as the sufficiency, of the scheme, an Order would be made authorizing the local authority to proceed, but this was provisional and subject to confirmation by Parliament and if either House decided to refer the scheme to a Committee, the local authority might have found itself mulcted into enormous costs, including those of the Board and opposing owners. Then all land and buildings had to be secured by the authority on terms of compulsory purchase, frequently involving heavy compensation in the case of business or licensed premises. There was no statutory obligation, however, on the part of an authority outside London to rehouse persons displaced from an unhealthy area.

With a procedure so involved, it was only natural that most urban authorities, with the exception of a few of the large industrial centres, whose intrepidity and resources were equal to the contest, should avoid such costly methods of slum clearance. There were no State contributions and in such schemes as were undertaken the cost per head for slum clearance and rehousing varied from £80 to £200. For demolition only, the cost of schemes varied considerably in different parts of the country and depended upon the price of the land and buildings comprising the area. In some congested districts the amount paid for the freehold of a slum area would work out as much as £2 per square yard and the cost per house demolished at £100 or more, although it must be acknowledged a few cities were able to clear slums at a much less figure.

Part II of the Act provided the alternative method of dealing with slum dwellings individually. Notices were served under the nuisances clauses of the Public Health Act, 1875, requiring the owners to execute repairs in respect of such houses, and failing compliance the local authority applied to a court of summary jurisdiction for Closing Orders to be made. The tenants had to be evicted by the authority, and if the necessary repairs were carried out, the Orders were determined by the Court, but if at the expiration of three months the work had not been done, then the local authority could make Demolition Orders after hearing any objections from the owners. Demolition Orders, against which there was a right of appeal to the Quarter Sessions, required owners to demolish the property within three months, failing which the local authority had to pull down the buildings and sell the materials.

If improvement schemes were expensive, demolishing unfit houses individually was a painfully slow process. The circuitous proceedings, which could be obstructed

at several stages by recalcitrant owners, resulting in interminable delays, defeated the purposes of the Act. Furthermore, in at least half the cases, it permitted worthless property to be reconditioned and given an extra lease of life. Although numerous efforts were made to set in motion the wheels of housing reform, it became evident that without drastic amendment the Housing Act, 1890, would never produce any tangible results. The trade depression which followed the South African Wars, partly due also to world-wide repercussions of the financial instability of the U.S.A., resulted in a serious decline in speculative house-building and intensified overcrowding and wear and tear of property, especially in slum areas. The growing strength of trade unions and socialist organizations, strikes, lock-outs and the rising numbers of unemployed, although conditions indicative of the labour market and the struggle for political existence by the poorer classes, directed more closely the attention of the central authorities to the many dangers of ignoring slumdom. Politicians, scenting votes, danced to the swelling tune, and Parliament passed the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909, the first genuine legislative attempt on the slum problem. This Act considerably simplified procedure by obviating the necessity for securing Parliamentary confirmation of an improvement scheme and by empowering local authorities themselves to make both closing and demolition orders, the owner having a right of appeal in each case to the Local Government Board. It facilitated the acquisition of land for the purpose of erecting working-class houses by municipal authorities; it made the erection of back-to-back houses illegal; cellar dwellings were deemed to be unfit for human habitation, and in the letting of houses of specific rental values there was to be an implied undertaking at the commencement of the tenancy that the house was "in all respects reasonably fit for human

habitation" and would be kept in such a condition by the landlord throughout the tenancy. In this Act also, town planning was introduced for the first time as a measure of slum prevention. Local authorities could prepare and, if authorized by the Local Government Board, adopt a town planning scheme for any land in course of development or likely to be used for building purposes with the object of securing proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the layout and use of such land. A scheme once adopted had the force of law and any building contravening such could be pulled down by the authority.

In the 1909 Act, housing reformers were encouraged to believe that great as the difficulties were, here at last were the means of gradually removing from our beautiful country the worst of its black spots. Rehousing was not a problem and any schemes that might have been necessary would not have needed financial assistance from the State or local authorities; private enterprise was in a position to build working-class houses at prices from £150 to £180, and there were no serious political difficulties. The clauses relating to town planning were especially hailed as being the best method of correcting development and preventing new slum formations, for however stringent the building bye-laws, the speculator and jerry-builder had always somehow managed to evade them. And there appears to be little doubt that authorities up and down the country took the Act seriously and were making earnest endeavours to set its machinery in motion, but before much could be attempted, a tornado swept through Europe, embroiling the nations in a mad struggle that could only have one result, poverty to both victors and vanquished alike. Siege guns laid bare Belgium's fair cities, their streets echoed to the tramping feet of Teuton columns marching through with bands playing and colours flying: a prelude to the massacre

of the flower of the white race in a welter of mud and blood. As time passed, the War lumbered on, a colossus beyond human control, its origin forgotten and the end in the lap of fate. Before sanity returned, ten millions dead, fifteen millions maimed, three mighty empires wrecked, the world in pawn, its riches lying idle in the vaults of the Federal Reserve Bank, U.S.A.

II

Man is the creature that environment has made him, but it needed the War, with its compulsory medical examination of army recruits and conscripts to reveal just how powerful an influence environment could be. The cumulative effects on the masculine physique of generations of slum life, poverty, overcrowding, lack of fresh air and sunlight, bad feeding and bad housing conditions generally were only thoroughly grasped when the collective results of these medical examinations were obtainable. That there had been a decrease in stature and deterioration in the health of town-dwellers had, of course, been obvious for many years, but never before had it been possible to obtain so clear a conception of how the vitality of the race had been impaired by unhealthy living conditions. Then was coined the phrase "a C3 nation"; not one in three had it been possible to grade as A1; the raw-boned Englishmen of other days had degenerated very largely into diminutive weaklings. Not only had health suffered; when the homes of worthy citizens were gladly offered as billets for troops, many to their cost learned that whilst uniforms made all men look alike, there were some who by filth of body and mind stood as a class apart.

Rash promises were made of "homes fit for heroes," but the exigencies of war had caused a new and more pressing problem. The absorption of every available

man into national service led to a complete cessation of house-building during the period of hostilities, and although a million men paid the supreme sacrifice, the number of separate families and the birth-rate had not been materially reduced. As a consequence, the precipitate demobilization of troops in 1919 created such an acute shortage of houses throughout the country as had never been known before. Overcrowding was rampant. Working-class houses have always been built with little or no margin of accommodation, so that a large family results in overcrowding, but the post-war overcrowding problem was more serious than this. With such a shortage, families literally fought and scrambled for the existing accommodation, and as the poor always seek shelter from the poor, a large proportion of the working-class houses soon had two or more families living in them. Conditions in the large industrial areas were appalling, although no part of the country could claim immunity from overcrowding. Thousands of families had to live, eat, sleep and do everything in one room; the man, his wife and children, perhaps some of them in the adult stage, sleeping together with an entire absence of privacy, and as might be expected, immorality and sexual offences were common. In extreme cases, two or more families shared a room. What with the endless squabbles of the women, the fighting and quarrelling of the children, for harmonious relations are never sustained long with several families leading a communal existence, many a husband and father heartily wished himself back in khaki. So scarce was living accommodation that exorbitant rents were charged for the subletting of rooms and heavy premiums paid by professional men, clerks etc., to obtain vacant possession of small houses, which before the War were let for a few shillings per week. Multiple tenancy also had the effect of considerably increasing the wear and tear of property which had

already been seriously neglected as regards repairs for four years. Such conditions led to the occupation of so-called "temporary dwellings," consisting of vans, sheds of wood or corrugated iron, old railway carriages, motor lorries, bus bodies and similar structures. Whilst many local authorities, chiefly rural councils, were powerless through lack of bye-laws to prevent their erection, others, either from compassion or habit, "winked the eye" at their establishment, with the result that there still exist in many areas large colonies of shacks and hovels, which for wretchedness and desolation could only be equalled by the isolated back villages of Russia's barren wastes or of other primitive countries.

The acuteness of the post-war overcrowding was in no small measure due to the fact that a definite shortage of working-class houses existed throughout the large industrial areas before the War, more serious, of course, in the poor quarters of London and other large cities of the north. The actual shortage can only be arrived at by approximation. The excess of families over structurally separate dwellings in census statistics is not a reliable means of arriving at the shortage, since for census purposes lodgers boarding separately are counted as families, and one finds that the percentage excess is no greater in the bad year of 1921 than in 1891, when the number of empty houses in the country was such that if placed end to end they would have stretched from Land's End to John o' Groats. The average excess is about 10 per cent. which, in addition to lodgers, etc., includes families who for various reasons do not occupy a separate dwelling. But we know that before 1911 house-building had been falling off and that the average number of houses erected per year from 1911-1914 was 61,000, and the average annual increase in the number of separate families 78,500, so that after allowing the 10 per cent. referred to, there was an annual deficit during the three years before the War

of 10,000. At the outbreak of war, therefore, the housing shortage for the whole country was in round figures 100,000, and in 1919 at least 500,000 houses were required to meet the needs.

CENSUS STATISTICS.

Year	Population	Structurally separate dwellings (including Institutions)	Persons per house	Separate families	Persons per family
1891	29,002,525	5,451,497	5.32	6,131,001	4.73
1901	32,527,843	6,260,852	5.20	7,036,868	4.62
1911	36,070,492	7,319,420	4.92	8,005,290	4.49
1921	37,886,699	7,811,030	4.85	8,790,406	4.31
1931	39,952,377	9,260,407	4.31	10,370,267	3.85

It became evident even before the cessation of hostilities that this great leeway would only be made up by strenuous efforts on the part of every local authority, financially assisted by the Government. The continuance of the war-time system of rent restriction, so obviously necessary in the return to peace, high wages and soaring building costs, definitely rendered it impossible for private enterprise to erect working-class houses capable of being let at economic rents to meet requirements. Accordingly, the Housing (Additional Powers) Act, 1919, empowered the Minister of Health to make grants to any persons or bodies constructing houses within one year after the passing of the Act, i.e. December, 1919. The grants to private persons varied between £130 and £260 per house. The Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1919, made it incumbent upon all local authorities to consider the housing needs of their districts and prepare schemes for the erection of houses to meet those needs, their liability, irrespective of the number of houses erected, being limited to the amount produced by a penny rate. Notwithstanding such lavish subsidization, many local authorities, more far-seeing and with a better knowledge of the condition of the building trade and the economic situation generally, were extremely loathe to embark upon schemes which had every appearance of being

inordinately extravagant. However, having so lately been engaged in "mass attacks" and "big pushes," it was only to be expected that similar methods would be adopted by the Government in attempting to solve the overcrowding problem. The result, a mass of stuccoed eruptions symptomatic of the most expensive working-class houses that the country has ever seen, were commensurate with the wanton waste of those war-time efforts.

Houses to the number of 213,821 were built under this, the Addison Act, and what with the profiteering of the "rings" of building materials manufacturers and the obstructive antics of building operatives and their unions, the average cost per house was a little over £1,000, each house bearing an annual loss to the State of £45 and to the rates of £5 10s.

Owing to the enormous cost of housing under the Addison Act, the Government in 1921 restricted its operation, until in 1923 the Housing, etc. Act, known as the Chamberlain Act, reduced the subsidy to £6 per house for twenty years, with power to the local authority to pay lump-sum subsidies of £75 per house to private builders, the authority retaining the annual contributions from the State. The houses had to conform to certain regulations as to area, construction, etc., and the Act was intended to encourage the erection of houses by private enterprise. Coinciding with the post-war trade boom and the slowly falling building costs, the Chamberlain Act gave the desired impetus to house-building by speculators. The Housing (Financial Powers) Act, 1924, known as the Wheatley Act, increased the subsidy to £9 per year for forty years (or £12 10s. in an agricultural parish) for houses built and let by local authorities, public utility societies or other bodies, providing the houses were let at an appropriate normal rent, i.e. the rent charged for working-class houses in August, 1914, plus any increase in local rates, and to assist in this

object there was to be a corresponding contribution from the rates of £4 10s. In 1927, the subsidy under the 1923 Act was reduced to £4, or a lump sum of £50, and under the 1924 Act to £7 10s. (or £11 in an agricultural parish), with a rates contribution of £3 15s. In 1928, the subsidy under the 1923 Act was discontinued, and in 1933, State subsidization of house-building for all purposes except slum clearance was finally abolished. The enterprise shown by building societies in advancing huge sums of money to comparatively poor people had by this time enabled builders to erect houses at economic prices and had helped considerably in rehabilitating the industry after its war-time hibernation.

NUMBER OF HOUSES ERECTED ANNUALLY IN ENGLAND AND WALES SINCE THE WAR.

Year ended September 30	Number of Houses erected	Year ended September 30	Number of Houses erected
1919	} ... 210,237	1927	273,229
1920		1928	166,415
1921		1929	204,857
1922		1930	161,699
1923	78,738	1931	194,944
1924	109,491	1932	200,562
1925	159,026	1933	218,313
1926	197,584	1934	309,753

Since the War, well over two million houses have been built and the prices have so fallen that the building trade can be expected to adequately meet the housing needs of all but the poorest. Taking the country as a whole, the great shortage of houses has now been met for all who are able to pay an economic rent. Some of the large cities have embarked upon gigantic housing enterprises ; they have created new towns far removed from the murky skies and squalor of the city, and their indebtedness under this heading amounts to many millions of money. The London County Council have made the small village of Dagenham in the Essex marshes into a town of a 100,000 population ; they have erected since the War over 60,000 houses ; Birmingham, up to 1933, had built

38,327 ; Liverpool, 23,260, and so on, but overcrowding still exists in the great industrial areas and we have as yet barely touched the fringe of the slum problem. It was generally expected that the provision of thousands of new houses would result in a slow and gradual exodus of the people from the slums, at least the better types of slum-dwellers. In this so-called "filtering-up" process, it was anticipated that the new houses would be occupied by the more affluent of the working classes, releasing houses which in turn would become occupied by a succeeding economic stratum of the population and so on until the unfit house automatically became empty but, if this has occurred, it has been an almost negligible movement. The reasons for it are not far to seek. The long period of trade depression which followed the short post-war boom and the unprecedented numbers of unemployed, has rendered an increasing section of the working classes totally unable to pay an economic rent and, although there may now appear to be a surplus of houses, taking the country as a whole, the low birth-rate has resulted in smaller families and therefore less persons per house, that if the individual family is taken as the unit, the surplus is more apparent than real. It must also be remembered that in the statistics of houses erected since the War are included all classes of dwellings, at least 70 per cent. of which have been built by private builders, who have generally pocketed the subsidies and sold the houses. Better-class houses have increased by 60 per cent., but the smaller type by 13 per cent. only, and only those built by public bodies have been let, ability to pay the rents being the principal factor in choosing the tenants. The poorest section of the community is not in a much different state than it was originally ; the municipal house being beyond the scant means of an unskilled labourer, with small wages, a large family and unemployed half his time. In the last few

years, instead of the upward tendency, there has been a reverse drift of families leaving the municipal estates owing to the severity of the times, and even the municipal house has not been exempt from the pernicious practice of subletting.

It must be admitted, however, that such overcrowding as is not the direct result of poverty and the exigencies of slum life, has been overcome. No amount of speculative house-building can solve the grosser forms of that which still exists; it goes hand in hand with the rent problem, unemployment, economic conditions and the emigration of surplus population and, like every other social question, is dependent upon national and even world prosperity.

The erection of working-class houses in such vast numbers has, however, been the means of establishing increased standards of comfort for the occupants. Bureaucratic control has to a certain extent stereotyped house-planning, with no aspirations to architectural beauty, but national co-ordination at a time of such extensive development has not been without its advantages.

III

At the close of the War, it was rightly urged that until there had been complete rehabilitation of the building industry, it would only intensify the already serious house shortage to demolish unfit dwelling houses, so that in the years 1919-1922 there was one improvement scheme and one reconstruction scheme under the Act of 1890 carried out in the whole country. Not that pre-war slum clearance had been spectacular, for it had been confined entirely to London and a few of the larger towns, the schemes carried out in the metropolis being the greatest in number and magnitude. Up to 1915, there had been confirmed a total of 82 improvement schemes and 28 reconstruction schemes throughout the country,

involving the demolition of approximately 15,000 houses. Of these, London had carried out 34 of the former and 16 of the latter and had incurred a debt of £2,000,000 in demolishing and rehousing. Such results indicate that there was a widespread reluctance to slum clearance.

The Housing Act of 1919 provided that where land was acquired compulsorily in any improvement or reconstruction scheme, the compensation to be paid for the land, including buildings thereon, should be the value of the site cleared of buildings. The risk of authorities incurring heavy costs as regards compensation were immeasurably reduced by this provision. The Act enabled contributions to be paid by the State towards the annual losses on any approved slum clearance schemes and not the least of its provisions was that it required all local authorities in making a survey of their housing needs to specify the number of insanitary houses in unhealthy areas and also those which should be demolished individually. Whilst later statistics have revealed that these returns were largely guesswork, as a result of this national survey, Dr. Addison, as Minister of Health, stated in 1922 that a conservative estimate of the number of houses which required to be demolished was 200,000.

In succeeding years, little progress was made, however, due in no small measure to the fact that housing legislation had become extremely complicated. Statutes and regulations had been gushing from the Parliamentary machine at such a rate that their effect was bewildering to the administering authorities. In consequence, housing law was consolidated in the Housing Act, 1925, which replaced the old Act of 1890 as the principal statute. It re-enacted in almost similar form the provisions regarding repairs to dwelling houses, power of making bye-laws relating to houses-let-in-lodgings, the closing and demolition of individual unfit houses, the closing of underground rooms, prohibiting the erection of back-to-back houses,

site-value compensation in compulsory purchase of unhealthy areas and continued the State contributions amounting to one-half the annual losses in approved slum clearance schemes. The definitions of unhealthy areas and the provisions relating to improvement and reconstruction schemes were also substantially similar to the old law. But far from producing the successful results anticipated, there was a decided retardation of progress after 1925. The adverse legal decision given in *Rex v. Ministry of Health ex parte Davis* (1928), K.B.D., in which a writ of prohibition was allowed and confirmed by the Court of Appeal, definitely deterred many local authorities from proceeding with schemes already in hand. The general effect of the judgment was to declare that the law required that all schemes under which local authorities proposed to work should not only be justified by the conditions of the areas, but should also be made *ab initio* with much greater precision and completeness as regards the future use of areas than had been supposed in the past to be necessary or practicable. After this, the Ministry of Health approved no more schemes under the Act, and although some progress was made on old schemes, most of them were abandoned and resubmitted under the Act of 1930. The slow progress made was probably due to causes which were in the main economic, but the case revealed the necessity for fresh procedure, which was effected by the Housing Act, 1930, which with the few amendments of the 1935 Act, will undoubtedly remain the settled law on slum clearance procedure for some time. A point of more than passing interest in this Act is that in all clearance schemes, local authorities, urban and rural, *must* provide for the rehousing of families displaced. Hitherto there had been no obligation to do this, unless specifically required by the Ministry (Housing Act, 1925). It marks a turning-point in housing legislation. The Government, no longer relying upon private enterprise,

filtering-up processes and so on, have made housing and caring for the poor a State and local responsibility.

Although the 1930 Act gave new life to the clearance of slums, the rate at which the work was being dealt with was still too slow for the Ministry of Health, and in 1933, they called upon every local authority to fix a limited time for the work to be completed. Such time-tables were to be "based upon a complete appreciation of the whole extent of the problem in the area concerned" and, as far as practicable, were to be drawn up on the basis of clearing all areas that require clearance not later than 1938. Briefly, this is the famous five-year plan for slum clearance, outlined in Circular 1331 of the Ministry of Health and referred to again in Chap. IV.

The gravity of the economic situation in recent years, the country's diminishing export trade, financial stringency and the strident calls for economy from the Government itself have undoubtedly restrained authorities from embarking upon what in many districts will be a truly gigantic task.

Our slums represent a century of administrative neglect during a social upheaval of the country; they will not be removed in a generation nor is there a single remedy or universal panacea for all housing evils. Their solution will require the concerted efforts of all classes. And not of the least importance to the successful issue of the task is the return to something approaching normal conditions. Whilst the slum work of local authorities may not be directly obstructed by trade depression and unsettled world conditions, they all contribute to the uncertainty of the position. It requires reckless enthusiasm to impel a public body to spend large sums of money, even for slum clearance, when they see thousands of their citizens in poverty and distress because some other country is able by tariffs and sweated labour to undersell their products in the markets of the world. Many

nations—Japan, Italy, Russia, etc.—are now compelled to a vigorous industrial development to feed the hungry mouths of their rapidly increasing populations, which is intensifying the world slump. The words of Dr. Johnson in 1773 are a remarkable prognostication of prevailing conditions :—

“ Depend upon it, this rage of trade will destroy itself. You and I shall not see it, but the time will come when there will be an end of it. . . . When all nations are traders, there is nothing to be gained by trade, and it will stop first when it is brought to the greatest perfection. Then the proprietors of land will be the great men.”¹

¹ Boswell's "Life of Johnson."

CHAPTER II

SLUMS

I

THE slums of our cities and large industrial areas constitute one of the greatest social problems that has ever confronted any nation in the history of the world. In no other civilized country, with the exception of Russia, can such vast tracks of slumdom be found. The industrial centres of other countries, of course, have their slums; in patches, infinitely worse than those of this country. Many foreign cities have their "east-end" or "down town" sections and all ports of the world have unsavoury quarters around the docks and wharves. In the Bowery of New York, there are narrow streets littered with filth and garbage, where the tall dilapidated tenements are as bad as anything to be seen in London, and the vice and crime considerably worse. Here, and in the even newer cities of the world, Melbourne, Sydney, Buenos Aires, etc., one may meet frightful human wrecks, hideous through drink, dope and disease, inhabiting indescribable scenes of squalor and filth, but for size and density, foul air and wretchedness, the slums of Britain are in a class apart.

In London, the problem is truly a gigantic one. There are no less than 30,000 basement dwellings; dark and airless, their occupants living in a perpetual twilight and in constant fear of fire and flood, and although the slums of the West End are not comparable as far as area is concerned with those of the riverside industrial districts or those stretching away in an atmosphere of gloom beyond

Aldgate and the City, they are in all other respects as bad. The Royal Borough of Kensington has slums and slummers, if anything, viler than those of the East End. Generally speaking, however, the housing conditions of the West are less complicated by haphazard industrial development than the Thameside boroughs. The great plain, south of the river, between Wandsworth and Deptford, originally flat marshy land, in many places several feet below high-water mark, contains some of the worst property in the metropolis. There are acres of twisting narrow streets of very small cottages, mean little places huddling around the numerous railways, embankments and viaducts, which deprive the occupants of light and air, while trains thundering by, day and night, shake the buildings to pieces and make life a nightmare. In Southwark and Bermondsey, the riverside is flanked with great warehouses and factories; behind, a chaotic jumble of narrow streets, alleys and courts, interspersed with large business premises spreading southwards and outwards from the main streets. In the alleys and courts, wedged between tall warehouses and factories, are teeming tenement blocks and tiny cottages, most of them dark, damp and dilapidated. As might be expected, these districts have a gradually decreasing population, owing to such families as are able to moving further out, but this does not apply to the poorest inhabitants, who perforce remain and actually have their numbers increased by casual workers crowding in to be in a more favourable position to acquire employment during the intermittent demands for labour on the wharves. The small dockland cottages at Rotherhithe, the oldest of them built some 150 years ago higgledy-piggledy around the Surrey Commercial Docks on odd pieces of land not required for dockyard purposes, present a problem of perplexing confusion; the results of indiscriminate development. Dockland slums, on both sides of the river, have a grimmer



Slum cottages huddling round railway viaduct (see p. 30).

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and more sinister aspect than those of other London districts, accounted for very largely by the different character of the people and the large floating population of foreign seamen, especially Asiatics. Here are found practically every caste, colour and creed under the sun, and even many of the natives of the districts seem to be a nondescript breed with few of the attributes of the English race. In many of these highly industrialized areas, so much is taken up by docks, factories, timber yards, warehouses, etc., with the streets intersected by waterways and turntable bridges, that the small area which remains for housing purposes might well be given up. The best of it is definitely slummy in character ; foul nests of narrow streets, where fog and flood reign supreme.

The mass of those slums north of the river are to be found in Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Stepney and contiguous boroughs. The whole a maze of small streets closely packed with cottages, a miserable slummy area, where the ornate pothouses, occupying street-corner sites, stand out as gilt and glazed edifices above the drab surroundings. Shoreditch has 100,000 people herded to the square mile. A Sunday morning visit leaves the impressions of Jews, cheapness, dirt and uproar. Beyond Aldgate are wretched little cottages in the dark and narrow back alleys of Whitechapel. Further on, mile after mile of narrow streets and thousands of dingy little houses packed together as closely as human ingenuity could devise ; that is Bethnal Green and Stepney. Rows of rectangular boxes, pierced here and there by passages leading to courts behind, not infrequently bearing the names of their builders who profited by the soaring birth-rates of the industrial beginning to sell bricks and mortar, land or bog for what they would fetch. Of Stepney, in particular, a first-class panorama of the housing conditions may be obtained from the trains passing along the Fenchurch Street to Tilbury

and Southend railway. The streets form culs-de-sac at the base of the railway embankment, and as the train passes by, row after row of miserable grimy cottages appear to view, with tiny limewashed backyards, filled with pigeon cotes, rabbit hutches, etc., the degree of whiteness of the limewash denoting the period which has elapsed since the sanitary inspector's last house-to-house visitation; lines of assorted washing suspended from windows; dilapidated outbuildings and innumerable chimney pots, wreathed in a pall of grey smoke. Here and there, bright new tenements of yellow and red arise in vivid contrast to the dingy hovels, evidence of recent slum clearances. These are the first impressions which many thousands of visitors from all parts of the world receive of the capital as they enter it by train after landing at Tilbury, not that the latter is remarkable for its beauty. In Poplar, Canning Town and other parts of West Ham, districts devoted principally to the housing of dockers and factory workers, the development is similar. The great new dock road has ruthlessly cut through the heart of this slum district, leaving on both sides of the mammoth concrete thoroughfare, lilliputian streets and houses, with people scurrying in and out like ants.

As far as the southern half of England is concerned, outside London and its suburbs, there are fortunately none of those vast urban conglomerations such as characterize the industrial midlands and north. There are few big towns and not many with populations exceeding 50,000. All are self-contained centres with rural environs, but they usually bear traces of the same promiscuous development that has cursed the remainder of the land, although the slum areas may be relatively small in extent. They consist either of very narrow lanes or small pockets or culs-de-sac off main thoroughfares, frequently called "yards"; a group of six or eight small dilapidated

cottages, originally built in an excess of thrift by some tradesman or owner of land on spare ground he possessed, possibly at the rear of his own business premises. It then became known as "Butcher's" or "Baker's" Yard, as the case may be, or the houses may have been built in the form of a small square with a pump and well in the centre. In any case, whether yard or square, there is neither fresh air nor sunlight for the occupants of these abject abodes. In many old towns, blocks of cottages are indiscriminately wedged between slaughterhouses, cowsheds, stables, etc., the only air space vouchsafed to them being viciously polluted by stenches from one or the other. Long unbroken rows of humble little dwellings, not infrequently erected in bungalow form, run at right angles from the street. Perhaps there is sufficient air space back and front, but almost invariably they suffer from the ruinous effects of old age. In other towns, cottages built chock-a-block on low-lying land, adjacent to the river, chiefly because years gone by such sites would have been incredibly cheap, are now soddened and rotten by habitual flooding, with multi-cracked walls due to settlement of their waterlogged foundations.

Even some of the glittering seaside resorts possess distinctly unhealthy areas in their "old town" sections, usually consisting of fishermen's quarters tucked away behind the harbour. A jumble of narrow streets, little old whitewashed brick or stone cottages, or they may be of wood, religiously tarred every spring, piled one around the other in picturesque confusion, but while the ocular perspective may be artistic and the effects upon the sturdy breed which inhabit them slight, if they were set in surroundings less attractive, there would be no hesitation in characterizing the district as a slum of the worst type.

Similarly, in the lanes and courts of most cathedral cities are groups of half-timbered cottages, treasured memorials of a distant past, but totally unfit for human

habitation. Such gems of mediæval architecture are, of course, worthy of preservation, but not as dwelling houses.

Bristol, the largest industrial city of the south, Leicester, Coventry, York and many other large towns, although occupied in various industrial enterprises, manufactories, iron foundries, engineering and railway works, breweries, tanneries, etc., have managed to keep industry in its place. The past is linked with the present in a dignified manner and the towns preserve their appearances, are clean and well regulated. They have slums, it is true. Narrow lanes running down to rivers, dark and damp cottages, cramped courts and airless alleys, clusters of small cottages between larger streets. Many are relics of pre-industrial days, some of them dating back to Elizabethan times. They suffer from the effects of *anno domini*. The hand of time destroys slowly, but industry and modernization swiftly devastates.

Most, if not all our large industrial areas, have been created by the merciless exploitation of great coalfields. Coal, and its twin, iron, are responsible for the filth and squalor of the "Black Country," South Wales, South and South-east Lancashire, the West Riding, Durham, Tees and Tyneside. Traversing these vast areas of industrial chaos, the number of houses unfit and also those likely to become unfit in the next decade or so would seem to be millions. Legal and other obstacles have reduced it to the lesser number of 270,000, but the difference between the two figures represents the greater problem. The better-class citizen, unused to the finer points of differentiation between bad and very bad, would unhesitatingly classify great tracts of back streets in the east end of London, in Manchester, Sheffield and scores of other industrial cities of the north, as slums, merely because the houses are small, badly designed, dirty and neglected, or that they violate his impression of the "home beauti-

ful," but æstheticism has no place in this great problem of working-class housing. If it were possible to sweep away overnight all those areas officially designated as slums under the Housing Act, 1930, most of our large cities would not present a greatly altered appearance next day. The slums are black spots on a background of shadow and as there can be no broad line of demarcation between unfit houses and fit houses, there will always be a vast zone of potential slums outside the scope of slum clearance legislation.

The colliery townships and scattered hamlets of the South Welsh hinterland, once the busiest and most famous coal-mining area in the whole world, have a slum problem all their own. Towns surrounded by mountains and steep hills, with no room for expansion, undermined by pitshafts making the acquisition of large areas impossible; rows of grey dingy cottages perilously perched on barren mountain sides, continually threatened by landslides and the rushing waters of heavy storms; the ten-mile string of dirty little towns that is Rhondda, where everything is smothered with coal-dust; they breathe it, eat it, drink it; unemployed miners sprawled full length across footpaths or gambling in groups on the high road; the steel towns of Merthyr and Dowlais, where 80 per cent. of the male population is unemployed, the rates 27s. 6d. in the £, of which public assistance takes over 15s. The whole of this large area is depressed, parts of it are derelict; and whether or not to undertake extensive slum clearance schemes in towns and villages that prosperity has left forever is indeed a problem.

The Black Country! A dreary country of factories, smoke-stacks, slagheaps and canals, where Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton, Walsall and half a dozen other equally miserable towns make everything that can be made with iron, from a crane to a safety-pin. The South Staffordshire coalfield which

supplies this district is situated all around Dudley and reaches up as far as Rugeley. Coal and iron! These built nineteenth-century England's greatness in commerce and laid waste some of her fairest fields. In Birmingham, we see the effects of haphazard industrial growth; large factories scattered about the city with clusters of small cottages wedged between them. Birmingham was the scene of much pre-war reconditioning; the opening-out of courts and improvement of back-to-back houses, of which there are approximately 40,000 in the city, but it is now only too obvious these praiseworthy efforts were directed at the wrong end of the housing problem. In the north of the shire is the pottery industry. It is of later origin than the blasting and smelting of the south, but just as the multifarious activities of the Birmingham group of towns began in the making of chains and other nick-nacks in back yards, so the birth of the potteries was the making of simple dishes and basins. With Stoke as its centre, the potteries is a confusing mixture of houses, factories, mills and mines, with a blanket of smoke sagging over the whole area, so foul that at times it is impossible to see from one end of a street to the other. A filthy slummy area, with difficulties so thick upon the ground that local authorities hardly know where to start or stop in dealing with them.

With Manchester and Salford as the hub, south Lancashire is a vast urbanized area, scores of towns large and small, densely crowded, united by a network of tramways and railroads; collieries, huge factory blocks, a wide expanse of slum areas and a smoking humid atmosphere. Manchester, in particular, being ringed by hills and situated in a basin, suffers much from smoke, which increases the general ugliness of the district and the darkness of the living accommodation. So that if the slums of Liverpool and the south-eastern part of the county are, as they are reputed to be, the worst in England,

those of the cottonopolis seem the greater and the more desolate and dreary. Lack of building sites, except at a distance of five or six miles from the city, make rehousing as difficult a problem as that of London districts.

Filthy towns straggle along the Ship Canal to Liverpool, differing slightly in appearance only in the variety of the stench and fumes from their manufactories. Liverpool probably has more courts than any other city ; scores of them not more than 10 feet wide and consisting of back-to-back houses. Some of the slums around the docks, like many low haunts of other seafaring districts, are known throughout the world. Here again rehousing must take place on the spot in order that dock-workers, etc., can be near to their work.

In the West Riding of Yorkshire we have what is probably the largest and most densely populated colony of manufacturing towns in the world. From the gloom of Sheffield, over smoky ridges, passing towns uncomfortably jostling one another and stereotyped in their dinginess, miles of grey slate-roofed cottages, factories, pits, slagheaps, to densely crowded Leeds, the problem is the same—Smoke and Slums. Everything is an unhealthy ashen colour, not even the grass seems green, and what few trees survive have their foliage covered in a grey smeary blight. Where blast furnaces send their yellow beacons to the sky, surrounding country is denuded of vegetation ; falling snow is melted by acrid fumes before it reaches earth. Most of the West Riding towns are lavishly sprinkled with back-to-back houses, Sheffield and other large towns having as many as ten or fifteen thousand, but Leeds is the city of back-to-backs, having a total of 75,000, of which it is estimated that 33,000 are totally unfit for human habitation. Street after street of them, packed to a density of 80 to the acre, where the houses are as alike as peas in a pod and the only item of difference seems to be the colour of the window curtains.

Large areas in many towns are still on the conservancy system of sewage disposal; stink-carts take out fæces from houses at the same time as the baker, butcher and milkman leave their wares.

Another highly industrialized area, with slums in abundance, is Teeside and Tyneside, with Durham county between, its hills, enveloped in smoky mist, running down to the sea. The iron and steel works of Middlesbrough and the same dreary streets of cottages, enormous slagheaps, etc., the newer chemical works of Upper Teeside, black smudges on the shore that are seaboard collieries with seams running out beneath the sea for many miles; a repetition of things at Sunderland and Wearside and in the numerous towns of the Tyne, foul tenements and large slum areas, where overcrowding, poverty and unemployment are as bad as anything to be found in England; where the shipyards, with grass growing in the slipways, are wistfully silent and the derricks strangely still. To the west is beautiful moorland country, arable and grass lands, unscarred by industry and still agricultural. The fine mansions tucked away behind trees are mostly empty.

The slums of Scottish industrial areas appear to be an even more formidable task than those of the English north and midlands. In Glasgow and Clydeside, not acres, but square miles of slums need clearing. Filthy dilapidated tenements and thousands of one-roomed dwellings, "ticketed" by the local authority in a vain attempt to prevent overcrowding. Streets of grey stone buildings, occupied by a swarming population and lacking the barest of conveniences. At the street corners, local tub-thumpers nightly roll off the catch-phrases of communism like cheap gramophone records.

Slums and slummers are as old as the human race itself, but uncontrolled industrialism and Victorian prosperity must be blamed for having made the creation

of such vast slum areas as have been mentioned possible. The rush-building of thousands of small cottages around factories created the slum environment and enabled slummers to thrive. But people must live and as much as every true lover of his country must grieve over her scarred features, the raping of her virginal beauty, there was no alternative to the present industrial system. One gifted novelist¹ in a spate of indignation has recently said he would like to resuscitate those Victorian giants of industry to rub their noses in the dirty mess they have left, but might they not stand aghast at the mess posterity has made of their efforts? As we see it now, industry could have been much better controlled, but who are we to criticize when we look around at present housing developments in many parts of the country?

The new rich of the nineteenth century, badly as they served the towns, at least added to the beauties of rural England. They built country mansions and kept up large estates, for their own interests it is true, but they preserved traditions and amenities which the revolutionized transport of the present age is ruthlessly destroying.

II

Having sketchily reviewed some of the slum areas of the country, it may now be possible to describe more in detail slum dwellings and the conditions of life in them. Undoubtedly the worst form of slum is the tenement block, for here there is neither peace nor privacy; in the alley or court, at least the people have a hovel of their own. A description of one large block, well known to the author, will suffice for them all. It is wedged between narrow streets and courts; a dark monster rearing its ugly head to the sky. It comprises four floors and a

¹ J. B. Priestley in "English Journey."

basement, the last-named being the depository for old bedsteads, bug-ridden mattresses, broken furniture, etc. The whole building is divided into right and left wings, communication between them being by means of an overhead gangway from the top floors, suspended at a dizzy height over a small central courtyard, measuring 20 feet square. One side abuts on a warehouse, the back overlooks the small yards of business premises in another street, the right wing opens into a narrow street and the left into a court. There are forty separate tenements in the block and its population numbers 226 all told, among whom are 48 children under 10 years of age.

Entering one of the wings through a dark passage from the street, up well-worn stone stairs to the first floor, necessitates stepping by the lounging or squatting forms of youths and girls, in deshabelle, grouped about the entrance, discussing in bantering vulgarity the social and moral failings of their co-residents in the "buildings." Proceeding onwards, one becomes acutely conscious of being enveloped in a foul foetid atmosphere, suffocating in its intensity, a composite smell made up of many lesser odours; the stench from foul unwashed and unaired bedding, filthy rooms littered with useless furniture and old clothes, floors, carpets and rugs soaked in urine and soiled by the excreta of infants, the reeking sweat of dirty bodies and unrenewed air vitiated by the respirations of an excessive population. All tenements seem to be filled with this smell, varying in intensity, and many of the palatial communal mansions erected in recent years to rehouse slum dwellers acquire the same objectionable odour in a few weeks. The causes are dirt in its many forms and lack of fresh air. On arriving at the first floor, it is just possible in the dim light to discern six small doors leading to a like number of tenements, three on one side of the landing and three on the

other. In a small dilapidated alcove are two w.c.'s and two sinks, with water-taps over them, for the use of the six tenements. Nearby are the refuse chutes; they are vertical channels running to the top floor into which the occupants shoot their refuse, the chute discharging into the courtyard below, from where it is collected. The walls of the landing and w.c.'s have some time or other been whitewashed to improve the natural lighting, but the more degraded of the occupants find this a useful background for indecent writings and drawings, with which most of the walls are adorned. The doors to the w.c.'s are broken, the w.c. pans filthy and the flushing cisterns defective; sundry deposits of excreta on the floor in and around the w.c.'s speak for the efforts of the children. The water-taps and sinks are within 3 feet of the w.c. doors.

Each tenement consists of three rooms, a living room and two bedrooms. Passing into the dimly lighted rooms, it is not difficult to realize why the whole block should be pervaded by such a nauseous stench; all windows are hermetically sealed, any broken panes being stuffed with old cloth, sacking or paper to prevent the draughts of fresh air so abhorrent to the occupants, whilst an ever-burning fire in the decrepit grate warms the air to a reeking sickly stew. Pale, ailing children play about the broken and filthy floors, amongst dust, food-scrap and other rubbish, languishing for clean air, proper food and healthy surroundings. The last arrival, when not suckling much and often at Nature's founts or guzzling from a dirty bottle, lays in an old perambulator, among sour-smelling clothes, fouled by repeated vomitings and urinations; a poor wee bit of malodorous humanity that has probably never breathed any pure air in its life. There is evidence of disrepair everywhere—filthy blackened walls and ceilings, the plaster of which is so defective it will not bear touching, lumps have fallen exposing large

patches of bare brickwork or ceiling lathes, the floor-boards and joists are rotten, the door- and window-frames falling to pieces, cooking-stoves broken and food stored in small unventilated cupboards near the fireplace, not infrequently infested with blackbeetles.

In the bedrooms are all kinds and conditions of beds, intricately placed to provide a maximum of sleeping accommodation; wood beds, with wire spring mattresses; iron beds with lathe mattresses; camp beds; improvised beds from orange boxes for children, down to the poorest, who sleep on the floor. And of the bedding, a few have white sheets and blankets; those of some were once white and the linen-ware of others is permanently grey, whilst many crawl fully dressed into a heap of old overcoats and such odds and ends as can be collected. And sleep? One of the horrors of tenement life is the incessant noise, punctuated almost nightly by the shrieks and screams of a domestic brawl. With the usual overcrowded condition of this class of dwelling, sleep is impossible for children and all before midnight, and undisturbed rest is unknown. During the summer, another preventive of peaceful repose is the feeding activities of the bug, louse and flea, but as these night pests constitute one of the major problems of housing, the horrors of verminous houses will be more fully described at a later stage.

Ascending to the upper floors, the playful shouts of the children echoing about the tomb-like landings and stairways, one passes similar scenes of dilapidation and domestic discomfort, with small groups of gossiping women, oblivious of the filth which surrounds them, indulging in the only relaxation they appear to get out of their joyless existence. In the top-floor tenements the roof leaks in many places, the rain dripping through the ceilings and running down the walls, leaving irregular water-marks on a background of dirt. From this elevated position the square courtyard, the only air-space

vouchsafed to this large block, as well as the only place where the spasmodic attempts at household washing may be dried, looks like a deep bear-pit as seen in some of the Continental menageries. It is strewn with garbage from the refuse chutes, the results of frequent visits by dogs and the professional calls of numerous itinerant rag-and-bone collectors.

The block which the author has endeavoured to describe is not structurally unsafe, but when families are herded together in large barrack-like tenements, something more than stability of structure is required to safeguard the health of the occupants. There must be an abundance of air-space all around the block and adequate means of natural lighting and ventilation. The absence of these vital necessities, as well as internal dilapidation, make this particular tenement block totally unfit for human habitation.

In many of the tall old houses, which were substantially built about a century ago to house well-to-do families, lawyers, doctors, etc., and have now fallen upon evil days, conditions are appalling. These have none of the facilities for separate tenements, but are really houses let out into lodgings. They may have a family in each room, where a man, his wife and children live, eat, sleep and spend their whole existence, and there may be as many as sixty people per house, including a swarm of children, with no water-tap for household purposes above the ground floor. The birth of a child in such a house is frequently a deplorable affair; the midwife or medical man on arrival has to clear the room of gampish females, gaping adolescents and wondering children, although the latter are often well-versed in old wives' pre-natal lore, and the child is ushered into a small crowded world where brute force and ignorance hold sway. In death, the corpse must perforce remain until the funeral in the same room where the family feed, the children play and the many callers

in commiseration are received. Swarming tenements of the poor ! Life passing out in one corner and a new life beginning in another !

The families living in the basements, although usually nearer to such sanitary conveniences as exist, suffer much from dampness, especially in the winter, when with the rise in level of subsoil water, the soddened walls stream with moisture. In heavy storms the floors may be flooded with back-flow of sewage. The only natural light in the front rooms may be obtained through an iron grating at pavement level and in the rear from a small back court. Underground rooms are practically always insufficiently ventilated, with heavy humid air in the winter, dusty and stifling in the summer, which has the effect of seriously reducing the vitality of persons continuously occupying them. The dangers of flooding in the basement dwellings of riverside tenements cannot better be illustrated than by referring to the great floods of January, 1928, when the Thames overflowed its banks in the dead of the night, trapping sleepers in their underground bedrooms, particularly in the neighbourhood of Westminster.

The passages and stairways leading to the upper floors are usually in a dirty and defective state ; treads and risers of the stairs broken, skirtings, rails and banisters ripped out for firewood, great patches of plaster knocked away from the brickwork, and where a water-tap has been placed on a landing for the use of the occupants, continual splashing and spilling of water soddens the walls and floors all around. Some of the large rooms, such as originally comprised the dining and drawing rooms, are subdivided into several smaller rooms by lath and plaster partitions ; these are often so badly defective that gaping holes allow one family to see what its neighbours are doing. Gas-stoves may be fixed in the corners of rooms, the walls surrounding being thickly coated

with fat from the frying-pan everlastingly spitting with some meal hurriedly dished up for "father."

In the garrets, arrived at by rickety winding stairs, although life may be a little quieter for the occupants above the constant clamour of the lower floors, it is frequently necessary for every drop of water to be carried up two or three flights of stairs, except in times of storm, when it drops on them from the leaking roof. Buckets, baths and basins then have to be distributed about the floors to catch the rain. If the rooms are built into the roof, the only access of daylight may be from skylights, the mean height from floor to the coving ceiling probably not exceeding five feet.

The inadequacy of sanitary accommodation leads to many objectionable nuisances in tenement houses. Where the w.c., perhaps serving three families, with a large number of children, is situated one or two floors below, or in the case of many tenement blocks in northern cities, out-of-doors in a common yard, it is not an unusual circumstance for the family to habitually use an uncovered pail in the corner of the room, which when full is taken down to the w.c. If this happens to be obstructed, or the pan smashed, conditions of common occurrence in the crowded houses of the poor, or if carrying the pail to the convenience presents too great an effort, then the window is opened and the contents emptied into the yard, probably without the culprit bothering to look and see if anyone happens to be in the line of fire beneath.

This class of house is often a source of considerable profit to the shrewish landladies or miserly males who manage its concerns. They may occupy the ground floor themselves and let off the other rooms at rents much in excess of what they pay for the whole. Then there are the shilling-a-night lodgings where families who have no home can find shelter. If they are fortunate they might get a room to themselves, but usually two families must

share, the beds for each being placed foot to foot. The bedding consists of coarse calico sheets and thick dark blankets, well marked with white paint to prevent misappropriation. In our large cities, there are many homeless families who sleep where they can; after breakfast the parents and children separate, the former following their respective occupations and the children going to school or wandering about the streets; then in the evening they meet to find sleeping quarters. As the boys get older, they drift away, feeding where they can, begging, stealing and generally learning to be habitual vagrants or criminals. The girls stay by their parents a little longer, but they, too, eventually come under police surveillance.

Those houses to be found in the slum courts, alleys and streets are of a very small mean type, one to four-roomed dwellings, old and dilapidated, although as regards age, few can claim to have stood the years that have mellowed many of the cottages of rural England. They were hurriedly erected with scant attention to detail in times when the standard of living for the poor was at an exceedingly low ebb; when such administrative control as existed was insufficient to prevent the establishment of housing conditions intolerable according to present-day views, and although many urban districts had building bye-laws in force, these were made only to be broken, much and often.

In a court, houses have been built upon a self-contained piece of land, with only one entrance, usually a small passage through other houses, the furthest end of the court being the blind wall of a factory or warehouse. They are narrow, dark and gloomy; there is little penetration of sunlight and no through ventilation. Even when a gale is raging with great force outside, all that may be perceived in these side-pockets in a stratum of bricks and mortar is the wind howling through the



A typical court (*see p. 47*).
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Another court with open drainage channel in the centre.

chimney-pots overhead and a whistling draught, accompanied by volleys of dust, up the entrance passage.

The alleys, although open at both ends, are equally dark and sunless and many are so narrow (not more than six feet wide) that children are able to indulge in spitting contests from opposite bedroom windows, the scores being calculated by the number of times a youngster in vigorous expectoration locates his opponent's countenance. Alleys, however, being public passages, are usually well paved and drained at the expense of the local authority, but the paving and drainage of courts is the responsibility of the owners. Flagstones or concrete, falling to a central channel which discharges into a large gully, is the principal method of removing surface water and such drainage may have to take much waste water as well, where the houses are not provided with sinks and gullies. Often the paving is broken and has numerous large holes, which fill with water. Then there are many courts which are not paved at all, where the surface consists of a series of humps and hollows, created by the deposition, here and there, of ashes and household refuse, ostensibly to enable the tenants to arrive at the doors of their abodes dry-shod. With heavy rains, the whole surface is aflow with water, the ash-heaps rising above the deluge to act as jumping-off places for such as desire a passage in or out.

Suspended across the court, fastened to door-posts, rain-water pipes, large nails driven in the brickwork or anything that will serve the purpose, are tangles of ropes and wires upon which the weekly washing dries. Fractured brickwork, loosened doorposts, broken gutters and rainwater pipes and much other damage is done by the considerable weight of wet clothes dried thus.

The typical slum streets are also very narrow thoroughfares, sixteen or twenty feet wide, with houses opening on to the highway. Many aptly bear names associated

with the age which saw their perpetration ; Albert, Arkwright, Victoria, Waterloo or Wellington, whilst others suffer more prosaic titles such as Bog, Dock, Dyke, Pump or Well. But from the clusters of narrow streets to the squalid courtyards, the problem is the same : old worn-out cottages, suffering from every symptom of senile decay, uninhabitable and beyond repair.

Enter one of those single-roomed houses which are such a deplorable feature of Glasgow and many Scottish towns ; you step from the road down into the room, the floor being about a foot below ground level. A poor wan specimen of womanhood stands dejectedly beside a kitchen table, covered with odds and ends of soiled crockery ; a dirty apron fails to conceal the fact that she is pregnant ; two small colourless children, about 15 months and 2 years respectively, are crawling about the stone floor. There are two chairs, which were once cane-seated, an old plush sofa, a decrepit chest-of-drawers, a baby's cot, a bucket, a couple of boxes and a double-sized bed, with a defective straw mattress and some old clothes in one corner of the room. Upon the sofa, reclining in an attitude betokening apathy and helplessness, is the unkempt figure of a man, sleeping, dozing, dreaming, anything but working for the good of his body and soul. His wife says he has not done a stroke for three years and judging from the condition of the room, neither has she. The walls and ceiling are filthy, the floor is covered with a thick deposit of grease and dirt, there is a heap of coal near the fireplace, cinders and ashes trod about the floor, all about the stove is bare brickwork, the mantelpiece and wood jambs having been ripped off, possibly to provide warmth when there was no coal. Neglect, poverty and decay ! Evidence of these degenerative influences everywhere, from the rotten floor, the damp walls and leaking roof, to the broken doors and windows that have not seen a coat of paint for many a year ; from the pale listless

woman and children to the man on the sofa. The gloom of these poor houses, the overcrowding, destitution, hopelessness, two out of every five ailing, seeking to live, yet to what purpose ?

You step from the all-pervading stench of the room back into the street once more, thankful for a breath of fresh air and full of momentary resentment against a system that permits human beings, however debased, to live worse than the beasts of the field. Contrast such hovels with the gilded salons where stockings, camisoles, neckties or handkerchiefs are sold, or the marbled palaces where tea is served ! Why this vast difference ? We are forced to admit man is a rapidly depreciating commodity. One of those little machines which tear up road surfaces and shatter people's nerves has a greater commercial value than a legion of unskilled labourers. Or as the sergeant-majors in mounted regiments were wont to inform recruits during the War when initiating them into the mysteries of horse-riding : " You blowdy juggers take care o' them 'orses ! They're worth more than the whole perishin' lot o' you ! We can get any amount of you for a shilling a day ! "

Two-roomed houses, with one room up and one down, exist in large numbers in the slums of the large industrial districts of the north and midlands. In providing separate sleeping accommodation, they are a slight improvement on the single-room dwelling, but they too are a housing legacy of the past, rushed up to meet the great boom in the heavy industries some eighty or a hundred years ago and now, suffering from the twin evils, age and decay, they fall far short of a reasonable modern standard of fitness. Built in courts, squares or in long unbroken rows, with a common yard in rear, these houses are often packed seventy or eighty to the acre. They usually have only the one entrance door and no through ventilation. The bedroom is reached on all fours up a dark

narrow winding stairway, and to anyone not accustomed to crawling up and down such burrows, numerous knocks and scrapes to the cranium are inevitable. In the descent one has the choice of two methods: either gradually descending from step to step on one's posterior, or scrambling down backwards. Both rooms are badly lighted and ventilated, and very small, usually about 8 or 9 feet square; the pitch from floor to ceiling may be as low as 6 feet and rarely exceeds 7 feet.

The four-roomed cottage, slightly larger by the addition of a small scullery at the back and a bedroom of corresponding size overhead, comprises the bulk of slum dwellings in most parts of the country. These also exhibit similar evidence of faulty construction and bad design. The rooms are small, with low-pitched ceilings, and often the back bedroom, built beneath a lean-to roof, is so small that it is impossible to stand upright; appropriately enough, it is then termed a boxroom. Both bedrooms may be built into the roof, with coving ceilings, inadequately lighted and ventilated by a small dormer window. It is rare indeed that they are provided with open fireplaces, which would assist ventilation and supply warmth during winter illnesses.

The most serious of sanitary defects in slum cottages is dampness of the walls, more intense, of course, where the houses have been erected on damp sites. With the invariable absence of damp-proof courses, moisture rises up the brickwork from the soil, soddening the plaster, rotting the floors and ruining such poor furniture as the occupants possess. The paper peels off the walls and often there are great patches of black or green mould over the plaster, which give to the air of the room a characteristic dank and musty smell. Porous brickwork, broken gutters and leaking roofs produce similar conditions of dampness in the bedrooms, and with the draughts whistling through ill-fitting doors and windows,

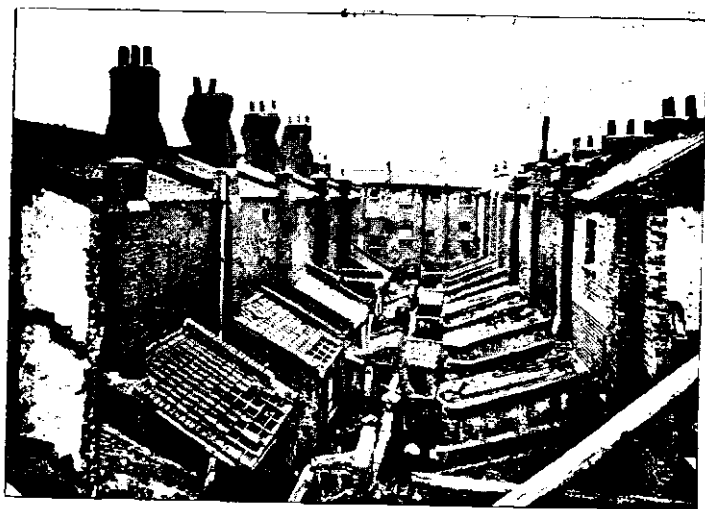
all but the strongest suffer continuously through the winter months from colds and coughs, whilst the serious diseases, tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis, etc., which levy such a heavy toll upon the lives of the poor, are more severe and treated with greater difficulty in damp houses. There is also a definite correlation between dampness and rheumatism, another condition which plays havoc with the health of the working classes. In hilly towns, row after row of slum cottages have been built on precipitous slopes, usually running straight down the hillside, instead of following the contours, so that in heavy storms the surface water rushes down the narrow streets and backyards, through the houses, flooding out the luckless occupants of those situated at the bottom, soddening the walls, rotting the woodwork and leaving a foul-smelling scum beneath the floors. Before such houses can have become dry again, they are subjected to another deluge. Much dampness is also found in the narrow low-lying streets which exist, without means of flood prevention, alongside rivers in many towns. With large rivers, the water level is subject to fluctuation, and in times of flood, it is not unusual for the occupants to awake in the morning to the sound of water lapping beneath the ground-floor ceilings.

Many cottages are distinctly unsafe through ominous cracks and bulges in the brickwork, usually due to settlement or movement of the foundations. Tying the walls together with iron rods, undersetting the foundations with concrete or externally shoring up the whole structure with timber struts prevents the house collapsing, but walls part company, large cracks appear in the ceilings, floors slope and sag, windows become firmly wedged and the roof develops permanent leaks, whatever may have been done to render the building safe. In areas subject to mining subsidence, especially in certain coal and salt-mining districts, houses gradually sink until the ground

floor becomes inaccessible. Fittings are then removed and the rooms filled in, the bedrooms being converted into living rooms. The roof is next stripped and another storey erected on the existing structure to serve as bedrooms. And so this has been going on for years, storey after storey being added as houses sink into the bowels of the earth.

The floors of ground-floor rooms are often well below ground level, joists being laid on bare earth, the consequent lack of ventilation to the floor timbers and dampness resulting in the large mushroom growths of dry rot. Even the joists of the bedroom floors are rarely more than 2 in. by 4 in., and as they become rotted through in many places, striding across the room resembles walking on a blanket. When slum dwellings are in course of demolition and the hotch-potch methods of construction are revealed, it is a marvel that they have stood so long. Split logs of green timber used for floor joists and for foundations upon which brick walls were built; bricks irregularly laid without line or plumbrule; walls but half-a-brick thick; joists built into fireplaces; 2 in. or 3 in. battens used for roof rafters, which often sagged beneath the heavy weight of the old-fashioned pantiles or thick hand-split slates, a little lime mortar being smeared here and there by the old-time craftsmen to stop any leaks.

Sanitary conveniences are of a varying order: in some districts, notably London, each cottage may possess a small backyard, woefully small it is true, in which is situated the w.c., so that a certain amount of privacy is ensured for each family. There is main drainage and, generally speaking, the house drains are in good order; thanks to the efforts of sanitary officers, the drainage system is often the best feature of the premises. A separate water-tap is provided in the small scullery or yard, and there may also be a sink and copper, or boiler, for washing purposes. In many houses, where there are



Backyards of slum cottages before demolition (*see p. 52*).

(Reproduced by kind permission of Architect's Dept., L.C.C.)



A creeper-clad cottage of the rural areas (*see p. 67*).

two living rooms and a small lean-to back addition used as a scullery, the conveniences may be situated therein. Household refuse is stored in galvanized iron dustbins. But for the greater part of the country, there is nothing approximating this standard; in fact, in many of the smaller towns and not a few of the large cities of the industrial areas, sanitary conditions, having regard to the congestion of houses and density of population, can only be described as ghastly. There are many districts where the cottages have privies in the small back-yards, which necessitates the full receptacle being carried through the house for emptying into the municipal slop-cart. Or there may be a small common yard with a range of privies situated close to the houses. In some cases, blocks of w.c.'s drain into a cesspool, and if there is no passage leading to the rear of the houses, the hosepipes from the cesspool emptier have to be taken through the house which happens to be nearest the cesspool. The author has gruesome recollections of an incident which occurred during a nocturnal cesspool-emptying expedition to such a group of slum cottages. The tenants had, as usual, left the doors unlocked for the hose to be carried through; the pipes were connected up, the motor exhaust pump started, but whilst the operation was well under way, a coupling burst inside the house, plastering the room with highly septic sewage. The picture presented by that room next day defies description.

Often the w.c. pans are not provided with automatic flushing cisterns, it being necessary for the tenants to carry water to the closets for cleansing. In some districts, trough closets are in vogue and are a constant source of trouble through misuse and insufficient flushing. The conveniences are usually placed in a dark narrow passage at the end of a long row of houses, so that the means of approach are more or less public. Two or more households sharing a single w.c. is one of the most objectionable

insufficiencies of slum life. The lack of privacy for the sexes involved by such arrangements is in no small measure responsible for that reckless abandon which characterizes many young people of the slums, as well as the satirical amusement with which some of the older generation view their lapses. It is also a common cause of the many squabbles which occur between the various families. Communal washhouses are a feature of many northern slums, but these have their compensations; here, feminine tongues wag freely and intimate scenes of conjugal bliss are described in detail, each story being capped by a "Now what price this one!"

Outbuildings are often dilapidated and dangerous, and when household refuse is deposited in large brick ashpits built against them, the brickwork is soddened with filth. In some cases, smaller ashpits built against scullery walls are used by a pair of houses, while in other districts they are underground, the refuse being shot through a trap-door level with the pavement.

The sharing of one water-tap fixed to a standpipe in a common yard by as many as half a dozen houses is another gross inadequacy. Personal ablution among the majority of slum-dwellers is something of an effort at all times, so that when it is necessary to carry water long distances, the children in particular indulge for many days in that freedom from soap and water which is their delight. Small wonder they bear a hereditary repugnance to washing, for the most they receive is a daubing around mouth and nostrils with the saliva of mother.

With back-to-back houses, although the design is fundamentally bad, there is considerable variation in their arrangement, size and structure, so much so that it is not possible to classify them all as slum dwellings. For example, in the most modern type, the premises are structurally sound and the accommodation provided as good as may be found in average working-class property;

a fairly large living room and scullery, and in some cases a cellar under the living room for the storage of coal. The water supply, sink, etc., is in the scullery, and there is separate sanitary accommodation for each house. There are two bedrooms and sometimes an attic. The houses are built in rows or blocks of about eight, with a forecourt in front, 10 or 15 feet in width, opening into a street as wide as the bye-laws require, i.e. 24 to 36 feet. Thus in such streets of modern back-to-backs, there is often a 50- or 60-foot space between the houses, which usually number about forty to the acre. An abundance of air-space in front, however, cannot make up for bad lighting and lack of through ventilation, but notwithstanding the culpability of such a form of architecture as virtually packs two rows of dwellings under one roof, these later back-to-backs, if in good repair and free from dampness, will unfortunately remain outside the scope of slum clearance legislation for many years to come.

An intermediate type of back-to-back house, slightly older than the modern house, but otherwise not dissimilar in size and structure, exists in large numbers in those districts where such methods of house-building have been permitted. Owing to the absence of forecourts, the living rooms open directly into the street and the congestion is therefore more marked; about sixty houses to the acre. The sanitary accommodation is inadequate, two or more houses sharing one convenience, whilst domestic refuse may be stored in large insanitary brick ashpits built in the space between adjoining blocks of houses. Nevertheless, with structural soundness and a good state of repair internally, some of this type will also escape demolition.

Of the earliest back-to-back houses, there is no doubt whatever that they are the worst type of slum-house in the country, a blot upon the escutcheon of every city or town that has suffered them to exist for so long. Those

built eighty or a hundred years ago in a maze of narrow unpaved courts and yards or in long unbroken rows, abutting on 20-ft. streets, as many as eighty houses to the acre, have not a single feature to commend them ; they all should be demolished. The single-room dwellings of Glasgow and other Scottish towns are in some cases back-to-back, but the oldest type in the industrial areas of the north of England are mostly two-room houses ; a living room opening directly into the street and a bedroom overhead. In addition to being inadequately ventilated, the rooms are dark and gloomy even in bright sunlight, and require artificial illumination throughout the days when light fails to penetrate the dense grey atmosphere of the smoky city. The living room usually contains a sink, water-tap and copper, so that personal and domestic washing must perforce take place in the room where the family feed and, not infrequently, a few of them sleep. The domestic washing is dried on clothes-lines strung across the court or street, or in wet weather across the living room itself. Food is stored in an unlighted and unventilated cupboard under the stairs, and where cellars exist, these are usually so dark and damp as to be practically useless, although the water supply for drinking purposes may be fixed there ; otherwise they are either boarded up or used for dumping verminous bedding and other refuse.

It is exceptional for this type of back-to back house to have separate sanitary accommodation. The water closets, or in some districts, trough closets, are built in pairs or in blocks of four or six at the end of the row, and possibly in the row itself, between the houses. They have dark narrow entrances, overlooked from bedroom windows of houses adjoining. One convenience may be shared by any number of houses up to six. In not a few districts, no attempts have been made to provide the slum denizens of these oldest back-to backs with even

the barest sanitary necessities of civilized life. The houses have no sinks, the usual practice being to tip waste water into the street; drinking water is obtained from a communal tap and domestic washing is done in small common washhouses inadequately serving the needs of many houses. Such sanitary conveniences as exist are not infrequently primitive pail closets, whilst the houses themselves show convincing signs of senile decay. The wholesale subletting of rooms in such property produces gross overcrowding with all its evils in an attenuated form.

Some of the houses are of a three-room type, one room on each floor, the first floor bedroom having been provided, as a gesture to the unconventional, with a miniature sun-balcony, *à la continentale*, but few have ever received the direct rays of that beneficent luminary. They have had other uses, however. Here, succeeding generations of infants have crawled and played in their own filth; damozels have flaunted their slatternly charms at leering louts below, whilst countless wives have yelled imprecations at departing husbands or threatened dire punishment to erring offspring from this advantageous position.

Although the erection of back-to-back houses was prohibited throughout the country in 1909 and before this in some districts by local Acts and bye-laws, the hurried conversion during the post-war house shortage of such buildings as stable-mews, rooms over garages, stores, etc., into living accommodation created many dwellings with single back walls between them, which have all the objections of this undesirable type. The division of large houses and mansions into numerous flats, with probably three or four separate tenements on each floor, all reached by a common staircase, also frequently results in a number of the tenements being back-to-back. The use of such premises, however, is not definitely prohibited if the local medical officer of health certifies

that the several tenements are so arranged as to secure effective ventilation of all habitable rooms in every tenement, but since the War many large buildings have been so divided and used without the necessary certificate being obtained. There is no legal definition of what constitutes back-to-back houses, and any attempt to treat these converted buildings as such almost invariably encounters stiff opposition from the owners, but it is generally held that there must be an unbroken and continuous centre wall dividing the houses or tenements, and by this it is assumed that the houses which are placed back to back must be of practically equal height.

Looking at the slums now, it seems difficult to believe that these cottages were once new ; that even if congested in courts and narrow streets, they once looked spick and span, smelling of paint and new timber and were much sought after by workers then crowding into the factories. One might almost visualize the man cracking his whip over horses and plough for the last time ; leaving the forty-acre field for the factory ; a pioneer in a new age, the age of industry ; rearing his family in one of these little houses in the towns where everything seemed prosperous. But hard times, with ever-increasing poverty and distress, gradually undermined health and strength of character of what in all probability was originally the finest of human material, whilst overcrowding and the vicious habits of many slum-dwellers, much more than the forces of *anno domini*, have been the instruments of destruction of property not too well built to begin with. Houses in massed confusion have created an environment which would stifle the lustiest of human creatures, as well as starve their hopes and ambitions, if they ever had any. So that despite a half-century's painstaking work by sanitary officers throughout the country to maintain such houses in a state of repair reasonably commensurate with their bad construction and design, it has been a losing fight all the way.

Overcrowding has been mentioned as one of the principal causes of decay of property. In many districts, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it has been the chief cause. Where families numbering ten, fifteen or more inhabit small four-roomed cottages, there is bound to be excessive wear and tear. The mere fact of living under such cramped conditions, sitting down to meals in relays, shouldering each other out of the way, waiting their turn for the w.c., every room used for sleeping purposes, and beds that are never cold, makes for a rough-and-tumble kind of an existence ; a case of every man for himself and the devil take the leavings.

An incident comes to my mind which may illustrate much more than overcrowding statistics, the continuous struggle that goes on in large families occupying tiny cottages, the degrading habits formed through lack of sufficient sanitary conveniences, and the pollution of immature minds owing to the impossibility of sex privacy.

Having noticed that certain black-headed boys of an Irish family with, one might almost say, the map of "that distressful isle" stamped all over their impish faces, appeared on different days garbed in a rich red waistcoat, resplendent with silver buttons and brocade, I was somewhat intrigued to know whether each possessed a similar waistcoat or if it was the only one and shared between them. Asking one of the boys how it happened that he was attired in the waistcoat that day, whilst his brother had it or a similar one on several days before, I received a pert reply, "Wal, sorr, I got up fust!" It transpired that the family was a large one ; that, in fact, there were in all twenty-three children, with sixteen of them still living at home. In the small back bedroom of the four-roomed cottage where they lived, six boys, ages ranging from 4 to 15 years, and two girls, 8 and 12 years respectively, slept on a number of straw mattresses placed about the floor. The walls were stained with

urine where the boys habitually used the room as a urinal, and on the occasion of my visit, the mattress where the two girls slept bore evidence of the elder one having recently menstruated. The incident of the waistcoat arose thus—as the children undressed, their clothes were tossed in a heap on the floor and the first lad to rise next morning bagged the prize—the red waistcoat. The other rooms were also packed to suffocation. In the front bedroom, four older girls and two toddlers slept, whilst the father and two grown-up sons shared a made-up bed in the living room downstairs, the mother, an incorrigible petty thief, being at the time a guest of the country for having misappropriated several tins of condensed milk. The house, with scarcely a bit of sound timber or plaster in it, filthy, verminous and stinking enough to poison a polecat, was probably worse than the majority of slum dwellings, but such are the conditions of life in the overcrowded hovels occupied by the lowest stratum of the poor.

Those parts of the country which luckily escaped unscathed from the industrial confusion of the past century and, being “off the map,” have not attracted the attention of capitalists and other advocates of “progress,” still retain their old-world charm. The many Tudor and Georgian cottages of mellow red brick and tile blend with the foliage of beech and elm into a peaceful setting; memorials of the past when an Englishman’s ideal was home and a garden. It is nothing more than an intuitive yearning for this vision beautiful that causes the people of to-day to prefer mass-produced cottages, cheap, shoddy and of vulgar architecture, to the perfectly appointed but soulless tenements in the vast communal palaces, which are the outstanding development of post-war housing. The little country towns, so typically English, may be very sleepy; they may be hotbeds of gossip and scandal, with petty shopkeepers ready and willing to

slit each other's throats for a new customer, but they are free from those vast stretches of foul back streets, dark twisted alleys and airless courts which render hideous the so-called thriving centres of industry. But while many districts may justly claim they are free from slums, there are extremely few towns or even villages in the country that have no houses at all unfit for human occupation. Most of them, it is true, are individual houses, or small groups of two, three or more, which age and decay have rendered obsolete. Disrepair, bad design, faulty construction and insufficiency or total absence of sanitary necessities, suffice to secure their condemnation but, as a rule, bad arrangement of the houses and lack of through ventilation are defects not so commonly associated with dwellings of this type, as in the slums proper. The housing work of such districts is therefore merely the replacement of old worn-out cottages ; theirs is no problem in any sense and much less so when compared with the gigantic tasks confronting authorities in slum areas.

Some small towns have large numbers of wooden houses ; especially the many small ports which flourished in the days of sailing ships. These, displacing less water, could use shallow harbours not open to the steamships. A brisk trade done in timber from Norway and the Baltic made this commodity cheaper than bricks, and it was consequently largely used in house-building. With tarred wood walls and red tiles, built in tight clusters for protection from the elements, they present a picturesque appearance, not unlike the clusters of tall houses on the steep shores of the Mediterranean, except that the Latin builds closely to be sociable with his neighbours and paints his house white to match the sunny climate. Arranged thus, they lack sufficient air space, but with pure air blowing off the sea and gales raging for most of the winter, this hardly matters, unless the houses are closely

hemmed in with taller buildings and the natural lighting and ventilation is seriously impoverished. When erected upon proper foundations of brickwork, these wooden houses are singularly free from dampness, rarely show signs of dry rot and, carefully maintained, have as long a life as some of the cheap brick cottages, the timber of former times being sound and well seasoned; vastly superior to the kiln-dried, sappy wood of to-day. Being of lighter construction, however, they cannot endure excessive wear and tear, and although defective external woodwork can be easily renewed, when the wall plates and general framework show signs of decay, the structure is really beyond further repair. A greater proportion of wooden houses are verminous than those of brick construction chiefly because, once badly infested, it is well-nigh an impossibility to disinfest them.

The housing conditions in villages and sparsely populated rural areas vary according to the character of the district and the occupation of its inhabitants. In the many mining villages of our great coalfields, the living conditions of the miners and their unusually large families are as bad as anything to be found in the slums of the crowded towns and cities. Arising from the same cause, i.e., the development of organized industry, the types of houses are similar to those of the urbanized industrial areas. There are the single-room cottages, back-to-back houses, long terraces of two- or four-roomed houses. There are courts and squares, with common yards unpaved and undrained, roads unmade, water supplies inadequate and often drawn from contaminated shallow wells. There may be no means of drainage whatever, and sanitary conveniences consisting of privy-middens or pails.

Census statistics for the country show that those districts where the greater proportion of the population are miners are easily the worst as regards overcrowding,

i.e. counting all houses where the number of occupants are in excess of the Registrar-General's standard of two persons per room, and although such statistics, except for serving as a comparison of housing conditions in different districts, are of little practical worth, since they are based on a standard which among other things makes no allowance for cubic capacity or separation of the sexes, they indicate as far as figures can possibly do, the severity of housing conditions. They do no more than average between good and bad, however ; just a dim reflection of a truly terrible picture. Miners, more than any other workers, are rigidly stereotyped by the nature of their toil ; creatures moulded and stamped by the uniformity of their environment. Working in dark places, their whole lives seem overshadowed by darkness and their homes and habits portray a callous indifference, an animal stoicism, without which they would probably be unable to endure their hardships, or it may be an instinctive realization of the futility of struggling against an overwhelming destiny. The evils of bad design, cheap construction, dampness, senile decay, nothing can alter, but extremes of overcrowding, neglect and wilful damage will destroy any property and quickly make hovels of the best. Many of the filthy and destructive habits of the poor arise from their occupations. Men clothed in a compost of grease, soot and metal dust, their nostrils filled with the stench of soap works, oil-cake mills, gut-scraping plants, etc., these are constant reminders of the atmosphere in which they work. What is the use of washing off filth and grease that will be there again to-morrow ? And so the plaint that miners do not use pithead baths, but go home to bed unwashed. When men and boys work for several hours in a crouched position at the coal face, perhaps stark naked owing to a torrid atmosphere, allowances have to be made for them. Their smashing tactics on Saturday nights are possibly

due to the fact that hacking coal all the week, they cannot shake off the habit of hacking at something or other.

In the typically agricultural parishes, the condition of the cottages of farm workers depends chiefly upon ownership; if forming part of the estates of landed gentry, a very high standard has usually been maintained, for the welfare of their tenants is the first concern of such owners, or at least it was until heavy taxation and death duties drove many of them off the land. In not a few rural districts, however, the houses of the lower classes are, if anything, in a more dilapidated state than the slum dwellings of towns, although probably the density of such houses is less per square mile than per acre in the latter. The worst are nothing more than primitive shelters constructed of a variety of materials by methods most crude. Walls built of stone, flint, brick or wood, depending upon which of these materials was cheapest, may be devoid of internal plastering, it being the duty of the tenants to whitewash them in much the same way that the farmer provides for his cattle in cowshed or stable. Brick walls are often built with bricks on edge, i.e. 3 in. thick, and whilst those of stone and flint are usually sound and tolerably free from damp, proper foundations and damp-proof courses are invariably absent. Sometimes the walls consist of a mixture of bricks and stone, with cracks and crevices filled in with tiles or flints, the whole copiously smeared over with lime mortar. Stone and tile floors are also common. All rooms are small and low-pitched, often with timbered ceilings, the windows appearing like so many portholes, those of the bedrooms, if built in the roof, being at almost floor-level. Roofs of thatch, if of sufficient thickness, are generally watertight, but in many wretched cottages this has rotted and worn so thin that in places it is possible to see the sky. Attempts to repair by inserting patches of slates or tiles gives the place an even more decrepit appearance.

That the sanitary services in many country districts are woefully inadequate is well known, and some of the functions of rural authorities, such as cesspool-emptying, are often performed in an extremely perfunctory manner or not at all, but the greatest problem of rural housing is the provision of a pure supply of water for drinking purposes. Stored rain-water collected from roofs forms the source of supply in many cases, and when in times of drought this is exhausted, cottagers are obliged to carry water in pails and other receptacles from supplies several miles distant, or a central supply tank may have been provided in the village to which water is taken by water-cart and doled out to the villagers by the pail. The village pump is still the source of supply in many compact villages. Where water is drawn from springs and ponds, surface pollution is inevitable, and where shallow wells form the source of supply to individual cottages, these are liable to subsoil contamination, particularly in porous ground with cesspools, etc., in close proximity. It is not unusual in some villages for at least 50 per cent. of the shallow wells to be contaminated. And until the Local Government Act, 1929, although these conditions were well known to authorities, little could be done to remedy them owing to the fact that the total cost of any water schemes had to be borne entirely by the parishes in which they were provided. In most cases this would have resulted in a special rate of three or four shillings in the pound, but now that the Act allows any deficit to be spread over the whole rural district, many rural councils are proceeding with extensive water schemes.

Thus, if the countryside is without slums, keeping to a strict definition of the term, it possesses in such conditions as these a housing problem which is at least a counterpart of the city slum. Insufficient sanitary administrative control and the greater power of vested interests in many

of the rural districts are responsible for much of the trouble. One usually finds that those agricultural districts where the farming element is well represented on local authorities contain the worst property, much of it so dilapidated as to be quite unsafe; it is not by any means exceptional for premises to collapse about the ears of their occupiers. Some of these creeper-clad cottages, festooned with honeysuckle and roses and set among trees in large gardens, produce ecstatic thrills in sophisticated town-dwellers; to suggest demolition raises storms of protest. Archæological and other societies pour forth venomous diatribes on such a sacrilege, dubbing health officials barbarians in an age of destruction. When viewed from a distance, it must be conceded many of them look very pretty, but if there is any object in their preservation, it is not that of human occupation.

Overcrowding is another evil not confined to the working-class property of crowded urban areas; its existence in rural cottages is more often caused by large families than by subletting, this pernicious practice being less evident among agricultural workers than town-dwellers, but its effects are in no sense dissimilar. Although body ill-health often appears less evident in the poorest children of the country than in those of towns, there is just the same physical, and also psychological, deterioration of youth. The prevalence of adenoids and infected tonsils is proof of this, for these defects, which result chiefly from continuous clogging of the nasal passages with dirt and mucus and the consequent necessity for mouth-breathing, are commonly attributable to the foul air of overcrowded houses. The gaping yokel of the countryside, butt of all the caricaturists and "superior" townsmen, is more often afflicted with adenoids than a deficiency of intelligence.

A dissertation upon vermin has been purposely relegated to the end of this chapter, since the bulk of slum

dwellings, tenements, back-to-back houses and cottages of all kinds, in every part of the country are verminous, and by vermin is generally meant fleas, cockroaches, beetles and bugs, but mostly bugs. Many slum dwellings are infested with rats; in rows of cottages they run under the floors and in the roofs from one end to the other; they scramble up and down defective walls, etc., and in the night sound like housebreakers on the job; but rats, however much discomfort they may cause, are not generally classed as house vermin. Similarly, many slum-dwellers are badly infested with lice; masses of greyish-white lice and nits can be seen crawling behind the ears, in hair matted with grease and dirt, and "crummy" specimens are continually scratching or rubbing themselves against door-posts, etc., to allay the irritation of either head-lice or those in the clothing next the body, but lousiness is personal filth and not the result of bad housing. Fleas, on the other hand, although infesting persons and their clothing and also domestic animals, are present in most slum houses and their contents. They exist in large numbers in dirty bedding, carpets, rugs and other domestic furniture; they lodge in dust-filled crevices of floorboards, skirtings, etc., and hop about the floors and walls. Domestic cleanliness is their enemy, an art not too enthusiastically practised by even the best of slum-dwellers, who get thoroughly inured to the creatures' feeding activities and take little notice of the irritation occasioned by their perambulations. They are most prevalent in bedrooms, preferring their victims to be in a state of repose, but in warm weather they blithely hop about tenement landings or venture downstairs in cottages and even out of doors to the street. Filthy houses shelter vast numbers and fresh blood attracts them with lightning-like rapidity. One does not need to stand in such houses for more than thirty seconds before an itching sensation about the legs heralds

the approach of the advance guard ; another couple of minutes and they have swarmed all over the body and clothes, and one can be safe in estimating the total cargo in hundreds.

Cockroaches and also blackbeetles are sometimes found in slum houses, but their distribution is generally restricted. They have a predilection for dark corners, such as under hearthstones, stairs, floors, etc., and in such positions, their eggs are deposited. Here, too, they rest in clusters during the day, prowling for food at night. Their chief objection is that they contaminate foodstuffs and the inaccessibility of their hiding places constitutes the chief difficulty in eradicating them from houses. On hot nights, in badly infested houses, they issue in great numbers, swarming everywhere, crawling into the beds and, especially in the case of beetles, which are the most repulsive, terrorizing women and children.

With fleas, etc., the means of eradication are not really difficult ; all that is required is care and cleanliness, but bugs are a much tougher proposition ; even slight infestations demand the continued application of extremely vigorous measures. In many slum districts, it is indeed rare to find a house free of them, and for an individual unaccustomed to slum life and its horrors, to spend a night in one of the worst houses would be almost sufficient to drive them insane. The mere thought that bugs may have crawled over them in their sleep produces extreme nausea in better-class people, the revulsion being so great in some that they vomit violently, run a temperature and are really ill. But while slum-dwellers do not regard bugs with complete equanimity or with the contempt bred of familiarity, they at least acquiesce in their presence, and beyond squashing a few of the uncleanly insects on the walls, leaving numerous tell-tale smudges of blood and dirt, they do little to keep them under. Such an indifferent attitude is not

surprising when it is remembered that they have been used to bugs all their lives ; their old houses, which provide unlimited scope for bug-culture, have probably been infested for a great many years, long before some of the occupants were born, and few of them possess the necessary resources to effect complete eradication of the pests. They are usually without facilities for destroying those which attack them at night, for the most that slum-folk possess to search in the dark, with eyes dimmed by sleep, is probably a candle ; it is so much easier therefore to scratch and sleep, sleep and scratch, and fervently hope the hungry parasites will suck their fill of blood quickly and depart. An examination at daybreak of infested rooms reveals bugs wending their way homeward, crawling up walls, along bedrails, etc., for curiously enough they appear to possess a homing instinct, returning to the crack or crevice which first gave them shelter, clustering around their progenitors of varying ages.

Little brown insects, round in shape but thin and flat, as thin as paper before they have fed, bugs are able to enter the smallest crack. They are not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter when full grown, are not particularly quick in movement and possess protective stink glands, which emit offensive odours. When present in large numbers, they convey to the room and contents a dull heavy stench, frequently likened to "sweaty feet." Their places of refuge are in the straw or flock of defective mattresses, in the seams or under the tabs of sound ones, in the joints of iron bedsteads, in the junctions of the wood supports and spring-coils of wire-spring mattresses, behind skirtings, architraves, mantels, sills, etc., in the joints of match-boarded partitions, behind pictures and in the frames, in upholstered furniture, under wallpapers and in the many cracks of the plaster of walls and ceilings. It is in such positions that the females deposit their eggs and, as these possess a particularly strong cuticle and are

capable of surviving most unfavourable conditions, the insuperable difficulties of disinfecting old slum houses, leaving aside the question of infested furniture and clothes, can be realized. With an abundancy of good hiding places in the rotten woodwork and plaster, and bugs able to pass from house to house through defective walls, etc., accompanied by the usual overcrowded condition of such houses, it does not indicate want of effort to label the task hopeless. Badly infested houses literally teem with vermin in the summer, and the old joke of going into such a dwelling in a blue suit and leaving with a brown one is partly true. Several bugs will drop on to one's head and shoulders merely by standing in a room for a few moments, and it is nothing out of the common to see them drop into the occupants' dinners or into cups of tea. They cluster undisturbed in dusty corners and, in the bedding of the very filthiest, under pillows, in the sleeves and seams of old coats, etc., lay in thick mats, numbering thousands, like leafy débris beneath trees in autumn. Rather than face the horrors of night, many families drag their mattresses into back yards, arranging about them screens of blankets on rope-lines. Here they enjoy the rest that would be impossible inside, although a few bugs usually go with them, and next day these may be observed instinctively seeking shelter under window sills, in loose mortar joints of brickwork or in any available chink in fences, etc. Dwellers in tenements and back-to-back houses must perforce tolerate such terrible conditions unless they sleep on the stone floors of cellars or landings. Some smear turpentine or paraffin over their bodies to ward off the vermin; others get up in the night and shake themselves like dogs to dislodge clinging insects.

It must not be imagined, however, that bugs are confined to the slums or that they are solely the result of uncleanness, although this deficiency permits of their unrestricted propagation. They are often carried into the

cleanest homes, and in such a variety of ways that to recount the following incident may be justified :

A certain military gentleman of title, living in a large country mansion, had suddenly developed rabid tendencies owing to the discovery of bugs in his bedroom. He had turned the whole house into an uproar, dismissing domestics right and left. His lady was prostrate and his poor old valet so harassed and bewildered that he hardly knew whether he was afoot or horseback. The sanitary officer called in to investigate discovered the seat of infestation to be under numerous wooden battens on the exterior of a large travelling trunk in a small dressing room adjacent to the bedroom. It appeared that the nobleman had, after wintering with his wife in the West Indies, quixotically decided to return to England in a French four-masted windjammer via Vigo, this particular trunk being lodged in the steward's quarters to allow more room in the small cabin he occupied, and there it must have become infested with bugs, for few wooden ships, from barges to schooners, are ever free from vermin. Sailors for many years have carried them in their clothes, in their thick wool jerseys, the seams of trousers and jackets, to houses on shore, which accounts for the reasons why bugs were first observed in seaports and dockside areas, and are still more prevalent there than in inland towns. However, on destruction of the offending trunk and thorough spraying of the dressing room, no more bugs were found.

Sufficient has been written of bug-infested houses to demonstrate the seriousness of this aspect of the slum problem. In many ways it is the most serious aspect of the problem, for apart from their loathesomeness, bugs, by their predatory habits, are a menace to the health of the occupants, especially children, who are frequently in poor condition owing to continual harassing by vermin. And in the clearance of slums, how to get the occupants into new houses or tenements without their bugs is quite another problem in itself.

CHAPTER III

SLUM-DWELLERS

ONE very striking point about the great slums publicity campaign which has been launched in the last few years is that it confines itself to slum clearance and rehousing ; reference to slum-dwellers as part of the problem is carefully omitted. To those of us who have worked in the slums, the greatest factor of all is not so much the slums as the people who live in them. Upon their reactions depends the success or otherwise of this vast social experiment to which the nation has committed itself.

Idealists and ardent housing reformers visualize an immediate response to an improved environment ; others see in slum-dwellers no possible hope of reform. The latter assert that most of to-day's slums have been converted into such by the filthy habits of the occupants, who will manufacture slums wherever they go. Often there is justification for this attitude. Owners who time after time have spent a year's rent in removing for the benefit of new tenants filth left by the previous one, only to find in a few months the house in as bad a condition as ever ; those who have seen their property wilfully damaged and gradually rendered worthless by destructive tenants or, worse still, owner-occupiers who, having been thrifty enough in their youth to buy a neat little house in a neat suburban street, are forced to watch the invasion of the district by a rough uncouth people, involving rapid depreciation of a life investment ; all these can be forgiven for adopting this view. There is a great deal more truth in it than those impassioned exponents of the

social and political aspects of the slum problem appear to appreciate.

To know the people of the slums, to understand the mentality of the different types, to appreciate their failings and their extreme poverty, to watch their home-life, to observe the women with their child-bearing and child-rearing, one must either live or continuously work in the slums. Whilst close contact with people frequently obscures the vision of them as a whole, accentuating their worst features and, in the case of slum-dwellers, inclining one to cynicism, born of disgust, the somewhat miscellaneous impressions set out in this chapter under the headings of Vice, Poverty and Ignorance are the result of many years' observation, and may enable impartial readers to form some idea of the true value of these denizens of the slums. At least they may be able to avoid that sloppy sentimentalism which characterizes much of the present propaganda.

VICE

It scarcely matters to-day whether the slums were originally made by the people or vice versa. In the industrial beginning builders obviously did not build slums, but they created the slum environment, which in turn fostered slum habits in the people, but now both slums and people have progressed so far down the road of degeneration that to decide which began the race would be invidious. If, as biological experts in the U.S.A. have proved, it is possible by environmental means alone to make a 100 per cent. American in the third generation of any of the mixture of races, Nordic, Slav or Latin, that have in the past left Europe for the New World, then is it surprising that the extremely bad housing and living conditions of the poorer classes of Britain, which we know have existed for more than a century, should have effected such great changes in the

character of the people? Notwithstanding hereditary influences, home life is largely responsible for the physical and psychological make-up of child, adolescent and adult, and considering the slum environment as an instrument of evil, can we really expect slum-dwellers to be paragons of virtue? It is a useless and dangerous expedient to gloss over unsavoury details, and in acknowledging their vices and taking steps to bring them under studied control, one is not doing a disservice to slum-dwellers. There can be no objection in admitting, and this will become more apparent as time goes on, that an appreciable percentage of the occupants of the slums, and also those of the slums prospective, are born slum-makers; a curse to any landlord, private or municipal, and in many cases a curse to themselves and the whole community. This vicious class may be considered the core of the whole slum problem. It consists of people of varying degrees of viciousness: drunkards, hooligans and loafing idlers down to the hardened criminals and moral degenerates; men and women who are monsters of cruelty and soddened with drink, who prefer to lead lives of filth and crime. They are drawn from every walk in life, some having sunk from a good social position, and there is no doubt that as a class they are hopeless, with not even the remotest chance of regeneration.

Slum-makers exist to a greater extent in the large cities, where their mode of living is more easily attained, than in the smaller country districts, where ostracization by the neighbours still counts for something. Rent collectors can tell many a tale depicting the contempt these people have for their obligations; of brazen children flinging open doors and spitting upon the collector, or handing to him the rent-book with what appears to be coppers and change wrapped in paper, but when opened proves to be offensive matter, whilst parents guffaw behind the curtains. The utter uselessness of endeavour-

ing to collect rents from them or of keeping pace with their destructive ability has in some cases led owners to abandon the houses. One such haunt, long since demolished, but well remembered by the author, went by the name of Cow Lane. No rent had been collected for years, and the last agent sent by the owner in a final attempt to extract something on account was so roughly handled, being thrown into a nearby canal by some of the women, that the occupants were left in free and unrestricted possession, or in the words of the old Irish saw, "They paid no rint and lived contint!" At least they did according to their own lights, for the lane was the scene of constant tumult, which every Saturday night, after closing time, developed into a positive inferno. Policemen, wise in the ways of inebriety, would arrive when the melée was drawing to a close and all the exhausted combatants desired was sleep. Gradually the property was knocked to pieces and families were forced to abandon the houses one by one. They hung on as long as they possibly could, however, and when the last of them departed, practically all woodwork had been removed and nothing but a ruin of brick walls remained.

The more enlightened section of the community must perforce plan the arrival of their children, but this class of people breed in lust, the pregnant wife often openly vaunting her condition as a reason for non-payment of debts. Multiplying without restraint, their progeny, notwithstanding high infantile mortality, are numerous, and from the day of birth become dependent upon some form of charitable maintenance from either local or national sources. District nurses and visiting midwives frequently find that no preparations whatever have been made for a birth, not a stitch of clothing for the infant, no fuel or any utensils. On their next visit, they bring a large bundle of clothing from the hospital or institution and parents, having already anticipated this, have not

bestirred themselves. With their home life a background of poverty, crime, intemperance, ignorance and disease, the children grow up with warped bodies and minds, animalism and cruelty uppermost in their nature. Their earliest recollections are displays of brutish passion, savagery and sensuality, drunken brawls, endless conjugal strife and loose living. All day long they are accustomed to no other language but foul blasphemy; but slum days, bad as they are, cannot compare with the nights. Dark passages, mysterious comings and goings, growing children forced to sleep with filth, in intimate nearness to horrors unseen, their immature minds questioning the noises of the night, sensing vile practices. They see white women living with coloured men and their half-caste children. In the tenements and cheap houses-let-in-lodgings, through overcrowding and lack of privacy, they are in constant moral danger. Frequently they are taught to steal before attaining school age, and the boys in particular turn up sooner or later at the police courts; but, generally speaking, not even birchings, reformatory or other drastic disciplinary treatment can subdue the wild lawless passions with which heredity has endowed them. To anyone systematically handling this type of child, watching their habits and seeing their capacity for evil increase as they grow older, it is only too clear that their lives are doomed to disaster. Some develop a cunning which endows them with an inordinate aptitude for creating trouble and escaping from the results of it; others seem consumed with a diabolical hatred of everyone and everything, imagining that every hand is against them. Not unusually this type are weedy, insignificant specimens. They grow up to man- or womanhood poor in health and physique, full of class jealousy. Communism presents natural attractions to them and they preach the doctrine which means something for nothing, as far as they are concerned.

The extent to which the slum-making element exists varies considerably in different districts and also in the various slums of those districts. In an average industrial slum area it is about 10 per cent., and that this is a reasonably accurate estimate is supported by the fact that in past rehousing schemes something like this percentage have usually had to be evicted for their filthy and vicious habits. These have generally crowded into parts contiguous to where slum clearances have been made, making conditions worse in the adjoining property. It must not be imagined that the other 90 per cent. are faultless. If slum-makers are black, then the remainder can be graded in various shades from the darkest hue to white. In some of the foulest districts, there is no doubt that slum-makers predominate, crime and vice being particularly rife in those cities which possess comparatively large foreign quarters occupied by Chinese, Arabs, Negroes, etc. The Irish labouring classes, with their ever-increasing families, are among the worst destroyers of property. Personal and domestic cleanliness is not especially apparent in the English lower classes, and although certain types of Scotch are noted for their moral and physical purity, this certainly does not apply to those of the industrial areas who, like the highlanders of old, are "inseparable from their vermin and as odorous as buck goats," but I think the lowly Irish poor transcend them all and yet, in contrast, the fine hefty police forces for which many northern cities are noted, are mostly recruited from this stock. The habits of the lower-class Jewry are also filthy; their families, like their women, assume large proportions, and help to make a Gentile slum more squalid and foul. The question of rehousing aliens must be a difficult one for those areas with this class of population. I remember during the War being taken to a street in one of our large ports occupied almost entirely by Arabs, their white wives and children of

varying hues, from chocolate colour to dirty white. It was one of the show-places for bold bad sailormen! If not already cleared, it would most certainly have been included in the present clearance campaign, and whilst everyone would hold up both hands for building communal mansions and homes for working Britons, it would seem madness to rehouse such people at the expense of the community. Any other country would have deported them to their native lands long ago. The same might also be said of many of the Irish, but, as others put it, Ireland's *Sinn Fein* policy is not meant for her children across the water.

To observe daily the life of people in such middens of filth makes one despair of any improvement. Once, during the War, when the warship on which I was serving was forced to dock for repairs, I had little else to do for nine days but watch life in a large tenement block hardby, and incidentally one of the foulest it was possible to conceive. The ship rose high in the dock, affording unobstructed views of the rear elevation, with the large common yard and dilapidated outbuildings. The block, some 80 yards in length and six storeys high, had the dark forbidding appearance of a gaol, the many windows standing out in relief from a background of sooty brickwork. During the day, women seemed to have the place to themselves. Infants played in the yard, their shrill voices echoing about the buildings, and a few shambling males made sundry appearances, but it was slatternly females who predominated; they gossiped in groups or leaned out of the upper windows, some remaining thus for hours, just looking! Now and then, they bawled lewdly to men passing by and to the sailors, many brazenly proffered themselves, lifting skirts and freely exposing fleshy charms by way of inducement. Occasionally a window-sash would be thrown up and rugs beat on the sill, or a mattress would be laid out to dry, or a bucket of

filth emptied into the yard below. Towards opening time, there was a steady procession towards the street; those who had taken jugs and other receptacles returned; others did not. A little before noon, the already depleted gossiping groups broke up and heads withdrew from the windows, presumably to scratch something together for dinner. The somnolent atmosphere gave way to the clumping of heavy feet, clattering plates and the yells of school children, who bolted into the buildings, returning in a few moments, both hands filled with hunks of bread. These they wolfishly devoured, gesticulating and holloaing the while. Many shoeless, with just a few rags distributed over their starved bodies, they pattered down the street and were soon lost to view. Little wild animals, stealing, begging or combing the gutters, until school claimed them again.

In the afternoon, groups re-formed, heads appeared at windows and the leisurely round continued. The coming of newsboys with early editions appeared to be an occasion of importance; scrawny and bullish necks bent eagerly over the columns, voices bandied about the building and even slight animation was manifest in the spitting loafers of the yard.

Later the bibulous ones returned, straggling back in twos and threes, some hysterically verbose, others snarling and snivelling, a few with uncertain gait, their hats awry and long skirts trailing in the mud, but all much less amiable than before their departure. One sensed a perceptible change in the atmosphere; many of the women seemed ripe for quarrelling. Presently actual sounds of strife could be heard in different parts of the building: women squalling, small children crying, the sounds of things being thrown about the rooms. Into this tension the children returned from school, but the boys, probably grown wise from past experience, stood in the yard yelling up to the windows of their respective

domiciles for pence. Parental heads appeared, hurling foul abuse upon them, but they, nothing loth, replied in terms equal to the occasion. After the passage of more filthy language, coins might be tossed to them, whereupon they scuttled away to seek the pleasures of the town, but if their harangue proved unsuccessful, they hung about the yard with the increasing company of loafers who, as dusk fell, could be seen furtively issuing from the stairways of the tenements; apt pupils in a school of petty crime, snatch-thieves, pick-pockets, etc., to eventually develop into habitual thieves or stop-at-nothing criminals. If the girls, on their return from school, dared to linger, however, raucous voices shrieked to them to "Come and take this squalling brat" or "Hurry your blasted bones and get a bloater for the 'old man's' tea," accompanied by a self-pitying whine about "what a 'ard day" the maternal parent had had. Small girlish forms, with unkempt straggling locks and dressed in an odd mixture of adult and childish clothing, could be seen holding dirty infants hipwise and simulating parental methods of soothing wind or indigestion.

Darkness and the many lighted windows of the tenement, children playing in and out of the shadows, dark forms sneaking out of doorways gave the premises an even more sinister aspect by night than by day. At each end of the yard were two lamp standards, from the light of which groups of men gambled each night through until the first streaks of dawn appeared across the sky. Children, including babies-in-arms, played until utter weariness drove them inside to sleep. Towards midnight men and women, in that stage of intoxication known as "fighting drunk," wrangled their way along the street, into the yard and upstairs to their rooms, continuing the dispute long into the night with intermittent bouts of fisticuffs and furniture-smashing. Others, and these were mostly women, crawled back in the small hours

in the condition known in alcoholic parlance as "incapable." Neighbours rarely interfered in domestic brawls, although in one dinner-time episode when a diminutive one-legged fellow, having the appearance of a seaman, was engaged in unequal combat with his extremely ponderous wife, and a carrotty-headed female interposed to lend support to the husband, the warring spouses united to defeat and put to flight the common enemy, afterwards retiring in righteous triumph, unmindful of their original conflict.

Very early one morning, the place was raided by a large body of police for the purpose of apprehending a number of deserters believed to be hiding inside. For about half an hour pandemonium reigned complete, and if it was fighters they were seeking, the women certainly showed greater aptitude for this than the males. Some literally fought like tigresses to protect their men. Pots, pans and crockery of all descriptions were hurled at the police surrounding the buildings; when the supply was exhausted, jeers, catcalls and exhortation were resorted to. The bag consisted of several kicking, struggling, wretched specimens who had either deserted the forces or neglected to obey calling-up papers; each of them about as much use in a fighting unit as a maggot in an apple.

Such are the untouchables of slumdom! Adults rearing their children as they were reared, in the cradle of vice and crime. Sweep away the labyrinth of mean streets constituting the underworld which almost every large city possesses! The dissolute inhabitants, many of them alien and coloured, still remain; moral degenerates, drunkards, hooligans, loafers, roughs, petty street gangsters and criminals. Is it logical to expect anything fine or noble from such stock? Or to even bask in the hopes of eventual reform? Is the brute who, in a fit of ungovernable temper, would sling a wailing two-months'

old infant across a room and cripple it for life, or plant a kick in the stomach of his pregnant mate expected to acquire decent habits from decent surroundings? Are the local police courts, where most of the sins and sorrows of the slums come to judicial light, expected to suffer a serious decline in attendances when municipal authorities assume responsibility for housing these dregs of humanity?

He or she who believes these things to be possible, either now or at any future time has, like Pip, great expectations!

POVERTY

If uncontrolled vice and criminal habits make the worst section of the slum community, there is little doubt that poverty is responsible for the largest section, although, even in considering this aspect of the problem, it is possible to differentiate between poverty caused by arrant selfishness, amounting almost to vice, and that produced by misfortune, disease, ill-health or genuine unemployment. Occasionally families are met with in slums where, with grown-up sons and daughters working, the total earnings are probably ten, twelve or fourteen pounds per week, but, in order that there may be liberal spending money for pleasure, they are content to live in small, cheaply rented slum houses, overcrowded and verminous, when they could well afford to rent, or even buy, a larger house in better surroundings.

Such cases, however, are not so common at the present time owing to the prolonged economic stress, which obviously affects severely unskilled labour, and this forms the bulk of the slum poor, but on the other hand, poverty now rarely descends to actual starvation conditions, as was comparatively frequent in pre-war trade depressions, owing to the excellence of relief organization and more generous rates of assistance.

In 1889, Charles Booth, after a careful investigation of labour and living conditions in London, estimated that 30·7 per cent. of the population lived below the "poverty line," defined briefly as the income necessary to provide, according to reasonable standards, a bare sufficiency of food, warmth, shelter and clothing. In 1929, a similar survey conducted by the London School of Economics, applying Booth's standards, found that the percentage had been reduced to 9·7 per cent. Whilst poverty is not now so acute as in Booth's time, it is undoubtedly more widespread; even if less people live below the poverty line, a much greater percentage live nearer to it. Poverty, although the yardstick keeping most people in the slums is not, in these peculiar times, by any means confined to them, being just as intense among the highly respectable artizan class, many of whom probably own the houses in which they live and endeavour in adversity to remain independent. This type in hard times tighten their belts; others open their mouths.

With modern conditions, a wider dispersion of poverty is unavoidable. The gospel of trade and wealth means intense competition and unscrupulous rivalry, and an industrialized people, depending upon export trade for their existence, must weather every storm and stress to which the economic structure is subject. No trade—no work—no wages, but it is of course the poorest who feel the consequences first and last and more severely than the remainder of the community. In no other country of the world, however, is there greater sympathy and understanding of the lower classes as in Britain. No other nation can boast such vast social services, in which these people have the greatest share, and indeed no one in this country should starve, but between starvation and repletion there is a substantial gap, and in the shadow of the former the poor spend the greater part of their lives.

A careful analysis of poverty in the slums reveals the following to be the chief causes : lack of, or inability to follow, regular employment, low wages, large families, ill-health, intemperance, gambling and the combined influences of the hire-purchase system, tallymen and pawnshops.

Even in normal times unemployment is common among slum-dwellers ; it is a perpetual problem of the very poor. Ignoring for the moment those who by reason of physical unfitness are unemployable, in the cities and towns most of the unemployment can be traced to the fact that in youth men were taught no trade or regular occupation. Owing to privation in the home, parents send their children out to earn money at the earliest opportunity as errand boys, newsboys, or other forms of childish drudgery. For the next few years they dodge from post to post with the object of earning a shilling or two more per week, until an early marriage, probably of necessity (colloquially termed "getting caught" by the guffawing hobbledoys of street corners), forces them to obtain man's wages as labourers, and they join the great army of the unskilled ; their livelihood often at the mercy of the weather and the vagaries of the money market which controls the carrying out of public works.

The marriage which may make a honest woman of the wife also begins her physical and mental deterioration. With her establishment in a tenement or slum cottage, she assimilates the crude domestic methods of the neighbours, living from hand to mouth, with small quantities of foodstuffs, just sufficient to last from one day to the next ; twopenny packets of tea, butter, cheese, etc., in quarter-pound quantities, a penny candle and so on. (Among the costers and barrowmen of London's poor quarters, who buy and sell out each day, the wife's allowance for housekeeping is often not more than two shillings per day.) Even with the husband's low earnings, life for the

first few months seems pleasant enough. After paying the weekly instalments on their cheap flashy furniture, they usually have a few shillings to squander on luxuries and entertainment at the week-end. As the time draws near for the wife's confinement, affairs begin to assume a less pleasant aspect. Lack of ready cash renders it necessary to obtain the accouchement outfit and baby clothes from a tallyman, whose bland assurances regarding the small weekly payments fools the woman. She usually has no idea of her total indebtedness and he takes good care she never gets clear of debt. Before the first baby is weaned another is on the way, and the woman becomes a haggard fatalist. The tallyman, now a regular caller, unloads more of his shoddy wares; the husband needs a new suit, the wife some gaudy finery and the new baby a christening shawl like the neighbour's, and payments, which probably began at a shilling per week, gradually rise to nearly ten shillings. Finding the rent becomes a task of increasing difficulty, so the husband's suit is taken to the pawnshop early on Monday morning to raise the money, being retrieved on Saturday when he brings home his wages (or part of them). This weekly trip to the pawnshop with the suit develops into a ritual; it apparently is not without advantage, for as the women say, "It keeps the clothes nice and clean and out of the dust."

Gradually the pawnshop becomes a habit; the only means such a woman has of raising cash. She will purchase at the usual shilling per week some flimsy furbelow for which the tallyman will charge £2, whereas the actual retail value is less than £1. After being shown off once or twice it is taken to the pawnbroker, who of course immediately recognizes its origin and value. He pays in the neighbourhood of 8s. for it; the thing is never retrieved, and in this way the woman gets hopelessly entangled with debts. Terrified of unburdening her troubles to the husband, she may foolishly borrow from

women who practise as moneylenders in slum areas, and once in the clutches of such pitiless shylocks, the final issue is invariably calamitous. Many a poor woman has been driven to suicide by a handful of tallymen's debts, and most of the punishment which the master of the house inflicts upon his erring mate is for running up debts without his knowledge.

The family continues to grow year by year, but the husband's wages are no more, and owing to lack of nourishing food, ill-health begins to take its toll. Some men will work until they drop for fear of losing that labour which prevents hunger; many of the women are listless and ailing, suffering from the ills of too frequent child-bearing, and the children are white and pinched, their bodies starved of nutriment and sunlight. In large families, the children have small chance of growing healthy and strong, for from toddling age, the mothers have no time for them, and they spend their days in the streets, playing in the dust, sitting on wet pavements or eating rubbish picked out of the gutters. It is difficult, however, to induce these poor women to regularly adopt measures of birth control; they take their pleasures without restriction, sometimes attempting to procure an abortion by methods filthy and crude. If without success, they fall back upon their unanswerable creed of fatalism, "Wot is t' be, will be." One small ferrety woman, mother of seventeen, asked why she did nothing to prevent the hardy annual, replied: "It ain't no good. I went to the 'orspital to be sterilized; 'sposed to larst seven years. Lorluvaduck, it never larsted me seven months!" Her husband's wages were £2 per week; he gave her it all and she returned one shilling for him to buy tobacco. When asked how she managed to feed them all she said: "I sends two of the young 'uns every morning ter get a dozen loaves o' stale bread from the resterawnt. They lets me have it half price and we has a good fillin' of

bread and marg for breakfast. Then I stuffs 'em out with suet puddens and stew at dinner time and we has another good fillin' of bread and marg for tea. When the kids 'a-gorn to bed, me and the old man has us a pint of beer and some bread an' cheese for supper."

Bulk, but no quality. A diet upon which a hale hearty countryman might exist, but no use to provide stamina in growing children living in a dark sunless city slum. But how else can they appease their hunger? With existing prices of foodstuffs, it is impossible for poor people to give their children a pint of milk per day, orange juice, eggs, fish, meat gravy and fresh vegetables, fruit and all other components of a body-building diet. The Ministry of Labour's cost of living index varies between 40 and 50, but the prices of those foodstuffs named are all much in excess of this; some are at least 100 per cent. above pre-war prices, as are coals, boots and clothing. Even the plebeian herring, which one captain of commerce during a great industrial dispute declared to be quite good enough for a working-man's dinner and drew vials of wrath upon his head in consequence, is now sold by the pound at prices no longer making it a cheap food. It cannot be denied that even if most of the poor were regularly in receipt of good wages, they would be very little better off and the children would still go barefoot and hungry, and whilst it is probably useless to preach thrift to those whose lives are one long struggle, some of the poverty could be alleviated by the practice of domestic economy. In the house, they discard stale bread and other commodities that a housewife in better circumstances would utilize. The dustbins from slum houses invariably contain more wasted foodstuffs than elsewhere.

Although we do not see so much drunkenness in the slums as in pre-war days, animalized men and women pouring out of the public houses at midnight, lurching

about the pavements, alternately urinating and spewing, intemperance is still so grave an evil as to be one of the principal causes of poverty in the lower classes. It has been so often argued as to have become the most acceptable conclusion that it is lack of home comforts which drives men and women to liquor, but alcoholic indulgence is not symbolical of a craving for anything decent in life; on the contrary it is the negation of every upward tendency, frustrating whatever hopes or ambitions may have existed. It is possible to understand poverty, distress, hunger and the desire for better things driving a man to steal or even a woman to sell herself, but the lower classes, and indeed every other class, take to alcohol because they like it. Apathy and despair are excuses rather than reasons.

The men spend their evenings in the pothouses squandering money that could provide home comforts, however mean the abode, and the necessities of life for the children, because they enjoy themselves in this way. They seek convivial companionship; the small doings of the day take on heroic proportions when recounted to a "gorblimey" kind of an audience, with lots of "I says," "he says," "an' then I says, Who the — — d'ye think you are?" (chorus of approving grunts). As the company get "warmed up," the exuberance of spirit finds expression in song. "Sons of the Sea-er; Orl Brit-tish born-er; Sailin' ev'ry O-shun; Larfin foes to scorn-er." Sea-songs, such as this, they bawl with great patriotic fervour, and whilst not disputing for a moment their consanguinity with the waters of the ocean, it would probably be better if their bodies, and in particular their feet, had a more regular acquaintance with fresh water and soap. Wives may join them in the nightly carousal, leaving perambulators and toddlers unattended on the pavement outside the premises until closing time, or what is probably worse, will, if their

husbands are away from home until nightfall, patronize with boon companions their own particular "house" during the day. Here they sit guzzling until turned out at the afternoon closing hour. The children return from school at midday to find what food they can, whilst the women roll homewards at tea-time.

The practice of backing horses (and now dogs), although universally admitted to be a "mug's game," has not, like drink, lost any adherents in recent years. It is in all probability to-day more popular among the lower classes, who can of course least afford to lose, than at any time before the War, and women are at least as bad, if not worse, than men. Next to scandal, horse-racing forms the chief topic of conversation. Bookmakers' touts commonly boast that slum tenements, courts and alleys, are among their best rounds. Stakes may be small, but so many contribute that the takings are good. Even small children are *au fait* with betting technique long before they achieve proficiency in arithmetic at school. The craze gets them young, and many a lad apprehended for stealing is found to have squandered the proceeds in gambling machines. And what is surely impudence unparalleled is the practice of racing touts to openly collect slips from the queues of men and women signing on at labour exchanges, and is only exceeded by the criminal folly of those diverting to the pockets of bookmakers money which has been raised for their immediate benefit largely by taxation.

Then in every slum there are families whose besetting sin is idleness; not apathy of frustrated efforts and stifled hopes, nor helplessness of genuine despair, but just idleness. Sloth which has in the past been an effective contribution to the making of slums and the poverty in them.

The men will not under any circumstances engage in regular manual labour; they may under stress act as

sandwichmen, push a not-too-heavily-laden barrow or execute sundry small tasks of this description, but any occupation which has the appearance of restricting their freedom, they definitely draw the line at. They rarely exhibit criminal tendencies and, beyond getting drunk as often as their straitened means will permit and engaging in occasional domestic brawls, they could not be said to have any really vicious characteristics. Adversity leaves them nonchalant and their only desire is a perfectly effortless existence and, curiously enough they, with their families, manage to subsist without having followed any regular occupation all their lives. The fact that in many such cases their fathers before them never worked and that most of their children also have a strong aversion to concentrated effort, points to this abnormally lethargic state being hereditary; a complex psycho-pathological condition needing expert analysis to arrive at the cause.

With women similarly affected, the home and children obviously suffer, the children in particular, owing to their filthy, verminous and generally neglected condition, requiring constant attention from that most beneficial of social institutions, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. With lousy heads and running sores over the body, pinched pale faces, revealing anæmia of malnutrition, they present a pitiable sight. The comfortless homes contain odds and ends of furniture, nearly every article of which is broken or defective in some way, ragged strips of linoleum strewn about the floors as coverings, dirty crockery piled on tables which are covered with old newspapers instead of cloth; rubbish and filth everywhere.

This type of woman, if still young enough to have hazy ideas of romance, squats most of the day reading cheap novelettes, or if age and experience have dispelled youthful illusions, she props herself against doorposts, leans out of windows or flops herself into any position requiring

a minimum of effort. Thus she will remain for lengthy periods, arms folded over greasy breasts, gazing vacantly into space. Dirty and unkempt in appearance, with shoes unlaced, stockings sagging about her ankles and clothes almost dropping from her for want of needle and cotton, she is a disgusting specimen of femininity. Her gait, speech and habit portray chronic idleness going deep to the bone, which neither homilies from seasoned women social workers nor the forceful tactics of sanitary inspectors can do anything to cure. When reproached, she may maintain a sullen silence or be garrulously apologetic of her dirt, not infrequently referring to it as "fresh dirt" (just arrived, as it were!) or even as "clean dirt." She may also excuse the landlord's delinquencies, but it means only one thing when she says "The roof leaks, yer know. But Oi don't mind. The landlord, he aint sech a bad sort"—substantial arrears of rent.

Men and women affected in greater or less degree with the taint of idleness bulk largely in the slum community. It is fair to assume that they would not be there at all if such were not the case. Even when work is to be found, the men lead an aimless existence; a "come-day, go-day, Gawd-send-Sunday" kind of life, with no thought beyond present needs. They spend a week or two in work, followed by a period of State-assisted loafing. Unfortunately it is difficult to distinguish between this type and those unemployed who are not victims of their own ineptitude. There are to-day thousands of young men who frankly admit they have no desire for work. Many have done practically none since leaving school, and yet they marry and have families.

This large class of slum-dwellers, never having known or wanted anything different, would be quite happy to remain in a slum environment, particularly if their means permitted an occasional night "on the razzle." Others may aspire to improved conditions, but the transi-

tion would not have to entail any drastic change of habits. They are exceptions, of course, and none more conspicuous than life's unfortunates who, finding themselves at the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel and in a slum, are obviously in it but not of it. Their homes are always spotlessly clean even if surrounded by the filth of other tenants; their children are neatly dressed and well-mannered and, in all such cases, it is the woman who is responsible. She has usually come of good working-class stock and, probably married to a wastrel, sadly endeavours to maintain her respectability in the face of overwhelming odds.

Nothing can justify poverty caused or made worse by profligate habits, but the poverty and helplessness caused by illness, suffering and death is something to wring sympathy from the heart of a stoic. There is no deception in it; it is so obviously real. The constitutional diseases of tuberculosis, rickets, etc., go hand in hand with poverty, and where poverty is greatest so these diseases are rampant, and although the children of the slums often appear to be comparatively free from notifiable infectious diseases, this is more apparent than real. It does not signify good health, but that owing to a continuous stream of lesser ailments from birth onwards, sufficient antibodies have been developed in the blood to endow such children with a general resistance to major infections. No better evidence of their unhealthy state can be obtained than by the reaction of a clean healthy child placed in contact with slum children in school or hospital; in a very short time, it goes down with tonsillitis, followed by measles or other infectious disease, while the others remain apparently clear. Immune themselves, they carry infection to others.

One often hears the low incidence rates of infectious diseases for slum areas ridiculously attributed to the "hardening" process of slum life, but in the weedy little specimens playing about the back streets, we see only

those who have had sufficient vitality to survive. The cemetery contains those who have been completely hardened off. Not all the ill-health of this generation, however, is due to bad housing and poverty. Much of it is directly attributable to the fact that the blood-stock is rapidly declining. The infantile mortality rate has fallen from 160 per 1,000 births in the beginning of the century to approximately 60 per 1,000 now. This saving of child-life has meant a general lowering of the physique and stamina of the people. Mental deficiency, in particular, is increasing: 8 per 1,000 are feeble-minded. Pneumonia, bronchitis and dyspepsia also have a greater incidence. One in ten is constantly in receipt of health insurance benefit. Infantile mortality has been reduced by nearly two-thirds, but it does not mean that the nation is healthier. It means that we are breeding from inferior types; the dull and sickly child is increasing and nowhere more rapidly than in the slums, where the birth-rate is high and the environment bad.

The entrances, lobbies and out-patient departments of our large hospitals are the vantage points to study slum-life in the raw. Puny infants are brought in suffering from every conceivable condition resulting from low vitality and chronic neglect; spreading eczema, running sores, poisonings, gastric catarrh, prolapse of the bowel and adenoids so bad that the nostrils are just two narrow slits. Children with all forms of sepsis, foul tonsils, suppurating glands and putrid mastoids; growing girls brought to see the doctor "cos of a 'orrible rattling corf"; men with pinched blue faces and emaciated frames, needing nourishment, not bottles of medicine; and women with that ghastly pallor indicating the existence of a malignant enemy drawing the life-blood from their tired bodies. Many a woman suffers silently, fearing to seek medical aid which will necessitate leaving her home and children, and when the agony is too great to

bear and she is forced to go to hospital, the monster has burrowed so deeply that operative treatment is of no avail.

Tragedy and grim humour, like all opposite forces, are often closely associated, but nowhere are they to be found so richly blended as in the slums. The one stalking through the homes of the poor leaves a wreckage of human lives in its wake, but not even the direst misfortune can stifle that witty sarcasm with which the lowest class survey life.

IGNORANCE

In seeking to establish the fundamental causes of slum habits, one is forced to the conclusion that, notwithstanding half a century's compulsory elementary education, the low standard of intelligence of the poorer classes is one of the cornerstones upon which the slum evil rests. That the greater part of them should still be ignorant of the laws governing healthy life proves clearly the inadequacy of our scholastic methods of child training to overcome the pernicious influences of slum life. There are, of course, slum children who from an early age show marked ability and who, by means of scholarships and other assistance, rise far above their station, but such cases are exceptional, and all have the hardest struggle in the world to disengage themselves from the toils of their own families and slum companions who seek to drag them down to their level. At first the discovery of a child's outstanding ability is hailed by much loud-mouthed boasting on the part of the parents, each vaingloriously believing the seed of intelligence to have originated in them, but as it grows older and gives unmistakable evidence of breaking away from the slum heritage, praise changes to abuse. The child's attempts to pitch its conversation on a higher plane or to improve its appearance, speech and habits are derisively characterized as "swank"; it becomes an Ishmaelite, a subject

for jeering, as only the lower classes know how to jeer.

But in the mass of slum children, education effects little change of habits. School is somewhere they are forced to attend and learn things which have no place in their lives, and within six months of leaving, most of the knowledge drummed into them has been forgotten. There are inordinate ideas prevalent regarding the value of the school education of children but, in truth, it counts for little unless there is proper parental control and home training. "The citizen of to-morrow" is made in the home and not the classroom. Something might be done to check the formation of dirty habits by the regular teaching of personal and domestic hygiene by experienced teachers instead of quite so much la-la-la-ing up and down scales, clay modelling and play. These subjects, however, should be taught, with forceful demonstrations, by practical persons qualified by experience, and not the usual type of elementary teacher, who spouts such knowledge from a three-and-sixpenny textbook. The teaching of cookery to older girls, a most laudable object, is in many districts a complete failure owing to the engagement of inefficient cookery mistresses.

What sets slum children apart from all others is their callousness and utter lack of feeling, the absence of childish emotions and an amazing disinterest in everything intended for their improvement. A fair proportion are of course genuinely dull-witted, and not many of them evince any desire to progress. This generally apathetic state is part of their nature, acquired from infancy as a natural reaction to the stark cruelty of their environment. It enables them to grow up oblivious of the horror of it all. The zest for games and enjoyment however is probably keener in Bermondsey than in Bayswater; there are fewer restrictions and less repression of energy, but this failing to find a useful outlet later breeds hooliganism and lawlessness.

It is not until adolescence that any natural tendency towards improvement is observed. For the first time in their lives, boys and girls now begin to take a pride in their appearance. Lads aspire to be sleekly groomed, wasp-waisted braves with the devil-may-care swaggering air that experience gives, but the metamorphosis is more complete in girls. Teeth are actually cleaned because, gleaming white in the mirror, they enhance the owner's fancied resemblance to one of those alluring sirens of celluloid fame; unkempt and straggly locks are shampooed, brushed and trimmed, *à la Garbo*; low-cut dresses necessitate thorough washing of the neck, a hitherto unheard-of procedure, although the rest of the body is probably as dirty and smelly as ever. Some maidens even try to live the part, appearing pathetically incongruous as languid artificial beauties amidst ugliness and squalor. Elegantly attired in a glaring mixture of colours, with hennaed locks, plucked eyebrows, rouged cheeks and painted lips, they may sometimes be seen reclining in a decrepit chair before an equally decrepit fireplace in a slum hovel, or sauntering gracefully around a common yard, affecting to ignore the leers and lewd remarks of their erstwhile companions. Others keep their cheap finery for high days and holidays; for basking in the gilded lights and luxury of hectic Saturday nights, retaining sluttish habits and appearances for the remainder of the week.

It all begins and ends in sex appeal, however, and the change is in appearances mostly; there is no striving for purity of body and mind. Nevertheless, it is a beginning; evidence of the birth of appreciation of beauty and if, at this stage, youth could be taken out of the slums and more particularly away from home influences, a complete reformation might be effected. When slum lads join the army or navy, training and discipline works wonders with them, and if their period of service is

sufficiently long, they grow right away from the old life. With girls, although it is more difficult to obtain complete severance of home ties, if they enter domestic service in large establishments, where discipline is strict and work under older and experienced maids, they will often become patterns of neatness and industry, but for any permanent improvement to be effected, treatment must be stern. The mere transportation of slum girls into decent surroundings does not result in them shedding any of their bad habits; they do not appreciate cleanliness and remain dirty, slatternly, ill-mannered, uncouth and totally unappreciative of kindness shown to them. In recent years there has been a steady stream of such girls from the stricken mining villages of Wales to London, and when they go into some of the hyper-snobbish villas of select suburbia as solitary "generals," the results are distressing for, under such circumstances, they make rotten domestics. As a consequence, they either drift back home penniless, their wages having been squandered in trash, or turn up in the police courts, arrested for pilfering or on some other petty charge.

The period of youth is short in the slums: a brief interlude of cheap excitement, bright lights, cinemas, dance halls, followed by an even briefer courtship, then two souls start up life's highway, both able to read and write, thanks to the nation's yearly education bill of many millions, but otherwise infinitely less well equipped for the journey than their forebears who travelled the same way half a century before. Easy pleasures have robbed life of its spirit of adventure; there is no joy in working for work's sake alone. From Victorian times down to the War, working men had to work or starve, but now it is frequently more profitable to be on the dole. Victorian wives had to know how to cook, make clothes, etc., for their many children. They would make nourishing and appetizing dinners in the cold weather by stewing

a few coppers' worth of meat and bones, with many vegetables; nowadays this would take far too much trouble to prepare, so it is half a dozen underdone pork pies over the counter and indigestion for the rest of the day, while husband and wife apply their costly education to studying the racing news. Housewifery knowledge used to be handed down from mothers to daughters, a practice which ceased with the wholesale absorption of women into the labour market. In our mothers' time, child-rearing, housekeeping and domestic work generally was about the only sphere for women, but now it is the last thing on earth that girls desire. They prefer to work long hours under unhealthy conditions in factories, shops, etc., to retain their "freedom," and then habitually starve their bodies to adorn their backs, or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to state "bare their backs," for they will dine every day for several weeks off a bath-bun-and-a-walk-round in order to raise the purchase price of some flimsy evening creation certain to give them a hacking cough until summer comes again.

The domestic ignorance of women, and in particular their extremely bad cookery, has played its part in making us a C3 nation, and nowhere have the results been so serious as among the very poor. Remonstrate with a young wife for thriftless housekeeping methods and the answer is always the same, "Nobody ever showed me how to do anything." Sometimes women, after listening to a lecture at a mothers' meeting on "How to cook a dinner for ninepence," "Decorate a room for eighteenpence" or "Make two pairs of boys' pants out of father's old ones," will go home and try, but with no one to help them, they gib at the first sign of difficulty and the half-hearted attempt usually comes to grief.

The decorating efforts are sometimes very funny! In the listless application to the ceiling of a weak solution of a twopenny ball of whitening, that part which manages

to adhere to the bulging plaster dries in an extremely thin crust, subsequently dropping in flakes at the slightest vibration, whilst the paper is stuck on to nail-ridden walls, the undulating surface of which is already covered by a thick wad of papers, anything up to a dozen in number, each in its turn having been so uniformly covered with fly excrements that it would be impossible to put a pin-head between them. The results are an unholy mess, much domestic strife and a determined resolution from the women never to try again.

It is in ante-natal and child welfare generally that the grossest ignorance prevails. Old wives' lore, so obviously ridiculous to more enlightened women, is religiously believed by women of the poorer classes. A youthful mother-to-be, as a rule still in her teens, can always get such advice in plenty, for nothing gives greater pleasure to flourishing matrons, boasting four, five or six of their own and still going strong, to gather round young women in tearful anticipation of their "first" in order to "comfort" them and appease their fears; but all give way to the blousy old hags which every court and alley seems to possess, whose knowledge and experience transcends them all. This type usually like a little refreshment ("Doctor's h'orders, dearie, 'cos o' me nerves"); it loosens their tongues and enables them to disclose in lurid detail their own pregnancies and many others of which they claim to have intimate knowledge. Their counsels, given with such assurance and accompanied by many expressive nods and sniffs, impresses ignorant girls and mothers much more than advice given at child welfare centres. Ante-natal advice is followed up with hints on child-feeding, and their aid is sought in the illness and numerous disorders which a faithful application of their methods is almost certain to occasion. In fact, such females are veritable encyclopædiæ of all ills to which the human flesh is heir.

The majority of mothers, having no knowledge of the very simple means of stimulating lactation, immediately resort to artificial feeding upon the first indication of milk drying up in the breasts, and much illness in later life is distinctly traceable to the ignorant methods employed. Infants, a few months old, are fed with bread sop or other mixtures; screaming in pain, unable to digest such foreign substances, they are fed again and again in an effort to satisfy their "hunger," in accordance with the common assumption that if a baby cries it is obviously hungry. With the appearance of alarming symptoms, medical aid may be summoned, but there is no need to ask what they have done: rolling eyes, twitching limbs, a stomach distended like a football and other evidence of a convulsion tell the tale. If the child survives at all, there is usually malnutrition with its inevitable sequel, rickets. The many mixtures on which infants are fed after weaning, owing to their indigestibility and absence of food value, produce similar results. Such children grow up anæmic and undersized, never really overcoming the handicap of a bad start.

It is difficult to really decide whether this incompetence is the result of sheer inability to learn and often to even think for themselves, or if it arises from indifference and idleness.

People stripped of colour, vision, enjoyment and being so thoroughly inured to misery, they seem to take an unnatural pleasure in troubles and misfortune; the dire forebodings of old wives, given with the characteristic chin-on-chest expression, thrills them, and if women can only overhear themselves referred to in strains of "pore ole Kate; she ain't arf got a load o' trouble," they are actually happy, enthroned in a self-imposed martyrdom. To visit an out-patients' department, with a couple of ailing children hanging round their skirts, is an event of importance, providing opportunities of listening to

the sensational symptoms and cures of other doleful females, of comparing illnesses, medicines, doctors, nurses and everything associated with this trade in human misery, and when the proceedings, which of course lose nothing in the telling, are set before commiserating neighbours, they become the centre of attraction. But of all the events which have the greatest grip on their morbid mentality, funerals easily rank first. These are the supreme occasions in the lives of the poor : births, christenings, marriages, all pale before such wonderful opportunities of indulging in primitive expressions of melancholy grief. The deceased is invested with an angelic nature : brave, kind, generous and altogether a noble character. The pious expressions of neighbours blend with the wailing, genuine and affected, of the relatives. Even barest acquaintances are expected to view the corpse before the coffin is screwed down and to add their meed of appreciation of a virtuous life. To decline such an invitation is considered "downright 'ard 'earted." The funeral costs, mourning clothes, etc., place a millstone of debt around their necks, but nevertheless nothing is spared to make the occasion a success, and if any choice of cemetery is permitted, that involving the longest route for the cortège is always selected.

After a harrowing graveside ceremony, the hearse canters away, leaving the dejected company to make their homeward journey. Owing to a general state of dryness and the need for dissipating feelings of faintness on the part of the women, numerous calls are made for the purpose of alcoholic stimulation. Thus fortified, the demeanour of each mourner is freely criticized, and the occasion is compared with many others that they have attended. As the liquor flows, the atmosphere becomes definitely occult ; some describe the peculiar sensations they experienced, whilst others, more uplifted, profess to having seen visions, seraphic forms wafting

about the open grave, some bearing the features of friends long since departed. This beatific state persists until a few of the party, in maudlin confusion, become argumentative and quarrelsome regarding dates and details, but the sanctity of the occasion usually prevents open violence and they all manage to return home, if not exactly sober, at least fairly quiet and peaceable.

Of limited education, weak in logical reasoning and lacking that spirit of sturdy independence which has given such strength of character to the real working population of this country, recent years have seen this rapidly increasing section of the community invested with a political significance out of all proportion to their usefulness to the nation at large. Although, generally speaking, they have sufficient basic sense not to be carried away by the romance of the Communist's standardized Utopia, they swallow whole the more rationalized baits of Socialists, because the promises of the latter have largely been kept, so far as local dispensations are concerned, and their dreams of a future State, with equal opportunities for all, do not seem beyond the realms of possibility. With indiscriminate charity, the wrong people invariably derive the greatest benefit. The largest purse, whether public or private, is the nucleus around which they collect, and when it becomes empty, they quickly depart. The author remembers once telling a wealthy parson, newly arrived in a very rough and impoverished district and who had let it be known he had set aside so much of his income for charity, that his many callers would desert him if he substituted goods for cash. He did not believe it at the time, but nevertheless tried it. Instead of money, he gave Quaker Oats and tins of condensed milk. In their disgust the people reviled and abused him, and some of them stuck the boxes and tins on the spikes of his fence, but thereafter he was able to discover the real poverty of his parish.

In election campaigns the votes of the lower classes are bought by promises of relief, and although public assistance is obviously necessary to avert anarchy, to maintain whole families in idleness has done more to rob them of virility, and what is probably more important, the power to believe in themselves, than any other single social measure in the history of the country. To be kept by the "parish" in pre-war days meant ignominy, but now it is claimed as a "right." Municipalities in many areas have been reduced to penury, not by the just claims of distressed families, but by profligate waste, and in this respect women councillors are usually worse than men. There are generally two kinds: one, a blousy, bloated lump of feminine loquacity, "speaking as a muvver to muvvers," parades her knowledge and experience, which is considered eminently useful on Housing and Maternity and Child Welfare Committees; the other, with clipped fringe, piercing eyes and a mouth opening and shutting like the steel teeth of a rat-trap, calls her fellow-councillors "comrades," talks incessantly of the proletariat and how it is exploited by the "boo-jah-zwah." Economics is her main theme, but not economy.

The higher ethics of government, however, are beyond the intelligence of the slum poor. Neither patriotism nor that self-abnegation of latter-day youth of "refined" intellect, pacifism, mean anything to them. Although they may bear little respect for the constitution of the country, if it were at war, many thousands would endeavour to join the army or do anything that would get them out of the mess in which they are sunk. Brutality, filth and vermin would not deter them, for these have been their stable-mates from birth. Good clothes, plenty to eat, wine and women would more than balance the scales. As the poor-man Socialist sees it, politics cannot be dissociated from worldly possessions. The

publican, the butcher, the draper, the milkman, all drive about in magnificent automobiles, their children finish at Oxford and the best is hardly good enough for them, whilst he has nothing; he and his family must suffer hopelessly and alone. Their lives seem desolate and empty. What more simple solution than that those with money should provide for those who have none ?

CHAPTER IV

SLUM CLEARANCE

DESPITE the many Acts which have been passed since the establishment of local government in this country having for their object improved housing conditions for the working classes, and more especially those devoted entirely to housing which have followed one after another with bewildering frequency since the War, very little progress had in truth been made towards slum clearance up to the passing of the Housing Act, 1930. There appeared to be no incentive on the part of local authorities to proceed with the work in a systematic manner. It seemed as though invisible forces were chained to the wheels of housing reform preventing the machinery being set in motion, for notwithstanding the manifold difficulties invariably encountered in the confiscation of property in Great Britain, which justly prides itself on the manner in which the privileges of private ownership are safeguarded, no previous laws had been so favourably disposed towards local authorities in this respect as post-war housing legislation. But not even the Act of 1930, with its simplified procedure and its liberal State grants for rehousing purposes of 45s. per person displaced, resulted in anything more than sporadic efforts at slum clearance; it did not produce a regular and methodical national advance, and the five-year programmes which all urban areas of 20,000 population and over were required to submit to the Ministry of Health under the Act, in the first two years fell short of the estimates given, the number of houses demolished from the time of passing the Act up to the end of 1932

being only 15,400. The caution with which local authorities were using the "powerful machinery" of the Act was not altogether surprising to the central authority, for in a Parliamentary debate on housing on December 15th, 1932, the Minister of Health mentioned the figure of 12,000 as being the number of houses which ought to be cleared per year at an anticipated cost to the Exchequer of £75,000. He further intimated that this amount could be doubled if local authorities could accelerate their clearance programmes accordingly, i.e. to 24,000 houses per annum. This seemed a reasonable estimate of future progress, but a few months later, in April, 1933, the five-year plan was launched, which in effect demanded an acceleration to 54,000 per annum. It required all local authorities throughout the country to submit by September of the same year five-year programmes embracing all unfit houses, which by the returns eventually received from some 1,700 local authorities amounted roundly to 270,000.

Regarding this figure, whilst it ought to be reasonably accurate, since officers of local authorities have for over twenty years had the duty of inspecting and recording the condition of working-class houses, the difficulties of keeping records up to date and painting an accurate picture of the housing conditions in a district at short notice make it a doubtful estimate. For some areas the figures given are sheer guesswork, and varying standards of judgment are certain to account for inconsistencies in the returns of different authorities. What has been condemned in some towns, owing to the application of a higher standard of fitness for working-class property, perhaps under political pressure, will be allowed to remain in other areas. Again, in many of the small urban and rural areas, sanitary officers, working alone and without facilities for obtaining legal advice, endeavour to avoid the possibility of appeals to the courts or to the

Ministry of Health by scheduling for demolition property regarding the fate of which there could be no conceivable doubt.

Thus, to begin with, the five-year plan is based upon a survey of clearance areas and individual unfit houses, which is undoubtedly an incomplete record of the present position, and certainly represents a mere fraction of our housing problem. In the metropolis, in the large industrial areas and in almost every working-class town, there are great tracts of property, perhaps not sufficiently bad to be included in the present campaign, but falling far below modern housing standards. Everyone not unnaturally thinks of such districts as the slums of the future, for in their rapid deterioration since the War, they now stand on the brink of slumdom. Such areas cannot be salvaged from the country's decaying mass of working-class houses and it is only a matter of time before their replacement will be necessary. Dealing, however, with the number of houses included in the present survey, i.e. roughly 270,000, can housing work be sufficiently accelerated to deal with 54,000 houses per year for five years? In some areas it will not be difficult to complete the task in the time stipulated, but to expect to eradicate in five years the slums of the large industrial areas is plainly absurd.

Authorities in distressed areas, for example, may send in five-year programmes, but there does not seem much hope of them being adhered to. The author has seen quite small towns, under 20,000 population, derelict in every sense of the word, where the rigid application of the legal standard of fitness would involve the demolition of many hundreds of houses.

Undertakings of this magnitude cannot be entered upon lightly or dealt with hurriedly; they require mature consideration, for apart from the time taken in initial site surveys and preparation of plans, house-to-house

inspections and inquiries of all kinds and making the necessary provision for rehousing the slum-dwellers, there are many obstacles to remove as well as the opposition of owners (and tenants) to be overcome. It would not be an exaggeration to say that few schemes of public works require greater vision and forethought in their preparation than the clearing of tracts of slumland in the congested centres of population. Owing to the involved legal procedure, with owners having the right of appeal at different stages, it is essential that any case for a clearance area should be flawless. Progress is ardently desired and concentration will undoubtedly secure it, but as it is obvious the slums cannot be abolished in five years, or several multiples of it, long-range planning covering not only slums but property likely to come within that category in the next twenty years, is needed in the worst areas. More lasting work will be done by cautious and orderly routine than by impetuous drives. The Ministry of Health therefore will have to be satisfied if a local authority is unremitting in its efforts and good progress is maintained, although it falls far short of the five-year time limit.

The chief and only purpose of the scheme and the inordinate publicity which accompanied it, appears to have been the provision of something in the nature of shock tactics to awaken the public conscience and to encourage local authorities to concentrate upon this formidable problem and prepare plans for dealing with the worst of it. Additional reasons for endeavouring to expedite the work are to take advantage of the prevailing low building costs and the extremely favourable condition of the money market, where capital for investment has not been so plentiful and rates of interest so low at any time since the War.

That the scheme is not without political aims is of course obvious. To an ordinary individual it looks like

an astute move by the Conservatives to appropriate what has been in the past the grand swell of Socialist thunder.

The difficult nature of slum clearance will be better understood from an explanation of the procedure and a description of some of the obstacles to be overcome.

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Actually, there is little real difference between a clearance area under the Act of 1930 and an unhealthy area under previous Acts. Before making the formal declaration, an authority must satisfy itself that :—

(i) The houses in the area are by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects unfit for human habitation

(Or are by reason of their bad arrangement or the narrowness or bad arrangement of the streets dangerous or injurious to the health of the inhabitants ; and

The other buildings, if any, in the area are for similar reasons dangerous or injurious to health) ; and

(ii) The most satisfactory method of dealing with the conditions in the area is the demolition of all the buildings.

Briefly, this means a Clearance Area is one in which all the houses are totally unfit for human habitation by reason of structural dilapidations, bad design, insufficient air space or natural lighting, flooding or other causes, and that to render them fit for human occupation is impossible.

The italicised words in the above definition of a clearance area have been rendered less effective by the Housing Act, 1935, since after the passing of this Act, there must be excluded from a Clearance Order dwelling houses which are considered to be unfit only by reason of "bad arrangement (in relation to other buildings)" or of "narrowness or bad arrangements of the streets, etc.," and "other buildings," unless parts of them are used for human habitation, must also be excluded from an

Order. This does not prevent any such property from being included in a Clearance AREA, but the authority must pay compensation in respect of it when it comes to demolition.

In defining an area of slum property to be dealt with under the Act, the work of clearance and rehousing is rendered less difficult if the area is not too large and unwieldy. It is not always possible for it to consist of a block of property, bounded by geometrically straight lines; more often it is an irregularly shaped area and may, especially in view of the amendments of the 1935 Act, contain in its midst, buildings, which for one reason or another, do not form part of the actual clearance area. Such "islands" will consist of houses which are fit and probably buildings not used for human habitation. As already stated, they may be bought by the local authority for demolition if their acquisition would facilitate the work of clearance or rehousing proposals, and in some cases dealt with as "obstructive buildings" by means of Demolition Orders, otherwise they must be left undisturbed.

As to how small an area may be, the Minister of Health has in the past confirmed orders in respect of groups of two or three houses, but a tenement block consisting of a single building let out into tenements cannot in itself form a clearance area.

In deciding which houses should be included in a clearance area, it is permissible to consider how far they fall short of the general standard of working-class housing accommodation in the district or in what respects they fail to comply with any bye-laws in operation. Items of disrepair and filthy interiors are of much less importance in arriving at conclusions than irremediable defects, such as those of bad design and construction; serious dampness occasioned by low situations, damp sites, flooding, porous brickwork and absence of damp-proof

courses; defective and dangerous conditions of floors, walls and roofs; absence of through ventilation; darkness and inadequate means of natural lighting, as instanced by the glass area of windows being less than one-tenth of the floor area of rooms; insufficient height of rooms compared with the minimum requirements of building bye-laws and the absence of separate sanitary conveniences and water supply. Other defects which influence decisions are faulty drainage, absence of sinks and proper means of food storage, defective cooking and washing accommodation and dilapidated outbuildings. Infestation of walls and woodwork by bugs also weighs in the balance, but overcrowding of persons in any of the houses bears little relationship to the question of fitness for human habitation or otherwise. Overcrowding of premises in an area, on the other hand, is a most important factor, since it results in insufficient air space in the rear or front of premises, or both, darkness and stagnation of foul air. In considering air space, this may also be compared with bye-law demands.

When the extent of the area has been decided upon and set out clearly on a large scale (1,500) ordnance map, with each house numbered consecutively, the local authority considers the matter, either on an official representation of the medical officer of health, or on the less ostentatious report of the sanitary inspector. Before passing the formal resolution declaring an area to be a "clearance area," the authority or one of its committees usually visits the district in order to be able to prove in any subsequent appeal that it exercised its discretion and did not act slavishly on the report of an official. The authority must also satisfy itself before passing the resolution that it is able to satisfactorily rehouse displaced persons and that its resources are sufficient for the purpose of carrying the resolution into effect.

The last-named proviso, which precluded many munici-

palities from proceeding with slum clearance in pre-war days, has now lost much of its force, especially since the 1930 Act has dispensed with the necessity of a formal scheme and has invested local authorities with new powers. So far as borrowing powers are concerned, for rehousing these are practically unlimited. The restriction placed upon them by the Public Health Act, 1875, limiting an authority's loan indebtedness to three times the rateable value of the district, does not apply to loans for housing purposes.

In the County of London, owing to the vast area and population, and to the severity of the problem in certain districts, the procedure is different. The L.C.C. possesses all the powers of local authorities for dealing with clearance areas, except that they must not declare any area to be such unless it contains more than ten dwelling houses. Any representations made to them of small areas consisting of less than ten houses each must, unless they form part of a larger clearance area, be forwarded to the metropolitan borough council concerned. Before a borough council considers a proposal to declare any area to be a clearance area, they must give two months' notice to the L.C.C. of their intention and cannot further proceed unless the county council signify that they have not incorporated the area in any of their schemes. This means that the borough councils must submit all proposals to the county council, whose duty it is to co-ordinate them as part of a general programme prepared by themselves for the whole metropolis. The slum problem in London obviously can only be dealt with in a comprehensive manner by the L.C.C. The enormous expenditure involved in the clearing and acquiring of sites for rehousing could not possibly be borne by the poorer boroughs, where the problem is so acute.

In submitting a copy of the resolution to the Ministry of Health, an accurate census of the population of the

area (for the purpose of arriving at the annual Government grant in respect of rehousing), together with the necessary undertaking to rehouse displaced persons, must be given. This being accepted, the authority may further proceed, either by making a Clearance Order, which requires the owners to demolish the buildings and clear the site, or by themselves acquiring the area and arranging for demolition. The first-named is an entirely new mode of procedure introduced by the Housing Act, 1930, and is intended to enable local authorities to obtain the clearance of slums at no capital cost to themselves and, needless to say, unless the site is required for rehousing or other statutory purposes, this is proving the most popular method, particularly with smaller districts, which have land for housing sites on the outskirts of the towns. The cleared site thus remains the property of the owners, but its development can be controlled by the local authority, who may purchase it, or any part of it, eighteen months after the date on which the Clearance Order became operative, if it has not been developed by the owners in accordance with approved plans.

The acquisition of the area for clearance by the authority may be effected either by negotiation and agreement with the owners or by means of a Compulsory Purchase Order, and land adjoining or surrounding the area may also be purchased, if it is necessary for satisfactorily dealing with the site or its development when cleared. A Compulsory Purchase Order must be submitted to the Minister within six months from the date of the clearance resolution, with an extension to twelve months for any extra territory, although this may be included in the order for the actual clearance area. This method of dealing with slums is not new, being a modification of early procedure. It has been much simplified, however, and there is not the lengthy delays which were commonly associated with pre-war compulsory purchase.

Before submitting either Clearance Order or Compulsory Purchase Order to the Minister of Health for confirmation, the local authority must by advertisement in local newspapers, give notice of the fact that such an Order has been made and describe the area comprised. They must also give proper notice to every owner, lessee, occupier and, if known, mortgagee, of any building included in the area, stating the effect of the Order and in what manner and period they may object to its provisions.

After the requisite notices have been given, the Order is submitted to the Minister, and if formal objections are lodged with him against the Order, a public local inquiry is held by one of his inspectors. Although every effort is made by local officers to secure the general acceptance of any scheme by owners and the withdrawal of objections precipitately lodged, it is rare indeed that clearance schemes of any size can be carried through without a public inquiry. The 1935 Act requires that the Minister shall not hold an inquiry until fourteen days after he is satisfied that the local authority has given written notice to all objectors of their principal grounds for declaring the premises to be unfit.

An inquiry takes the usual form. The inspector hears the case for the scheme by the local authority and then the appeals by owners and others. The case for the local authority consists of the presentation of plans of the area and photographs of the property, levels of the site, particulars of excessive density of houses, a full and accurate summary of the defects in each house and the extent to which it falls short of the general standard of working-class houses in the district, details of rehousing proposals, rents to be charged, etc., with other matters relevant to the scheme. Attempts are often made to prove by means of vital and other statistics continued ill-health among the occupants, attributable to bad housing conditions but, apart from the difficulty

of proving this in any case, unless an area is an extensive one with a correspondingly large population and the statistics averaged over a long period of years, they are likely to be very misleading. For example, if in one year, an area with a population of, say, 500 had 8 births, and one death under the age of 1 year, the district would have the somewhat alarming infantile mortality rate of 125 per 1,000 births, and similarly two deaths from tuberculosis would produce a death-rate for that disease of 4 per 1,000 population, both of which rates in another year might easily be nil.

The substance of most appeals is that the property is not unfit for human habitation, and that it is capable of being reconditioned at reasonable expense to the advantage of everyone concerned. Not infrequently there is real hardship involved in the loss of rents by widows, spinsters or aged couples, which form their only means of livelihood and, in the last few years especially, owing to the undue publicity given to slum clearance, cases of unscrupulous landlords foisting their slum property on to unsuspecting buyers, usually quite poor people, who fancy they can secure a good return on their savings, are becoming only too common, but these constitute no real grounds of appeal.

The manner in which appeals are prosecuted varies considerably; from the owners who brief legal aid and numerous expert witnesses, down to the individual poor man owner-occupier, who goes to the inquiry with every intention of "kicking up a heluva row," which he does by abusing official witnesses, assailing their integrity and casting doubts upon the sincerity of their purpose.

As in all cases where the opposition is at a disadvantage, cross-examination of witnesses forms the principal part of the proceedings, especially where appellants are legally represented. Facts and figures are accordingly challenged, witnesses bullied and brow-beaten, and every

endeavour made to create an atmosphere of confusion ; of right struggling against might, with their poor clients as the innocent victims of municipal despotism. These are the tactics adopted by lawyers in local police courts.

Then there is the niggardly close-fisted slum landlord who specializes in this class of property because it can be bought cheaply and brings in excellent returns on small investments. He collects the rents and endeavours in an extremely amateurish fashion to execute essential repairs himself, so that the outgoings are small. From youthful penury he has acquired his possessions by dint of miserly saving and toil. He appears shabbily clad before the inspector, far too stingy to engage expert aid, pleading for the retention of his houses. He may be given to bullying or whining, but whichever the type, he haggles and resists to the last ditch.

The opposition of many women owners is no less difficult. Self-opinionated and impervious to either sense or reason, it is only by exercising the greatest patience that an inspector can control their behaviour or extract from them any logical evidence.

Tenants, mostly past middle age, may be brought forward to testify that they have lived in the area and have enjoyed good health all their lives as their fathers did before them ; that all their children were born and reared there and they have no desire to leave. Such objections, although exploited by a mercenary owner, are often genuine. Old people dislike change ; they have become fondly attached to their homes and surroundings, horrible as they may appear to outsiders, and the breaking of old associations means more to them than gas coppers and bathrooms. They see no romance in sweeping away the old homes for new. Their objections are also partly based upon the fear of not being able to pay a higher rent ; a fear which rests lightly upon the young people, but tortures the old folk with visions of

the workhouse and a pauper's grave. Little wonder then they tell the inspector " 'Taint so bad as they makes out! Henny'ow, 'twas good enough for our mothers and fathers an' it's good enough for us."

After hearing all the evidence, the inspector, with local officials and representatives of the owners, visits the area, making a detailed examination of every house and building in it. In anticipation of this inspection, some owners, in the interval between the local authority making the Clearance or Compulsory Purchase Order and the inquiry, decorate and repair their houses, covering up as far as possible evidence of dampness, infestation by vermin, etc., in an endeavour to show that the property is capable of being made fit, but such methods are quite unnecessary, for every house is fairly and impartially judged, both upon its condition and relationship to the area as a whole. The inspector also visits a number of houses in different parts of the district, selected by the local authority, and possibly some put forward by the owners too, as representing the general standard of working-class housing accommodation. It is usual to select as standard houses, fairly good working-class property erected in the decade before 1914, or if few were built in this period, then those of the preceding decade.

If after consideration of the inspector's report on the inquiry the Minister confirms the Order, with or without modification, notice of confirmation must be given by the local authority by public advertisement and to individual objectors who, if they have appeared at the inquiry in support of their objections, are entitled to receive, upon request, a written statement by the Minister of his reasons for deciding that their property is unfit. Six weeks after confirmation the Order becomes operative, unless its validity is questioned by any owner in an appeal to the High Court, when its operation, so far as the property of the appellant is concerned, is suspended until final determination of the proceedings.

A number of appeals have been lodged under the Housing Act, 1930, against the decisions of the Minister to confirm Clearance Orders and that there will be many more arising from the present campaign against the slums is certain. Already there is evidence of organized opposition to schemes and concerted action by property owners' associations to contest ministerial decisions, and notwithstanding the fact that it has been held that the Court may not inquire into the sufficiency of the evidence which prompted the Minister to include in clearance proceedings any particular property, provided it is apparent that he had some evidence before him, it will be difficult indeed to frame clearance schemes for slum areas in the congested centres of towns and cities which contain business premises and other buildings, without leaving some small loophole to furnish grounds for appeal.

If the High Court decides that the Order is not within the powers of the Act or that the appellant's interests have been substantially prejudiced by any failure to comply with the requirements of the Act, the Order may be quashed either generally or so far as it affects the property of the appellant.

As soon as the Order becomes operative, the local authority must serve a copy of it on every person who received notice of their intention to submit the Order to the Minister for confirmation. In the case of Clearance Orders, occupiers of dwelling houses are required to vacate the premises by the date specified in the Order and owners must demolish within six weeks of that date or of the premises becoming vacant, whichever is the later. If any owner fails to demolish, the local authority must do the work in default, selling the materials, and any expenses incurred by them in so doing, after deducting the amount realized by the sale of materials, is recovered from the owner in County Court proceedings. Where

the area has been purchased by the local authority, all buildings must be vacated as soon as possible and demolished within six weeks of vacation or such longer period as may be deemed reasonable.

In the last month or so, owing to strong protests by the late owners and tenants alike, there has been considerable publicity given to the fact that several authorities have demanded payment of rent by tenants in the interval between their purchase of an area and vacation of the houses, and in some cases it has apparently been a long interval; nearly a year. One can easily understand the outraged feelings of owners who have had their property taken from them and received site value only, at seeing the guilty authority continuing to collect THEIR rents. Although the desires of tenants to live rent-free for a time are not unnatural, rents should continue to be paid, but the local authority can have no moral right to retain them.

The strongest criticism made of the Housing Act, 1930, so far as it relates to slum clearance procedure, has always been that it made no provision in any shape or form for the compensation of owners of condemned property. All that local authorities are empowered to do is to make a reasonable allowance for removal expenses and towards any loss due to trade disturbance in the case of business premises which have to be vacated under an Order. The latter is designed to help small shopkeepers until they become re-established, but as far as owners are concerned, Clearance Orders leave them with their land and usually a small deficit on the cost of demolition. As far as the site of a cleared area is concerned, if it is wedged between factories or other business premises, the land will probably realize a good figure, more than enough to compensate owners for the loss of property, as it will be acquired by the industrial or business concerns for extensions, or it may be so situated as to be suitable for use as a car park, but

more often it is practically worthless, especially in the case of small areas, and long remains an eyesore of brick-bats, old iron and other miscellany of a rubbish dump.

When a clearance area is acquired by means of a Compulsory Purchase Order, compensation is the value of the land only, cleared of buildings and available for development in accordance with the building bye-laws of the district, although actually it may be the intention of the local authority not to develop it, but retain it as an open space. Compensation for land surrounding or adjoining, but not comprising, a clearance area is the amount which the land might be expected to realize if sold voluntarily in the open market, subject to appropriate reductions being made on exorbitant values as the result of premises being overcrowded or used for improper purposes. These are the usual terms of compensation for land acquired compulsorily by Government or local authorities and any question of disputed compensation must be referred to and determined by an official arbitrator under the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act, 1919. For the purposes of this Act, "Land" includes messuages, tenements and hereditaments, houses and buildings of any tenure. Local authorities are also empowered to pay compensation in respect of old on-licences in force on premises comprised in the area covered by the Order. A local authority, while making a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of a clearance area, may by means of a second Order, which also requires confirmation by the Minister, close highways and extinguish rights-of-way, to enable them to satisfactorily re-develop the area.

Some of the objections to the compensation clauses of the Housing Act, 1930, have been removed by the Act of 1935. For example, houses and other buildings condemned only by reason of bad arrangement, etc., cannot be included in a Clearance Order, which means

that they must be purchased at market value if required. Further, if a house, although unfit and therefore properly included in an area, has been well maintained, the local authority, on being so directed by the Minister, must pay to the owner an amount (a) equal to the expenditure on the property during the preceding five years less one and a quarter times the rateable value; or (b) one and a half times the rateable value which is increased to three times if the premises have for the preceding three years been continuously occupied by the owner or a member of his family; in either case the amount must not exceed the full value of the property less site value. This clause ensures that in certain cases the efforts of owners who of their own volition or at the behest of local authorities have endeavoured to keep their property in repair, shall not go unrequited. Instances of owners being compelled by local authorities to execute extensive repairs to slum property within as short a time as two years of the districts being scheduled as clearance areas are by no means uncommon. In some cases brick walls have been renewed, damp-proof courses inserted and other expensive works carried out to property which by reason of its situation and condition would obviously soon be fit for nothing but demolition. No compensation is payable if Demolition Orders are made; the above clause relates only to property in clearance areas.

If we admit the justice of placing upon owners the responsibility of demolishing slum dwellings and bearing all losses, then there is little fault to be found with housing legislation, for it provides fair compensation, i.e., market value, for owners of habitable houses and other usable buildings which are situated in an area, and it helps to some extent owners who have endeavoured to keep their property in repair. On the face of it, nothing could be fairer. Everyone agrees that any losses inflicted upon grasping slum landlords and property sharks, who gamble

in cheap property, squeezing from it the last penny, are richly merited, and those owners whose agents' quarterly cheques merely go to swell a fulsome bank balance, can at least afford to lose the property, but unfortunately the problem does not rest there; it goes much deeper. Its roots are buried in the vast system of vested interests which make up a capitalist country, reaching out to obscure corners and involving widely different people—pensioners, widows, spinsters, etc. The rising tradesman or small business man of the last half of the nineteenth century chose working-class property as an investment because of its security. In those days, it symbolized the strength and power of England's middle classes. At his death, he would leave it to his widow or unmarried daughters for the safety and security it afforded. The income from rents would for years be sufficient to maintain them in a condition of strait-laced mediocrity, but failure to allow for depreciation of the investment has gradually overwhelmed them with responsibility. The War, bringing in its train changed conditions, rising prices, rent restriction, overcrowding of houses and increased wear and tear, reduced them to poverty and their property to dilapidation. They have no dole and would rather starve than approach a relieving officer. This is the unhappy condition in which force of circumstances has placed many who are entirely dependent upon the rents of small property. They and many others like them will be hard hit by clearance schemes, but rarely are they found squealing in the front ranks of the opposition. More often they are in the background, concealing with an assumed fortitude their panic-stricken feelings. Repeated assurances have been given in Parliament that no injustice will be done, but courts are bound by the law and not ministerial pledges.

In comparison, many of the tenants are probably in a position of affluence. Modern houses will be provided

for them at public expense, with generous contributions towards the rents from State and local resources, equal to about 5s. or 6s. per week, depending in each case upon the number in family, but their erstwhile landlords will be reduced to starvation. If rent subsidization is good for tenants, it seems hard that no mercy is shown to genuinely impoverished owners. They should not be allowed to be an obstacle to slum clearance, but not for so great a cause should they be reduced to misery and destitution. Those who engage in such hazardous speculations as the purchase of slum property cannot expect any consideration, but fair compensation could well be paid to such owners as are able to prove that property which it is proposed to demolish has been in their possession for many years, say since 1914, and that loss of rents will inflict upon them serious hardship.

There is provided in the 1930 Act an additional method to clearance area procedure for securing the demolition of slum dwellings. It consists of the making of Demolition Orders by local authorities in respect of individual unfit houses and can be applied to solitary unfit houses or as an alternative to clearance proposals for small groups of houses. There are several important variations in procedure. Before making a Demolition Order, the local authority must give three weeks' notice to the person receiving the rent of the house, whether as agent or owner, and any others having an interest as freeholder, lessee (with not less than three years of the lease unexpired), or mortgagee, to attend a meeting at which the matter is to be considered and every person on whom notice has been served is entitled to be heard. Any appeal against an Order must be made to the County Court, and not the Minister of Health, within three weeks of notice of the Order having been served, failing which it becomes operative.

Demolition Order procedure is restricted to dwelling houses which

(i) are occupied or of a type suitable for occupation by persons of the working classes ; and

(ii) are unfit for human habitation and incapable of being made fit at a reasonable expense.

There is no legal definition of a working-class house or what actually constitutes the working classes. The former is generally assumed to mean a dwelling house where the rent and accommodation is within the means and needs of the average working man, that is to say "mechanics, artisans, labourers and others working for wages ; hawkers, costermongers, persons not working for wages, but at some trade or handicraft, without employing others, except members of their own family, and persons other than domestic servants whose income does not exceed an average of £3 per week, and the families of any such persons who may be residing with them." This is how the term is defined in the fifth schedule of the Housing Act, 1925, but only for the purpose of defining "persons of the working classes" whom the local authority must undertake to rehouse when displaced by the clearance of a slum area.

In the definition of a "clearance area," no mention is made of working-class dwellings when referring to those houses which comprise such an area, and it is a little difficult to understand the object of limiting the other housing clauses solely to this type for, although superior houses rarely get into such a condition as to necessitate the application of Demolition Order procedure, they often require dealing with under the repairs section. Large houses let out into separate lodgings to working-class families come within the ambit of the Act, since each part of the building so let is in itself a dwelling house.

In determining whether a house is unfit for human

habitation, the same basis of comparison is used as in clearance procedure, i.e. the extent which by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects the house falls short of the bye-law standard or of the general standard of working-class housing accommodation in the district. These standards have to be relied upon to a greater extent in the single houses and small groups of houses dealt with by demolition order procedure than in large clearance areas as the decisive defects of the latter, insufficient air-space, excessive density, etc., do not always exist in the former, but their application to unfit houses presents few practical difficulties since these are generally deficient in the light of both standards, especially the bye-law standard. A point of more than passing interest is the changed wording of the Act of 1930 regarding unfit houses. No longer must a house be in "a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation," the words of the older Acts. It is now "by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects." Actually, it was never necessary to prove injury to health at the departmental inquiries held on appeal; such evidence it would have been well-nigh impossible to have found.

On being satisfied that a house is unfit, the local authority must next consider whether it is capable of being made fit at a reasonable expense. As so often happens with harmlessly simple phrases introduced into legislation, "reasonable expense" has proved a most refractory obstacle to the elimination of individual unfit houses, many appeals to the County Court being based upon a too rigid acceptance of the term by local authorities. From judgments delivered on appeals, one thing is certain although seemingly contrary to the wording of the Act: If an owner appears before the Council undertaking to carry out such works as will render a house in all respects fit for human habitation, notwithstanding the fact that the amount he is willing

to expend is out of all proportion to the value of the property afterwards, it runs a risk of having its Order quashed on appeal by refusing to accept the undertaking. It is obvious that an owner will have special reasons for proposing to repair on an uneconomic basis and if disallowed by an authority, he will in all probability be permitted to do so by the County Court judge. With leasehold property, the unexpired period of the lease largely determines the amount which would be considered reasonable to expend. County Court judges are empowered to consider all questions which the local authority could have dealt with, and this has in the past produced some peculiar results. In many cases appellants have submitted inadequate undertakings to an authority or refrained from making any offer at all and then on appeal have produced an entirely new scheme for the consideration of the judge, with the result that the appeals have been allowed and the authority saddled with the costs. The following case is an instance of such a course being adopted :—

Demolition Orders were made in respect of nine houses, purchased by the appellant in 1931 for the sum of £700. A scheme to repair them for £300 had been refused by the authority previous to the Orders being made. In the appeal, a new scheme was presented for demolishing three houses in the middle of the block, to improve air circulation and reconditioning the remainder at an estimated cost of £500, after which the value of the property would be between £600 and £700, of which £150 represented the value of the site. The houses were situated in rear of a public house of which appellant was licensee, and it was stated that if the site was cleared in accordance with the Orders, it would be useless as he would not be permitted to build further houses there and his life's savings would be lost.

The judge allowed the appeal.

In this case, £500 was considered to be "reasonable expense" for repairing property originally purchased for £700 (thus making a total outlay of £1,200), which it was appraised would subsequently be worth only £600 to £700 and, although the decision here may be considered an unusual one, it illustrates the point. The Housing Act, 1935, however, prevents this happening in the future. If an owner desires to make an offer to repair, he must do so within twenty-one days of the receipt of the Council's notice of the proposal to make Demolition Order and if he fails to submit, within a reasonable time, a list of the works he proposes to carry out, then he cannot submit an undertaking to the Court.

Another important amendment of the 1935 Act relating to individual houses, is that where only a room or part of a dwelling house is unfit, a local authority are able to make a Closing Order preventing that part from being used for human habitation, and they can take steps to prevent the closed part from afterwards becoming a nuisance. Hitherto, Closing Orders could only be made for a part of a building if it was let as a separate tenement.

Before accepting any undertaking to make fit, local authorities require to be furnished with detailed specifications of works which an owner proposes to execute, and if these are not, in the opinion of their officers, sufficient to render the property in all respects fit for human habitation, they may decline to accept the undertaking, without disclosing their actual reasons for so doing, but it is probably wiser to afford an owner opportunity of submitting a second scheme before making Orders.

It has also been made clear, again as the result of appeals, that a local authority more or less has to accept an owner's undertaking that property will not in future be used for human habitation, unless there are very good reasons to the contrary, such as the premises being badly infested with vermin or in other ways likely to

become insanitary. Owners frequently desire to use unfit houses as stores or to convert a block of cottages into a warehouse or lock-up garages, and the 1930 Act does not appear to confer any power upon local authorities to refuse such applications.

Appeals to the County Court against Demolition Orders is entirely new; under previous Housing Acts, the Ministry of Health heard them, an inspector visiting the district to hold an inquiry. Under the old appeals procedure, the decisions were scrupulously fair, with no more sympathy for the underdog than for an authority justly endeavouring to rid its district of slum dwellings, and what is probably more important, they were consistent, whereas County Court judgments in general show a marked lack of uniformity. This is hardly surprising, since practically all appeals are based on technical differences, which can be more easily decided by technical than legal experts. County Court judges have frequently lamented upon the lack of guidance given to them under the Act. Under previous Housing Acts there was even less, but Ministry inspectors were never heard to complain. The County Court is really the last place where such appeals should be heard. The whole thing is foreign to their routine. The insularity of the legal mind, its inordinate capacity for micrologically dissecting phrases and its total lack of practical experience, is causing considerable difficulty to the officers and authorities entrusted with the work of slum clearance.

Demolition Order procedure, although dealing with unfit houses individually and appearing to be a more lengthy process than clearance area methods, is quite as important a part of slum clearance machinery as the latter; in fact, up to 1935, by far the greater number of unfit houses had been demolished as the result of Demolition Orders. Its principal advantages are that it dispenses with vexatious departmental routine encoun-

tered in the submission of clearance schemes to the Ministry of Health and the local authority are under no statutory obligation to rehouse displaced persons. This last important difference is undoubtedly the reason why many authorities prefer wherever possible to demolish unfit houses by means of Demolition Orders, as by this means they are able to avoid the cost and responsibility of rehousing bad tenants. Whilst clearance area procedure is obviously necessary in the congested parts of large towns, the alternative method has been adopted for clearing small areas and terraces of unfit property in towns where overcrowding is not so acute. There is a serious risk, however, where Demolition Orders are made in respect of houses forming a terrace and owned by several people. The owner of one or more of them may successfully appeal, as a result of which all other houses have to be demolished, leaving the appellant's standing. This has actually happened in several towns, creating complications and bringing ridicule on the council and its officials. Such a condition would not be likely to arise with clearance procedure.

As far as appeals generally are concerned, those to County Courts against Demolition Orders are proportionately less than those to the Minister against Clearance or Compulsory Purchase Orders, owing chiefly to the greater expense involved in the former and to a general fear of "the law" ingrained in the majority of people. The less formal public inquiries, held in the local town hall or municipal buildings, are not regarded with so much awe as legal proceedings. Owners, after touting individual members of the Council previous to the meeting called to consider objections, are more often inclined to accept the situation as inevitable if Orders are made. On the other hand, there is a far greater risk of appeals being allowed by the County Courts than in those lodged against clearance proceedings with the Minister, for

reasons already given and also for the reason that the central department is just as keen to see slums cleared as local authorities.

* * * * *

Such are the present methods of slum clearance and a few of the legal obstacles to be overcome. They indicate, if nothing else, the impossibility of rushing schemes, for at each step forward, local authorities are certain to meet with opposition from owners, which will become keener and better organized as the work proceeds. Those politicians and so-called economists, who from public platforms glibly urge councils to smash their way through slumdom in approved steam-roller fashion, sweeping aside opposition with the flick of their fingers or ignoring it altogether, exhibit gross ignorance of realities; not an uncommon deficiency in theorists, however. During the year ended March 31, 1935, local authorities *resolved* to demolish 47,770 houses, displacing 197,594 persons, but the number of houses actually demolished during the year was 24,273 and the number erected for rehousing purposes 23,674. These figures, taken from the returns issued by the Ministry of Health, indicate a considerable deficit on the first full year of the five-year plan, although it must be admitted there is evidence of a probably accelerated progress in the future. There is little doubt, however, that at the termination of the five-year period, we shall see in the large and densely populated areas much of this elaborate statistical survey remaining unaccomplished.

Despite the vast clearance schemes of the L.C.C. and other large authorities, the present campaign is not the alpha and omega of the slum problem. It will not see the end of slums, for slums, like the poor, will probably always be with us. In fact, if present jerry-building methods are permitted for a few more years, nothing is more certain than that slum clearance will become a permanent department in the public health administration of the country.

CHAPTER V

REHOUSING

I

BEFORE proceeding with a clearance area from which persons of the working classes will be displaced, a local authority must undertake to carry out themselves, or to secure the carrying out by voluntary societies, of such rehousing operations as may be considered reasonably necessary by the Minister of Health, and although rehousing is not compulsory in respect of persons displaced from individual unfit houses by Demolition Orders, in those areas where overcrowding is a serious problem and other accommodation not available, local authorities will feel morally obliged to provide the necessary accommodation. Evicting families from their homes and turning them into the street is at all times an unpleasant task, and when carried out by an authority is likely to arouse public resentment with parades, demonstrations, political repercussions and even resistance to the police in executing warrants. It is true many councils have in the past adopted this course rather than accept responsibility for those who are largely undesirable as tenants, and who can blame them? But with more extensive operations, an essential part of local authorities' campaigns will be the provision of new houses.

The Housing Act, 1930, in order that houses may be let at rents which persons of the poorer classes can afford to pay, provides for a Government grant of 45s. per annum for a period of forty years in respect of each person (adult or child) displaced and for whom suitable

accommodation has been provided (not necessarily new accommodation), the local authority also being required to contribute from the rates a sum of 75s. per house per annum for a like period. The grant is 50s. per person in agricultural parishes and in special cases where rehousing can only be carried out on expensive land, the price of which exceeds £3,000 per acre, and in tenement blocks of more than three storeys, the State grant may be as much as 70s. per person.

Where a local authority enters into arrangements with a public utility or other housing society to provide rehousing accommodation, they may make to the society an annual grant equivalent to or in excess of the amount which would have been contributed by the Exchequer had the authority themselves provided the houses, and the Ministry may reimburse them to the extent of the grant under the Act. In such cases the rates contribution is not obligatory, but the same special conditions apply as regards rents. Thus, where an authority does not care to rehouse slum dwellers, they may clear an area and secure the provision of new houses by a public utility society, promoting the formation of such a society if one does not exist, all at no capital cost to the ratepayers. In many towns and London boroughs, the local authorities have acquired and cleared sites and then handed them over to societies to develop.

It will be seen that rehousing represents the major part of the slum problem; it is to cost vast sums of money; in some of the distressed areas, already overburdened by the calls of outdoor relief, the financial commitments will be very heavy indeed. The majority are at heart slum abolitionists, even those directly interested; it is the vastness of the rehousing proposals which frighten them. There are a great many people of the tax-paying community, perhaps with less intrepidity and greater foresight than the rest, who feel intuitively

that in making the State and district councils financially responsible for rehousing slum families, the Government has hastily started something of which it is impossible to see the end, or it might be nearer the mark to say they have taken on a responsibility with no end to it. The capital cost of accommodating the million and a quarter who will be displaced by the present campaign is estimated at £115,000,000, the full exchequer grant being approximately £3,000,000 per year and the contributions from local rates about £1,000,000 per year. Incidentally, the cost to the Exchequer of previous housing subsidies, which made no contribution to the slum problem whatever, is £13,750,000 per year, and the total indebtedness of the nation for housing purposes is fast approaching a thousand millions. In the Housing Act, 1935, we are promised a further great housing drive, "a war on overcrowding." Past experience led one to presume that this would take the usual form; local authorities being called upon for complicated statistical surveys, upon which housing needs will be estimated; then there will be demands for programmes of building, elaborate financial provisions, etc., so that altogether the prospect of future housing conditions is not a very pleasant one, especially to those who see the inherent dangers of public ownership of working-class houses.

In undertaking this colossal task, we are paying the price for mistakes of the past; a burden that a large section of the public think should be gladly shouldered. Others, if not entirely in sympathy, at least agree there appears to be no alternative, but many see in the present campaign not the end, but the beginning of a vast socialization of working-class housing. When the slums of to-day, comprising over a quarter of a million houses, have been demolished and the displaced families rehoused, is it likely that private enterprise, which for over twenty years has declined the risk of providing for the poorer

classes, will enter the field and erect houses in sufficient numbers to replace decaying property? Or are coming generations at intervals of years to embark upon national slum crusades and rehousing schemes, each more ambitious and original than the preceding one, until eventually the so-called curse of private ownership has been eradicated and the working classes made ideally happy as municipal tenants of a super-socialist state? Another question that many are asking: Financial assistance is to be limited to a period of forty years, but as housing loans usually extend to sixty, what is to happen in the last twenty years? *Quién sabe?* The only thing we may be certain about is that posterity is going to inherit more than its fair share of burdens from the first half of the twentieth century.

It is often argued that the most equitable arrangement for meeting the rehousing needs of densely populated areas would be to make it a national charge. Those districts with no slum problem would through the medium of taxation then have to help pay for the impoverished districts that seem to be all slum. The vast rehousing schemes already completed in east and south-east London, apart from the greater schemes to come, could only have been carried out by the L.C.C. with its immense financial resources. An intolerable burden would have fallen upon the ratepayers of the poorer boroughs if district councils had undertaken the work. As it is, the wealthier districts, through the county rates, are paying their share. Poorer districts, however, could reduce the cost to the community by allowing as much as possible of the work to be done by locally formed housing trusts or other voluntary societies. In some areas, societies might be able and willing to carry out the whole of the rehousing. They are able to undertake the work just as efficiently as local authorities and as far as management is concerned, property is always better controlled

by independent means than by representatives elected by and forever at the mercy of public opinion.

The total exchequer and rates contributions are to form a pool out of which reductions in the economic rents are to be made. It is left to the discretion of the local authority whether they should be applied to uniform rent reduction, differential rents or in the form of rebates from the rents to families needing assistance. Differential rents, although apparently a simple matter of adjustment, are the cause of strife in the council chamber and endless squabbling among the tenants. A tenant in regular employment may be called upon to pay the full rent; his neighbour, through wifely fruitfulness or masculine carelessness, whichever way one may be disposed to regard the possession of a large family, is charged several shillings per week less, whilst a permanent out-of-work may even live rent-free. Such conditions obviously result in jealousy and friction, and render efficient house management difficult. Whilst the best method is to fix a uniform rent, which with low building costs and liberal subsidization will be a reasonably low one, so much so that tenants of other municipal schemes invariably petition the authority for their rents to be reduced to the same level, it must be admitted such a course is opposed to the spirit of this and other post-war housing acts since it means that all are in receipt of rent relief whether they stand in need of it or not. All subsidies have been intended for persons of the working classes who cannot afford to pay an economic rent, but the recent rent strike of over 500 tenants at Leeds arising out of the decision of the city council, after conducting a "means test," to apply differential renting to the whole of their schemes, illustrates the difficulties of generally attempting to enforce the principle. While the action of the Leeds Corporation was a perfectly legal one—in fact they were able to recover possession of property for non-payment

of rent increases—it is not good government. These visionary schemes of social service breed class antagonism and are never anything but unpractical when applied to the people. There will be many cases among slum dwellers where rent relief is necessary, but the better way is to charge a uniform rent, with rebates for impoverished families, depending upon the extent of their poverty and lasting only for so long as they actually need assistance. Applicants for rebates could be dealt with in much the same way that the majority of authorities deal with similar applications for excusal of rate payments.

The number of new houses required to rehouse displaced persons is arrived at from the standard of accommodation prescribed by the Act, i.e. 2 bedroom-house for 4 persons ; 3-bedroom-house for 5 persons and 4-bedroom-house for 7 persons, but the number approved for grants by the Minister is not always equal to the number to be demolished. By a rigid application of the prescribed standard, the number of small families of less than four to be rehoused is restricted. For example, assuming 120 persons will be displaced from 28 houses and the local authority require 16 3-bedroom houses and the remainder with 2 bedrooms. Applying the standard means that 80 persons will be accommodated in the former, leaving 40 to be rehoused in the latter. This is equivalent to 10 houses, or 2 short of the number required. It occasionally happens that other accommodation can be found for old-age pensioners, etc., living alone in 1- or 2-room cottages, so that the number approved is sufficient, but this cannot always be done.

In a few districts authorities have anticipated the recommendation of the Moyne Report that there should be co-ordination between the work of reconditioning and slum clearance by acquiring and reconditioning structurally sound working-class property adjacent to condemned areas for the accommodation of dispossessed slum families,

the occupiers of the older dwellings moving into new houses (or tenements) provided for them. In the re-conditioned houses the families are subjected to regular supervision and those proving themselves fit to be elevated to a higher social stratum, and whose resources are sufficient to meet a possibly increased rent, are given the opportunity of moving into a new house in a more salubrious neighbourhood. The chief advantage of this method of rehousing, in addition to the fact that re-conditioned property can usually be let at more moderate rents than new houses, is that it provides a probationary period of control; it enables local authorities to formulate a gradation process, whereby those families responding to treatment can be removed from the degrading influences of others whom no amount of control will alter.

It is also the method most applicable to distressed areas; towns and villages which were once thriving hives of industry, but now with idle factories and smokeless stacks, are melancholy haunts of poverty. The return of prosperity seems a forlorn hope and the provision of new houses for people who may never again have regular employment an expenditure for which there is no justification. Such areas now have a gradually decreasing population through families, and more especially the young people, following the drift of industry southward; in the future, depopulation will proceed with greater rapidity. Therefore every attempt should be made to rehouse slum-dwellers in existing working-class houses, limiting new building to an absolute minimum. More accommodation would be made available if the many 5- or 6-roomed houses, occupied by aged couples and single persons, could be acquired for rehousing purposes. The old people rarely use more than two of the rooms, closing up the remainder, and with their means limited to old-age pensions, experience difficulty in paying even

a moderate rent. A number of local authorities have built small dwellings of the bungalow type for such persons, consisting of scullery, living room and bedroom, with necessary conveniences, and similar to the old-fashioned almshouses which philanthropists of old, wiser and more attentive to the needs of old people than the present generation, were wont to endow their native places. Apart from rendering available larger dwellings for rehousing, houses of this type meet a need in almost every town.

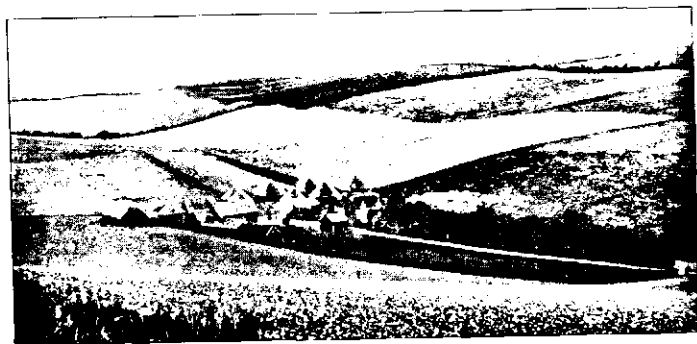
The type of new accommodation depends largely upon circumstances, but undoubtedly the best and most economical method of rehousing is to provide self-contained cottages on suitable land at the outskirts of industrial centres. In practically all areas, except the large cities with their equally populous environs, land so situated can be secured at moderate cost (in small districts, probably at agricultural prices) and housing accommodation provided in advance of demolishing the slum dwellings. Sites should be within a reasonable distance of industrial concerns, adjacent to 'bus or tram routes and near to schools.

Except in special cases, houses must conform to the statutory requirements regarding density and size which were in force for ordinary subsidized houses, i.e. 12 houses to the acre, or a land unit of 375 square yards and a maximum size for each house of 760 feet super. The Ministry in the past have approved a greater density in populous areas and it is obvious that houses of more than 3 bedrooms, which will be required for large slum families, will need to be larger than 760 feet super.

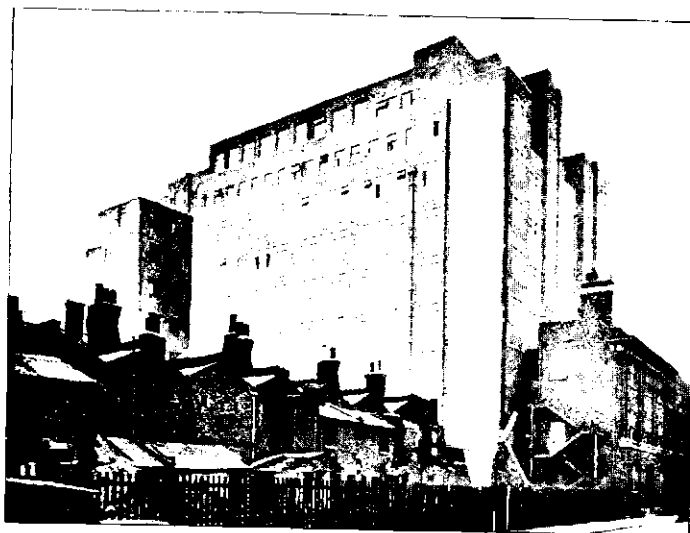
A density of 12 houses to the acre allows about 300 square yards of garden ground to each house and many argue that this is land wastage even where land is cheap and easily obtained, since most town-dwellers, whether from the slums or not, know little of garden cultivation.



A typical housing scheme.



Before development (see p. 138).



The first wing of a tenement block built on slum area,
showing piecemeal development (see p. 147).

(Photo by General Photographic Agency, Ltd.)

Many slum-dwellers have never seen a cabbage growing and have little inclination to adopt horticulture as a hobby. Unless therefore they are able and willing to cultivate a garden, it will be wise to considerably reduce the land allotted to each house, but whether the actual density should be increased needs careful consideration, although it cannot be denied that private enterprise, under most building bye-laws, is able to erect houses with a density of from 30 to 50 per acre. The great point against making any concession is that the people for whom the houses are chiefly intended, owing to their poverty of body and mind, need air, sunlight and open spaces more than any other section of the community. In planning large housing schemes, it will be possible by reducing the land unit to provide what is probably more essential to slum-dwellers than gardens, i.e. playing fields and open spaces. Further help in this direction may be secured by restricting road works to minimum requirements. One of the most uneconomical features of early post-war housing schemes was the lavish expenditure on wide roads and footpaths, some of them entirely superfluous, and all of them out of proportion to the needs of the householders.

The confusion of post-war emergency processes of house-building, which were often thrust upon recalcitrant local bodies by the central authority, have now passed to a timely limbus and orthodox methods and materials have prevailed, although the latter, generally speaking, are much below pre-war standards. In the matter of design, the drab and unattractive appearance of most municipal housing schemes, stigmatizing them as "Council houses," proves that architectural imagination did not run riot in their preparation. In some of the architecturally or naturally beautiful districts, they are a distinct eyesore. The lack of originalty in their layout and general design has been due in part to the employment

of unqualified persons to prepare schemes, particularly in the smaller towns and rural areas, and to the blue pencil which Ministry officials have wielded well but often unwisely in the cause of economy.

How far the defects of previous housing schemes may be avoided in those prepared for rehousing purposes depends very largely upon the scale of operations. The larger the scheme, the greater the scope for creative design, although in small schemes, and even in single blocks of cottages, much can be done to give the houses a pleasing appearance.

In planning the interior of houses for slum families, their circumstances in life and habits must determine to a certain extent the accommodation and amenities to be provided. For example, it is useless to make provision for a parlour if the people have not the means of furnishing it. Some say house them in stout brick boxes; others, anticipating no trouble once they are removed from their present environment, would surround them with luxurious convenience, providing expensive labour-saving devices not to be found in even the best of residences. The ideal house is, of course, between the two; severely simple, but planned to give a reasonable standard of comfort and convenience. In any case, it amounts to sheer waste when intricate fittings and appliances, which are not properly understood by the housewife and therefore never used, are installed. It must not be forgotten that women of the poor, so far as domestic knowledge goes, are extremely ignorant, and their ignorance of the use of even ordinary fitments could not be better illustrated than by the following remarks overheard between two women of an audience witnessing the opening ceremony of a provincial housing scheme.

The mayor was describing how he as "chief citizen of this ancient and 'onnerable borough" had insisted that nothing be spared to provide tenants

with every possible convenience, as befitted a public man who "'ad the 'ousing of the pore near to 'is 'art.'" He said there were separate bathrooms, running hot and cold water, radiators, linen cupboards, etc.

First female : "Linnin cu'boards ? Blimey, Liz ! wot's linnin cu'boards ?"

Liz : "Don't show yer hignorance ! It's where yer stacks dirty clothes ready for the wash."

With a family of average size, the chief need of the house is a large living room. Here the family take their meals and probably spend the greater part of the day. In homes of the poorer class, if a parlour exists, it is rarely used as such, probably serving as store for bicycles, perambulators, etc., or in the case of very large families, as a victualling annexe, so that its omission inflicts no hardship when a large living room is provided. A fairly commodious scullery, with deep sink, rack and draining board, copper (brick, portable or gas) and other fitments, coal-house and w.c. complete the ground floor. In working-class homes, the most convenient position for the w.c. is downstairs, and there is no reason why the bathroom should not be on the ground floor too. Bedrooms, each sufficiently large to accommodate a double-size bed, and provided with small fireplaces for permanent ventilation, should open on to a landing to avoid intercommunication.

If gas or electric cookers are installed, a kitchen range is still indispensable, for fathers and sons in the slums are rarely anything but casual labourers, likely to return at evening-time soaked to the skin, and their clothes, possibly all they possess, must be dried before the fire ready for morning. A boiler fitted to the range will supply hot water to sink and bath.

Of all the innovations of the municipal house, whether relating to design, methods of construction, materials or fittings, none have been so much maligned as the bath

with which each house has been fitted. Public criticism of the whole gamut of post-war housing seems to have focussed itself upon this simple sanitary fitting. Its unnecessary in working-class houses and the many and varied purposes for which it is alleged to be used have become glibly repeated clichés. The provision of extravagant and intricate fittings has been condemned, but the bath is not one of them. More than a necessity, it is a symbol of housing progress. As a result of the cessation of subsidies, baths are unfortunately being omitted from many small houses erected by private builders, whilst in some they are being fixed under a hinged shelf or other similar contrivance in the scullery.

If cleanliness is to become a virtue among the working classes of this country, they must be educated to regard the bath as a necessary house-fitting and bathing as a primary obligation. If they keep their bodies clean, they will keep their houses clean too. It is true that in existing municipal houses baths are often reserved for the storage of household junk or for soaking dirty clothes, and instances of them being used for the keeping of animals, such as rabbits, litters of pups, etc., are not unknown, but the provision of a bath is a constant reminder of the need for personal cleanliness, and those who, because of the malpractices of the submerged tenth, would deny this facility to such of the slum population as might be encouraged, or perhaps shamed, into using it, are shortsighted as well as economical.

To each house should also be provided a strongly built wooden shed for the storage of tools, etc., and damage to rain-water pipes and gutters may be prevented by the provision of clothes posts.

With prevailing low building costs, which are obviously incapable of much further reduction, small rehousing schemes, after the methods outlined, on cheap land and with low costs of roads and sewers, can be carried out at

an average price of 7s. 9d. per foot super, or £295 per house of 3 bedrooms and about 760 feet super, enabling houses to be let, if the grants and rates contributions are applied to a uniform rent reduction, at inclusive rents between 6s. and 8s. per week. The rise and fall of building costs may be seen from the following table :—

Year	Non-parlour Houses	Parlour Houses
1914	£160	£200
1920	£880	£984
1927	£413	£480
1928	£362	£429
1929	£345	£409
1930	£340	£404
1931	£333	£393
1932	£304	£360
1933	£295	£360

The magnitude of the slum problem in densely populated areas makes rehousing an infinitely more difficult and costly proceeding, necessitating the adoption of comprehensive plans and the development of large housing estates outside the city boundaries or the erection of tenement blocks on cleared sites within the city.

The development of very large estates solely to accommodate families from the slums is a policy fraught with risks. It has been done in some parts of the country and the results have not been very successful. Ordinary municipal housing has catered for the better-paid sections of the working classes, with a sprinkling of the middle class. These people, drawn from all parts of the district, have settled down comfortably together, each tenant following his daily calling and preserving old friendships and interests distinct from those of his neighbours. The segregation of all slum families in a district will produce psychological reactions of a different order. It will tend to create of them a separate and distinct class, a privileged class, claiming preferential rights over their fellow-citizens. There is, of course, an exception, and that is in respect of the irredeemably debased slum dwellers. For them, segregation in the form of sanitary imprison-

ment would be good. For the remainder, however, a powerful instrument in enhancing their improvement will be to make them feel they are an integral part of the community and this cannot be done by dumping them all down in satellite towns far removed from the warmth and colour of the city.

A suburban estate should be developed for ordinary housing as well as rehousing purposes, catering for all sections of the working classes and not solely for slum families: low and high wage-earners, large and small families, aged persons, etc., forming in itself a self-contained community with all those social inequalities that take the monotony out of life. It should possess most of the amenities of town life, i.e. schools, shops, churches, public halls, licensed premises, etc., to prevent as far as possible a drift of tenants citywards and consequent overcrowding of other areas, but the "call of the city" is not easily silenced in people born and bred there, and it is doubtful if slum families will find happiness in the hushed respectability of the satellite town. They are certain to miss the busy streets, markets, shops, lights and crowded pothouses; the life and boisterous spirits of the big town. For the young children, who never having known these things will not miss them, good houses, pure air and plenty of room to play will make life healthy and interesting.

It is abundantly clear, however, that so far as London, Liverpool, Manchester and other large cities are concerned, circumstances compel the abandonment of this method and the adoption of tenement blocks. There are so many reasons why these people cannot be moved to houses several miles away. The proportion of slum workers whose occupations would permit them to reside outside the city or who could afford to meet the cost of travelling to and fro is strictly limited, and those who actually desire to move out are still less. The factory hand, the docker,

the warehouseman, the market porter and even the itinerant hawker or barrowman must live near to the scenes of his labour, so that even if land is available in outside areas for building purposes, labour difficulties would prevent the people whom it is intended to accommodate occupying the houses. In fact, the absorption of unskilled labour which would, of course, be greatly increased where there was a high proportion of slum families, is the principal obstacle to the formation of satellite towns. Unless industries already exist in the vicinity or can be developed concurrently with the growth of the district, a "poverty town" will be created, inhabited by an alarming number of unemployed and their dependants, whose maintenance will be a perpetual burden to the public assistance authority. The only solution therefore is contained in the New Yorker's laconic explanation of his city's famous skyline, "We couldn't move out, so we moved up."

Flats and tenements have long been a feature of continental and American cities, but they are not popular among the working classes of this country, due largely to an inherent dislike of living in mid-air above a network of winding stairways and lobbies. This repugnance to tenement life it may be possible to overcome in young people, but older persons, who have always been accustomed to stepping from the front door into the street, never cease grumbling about the stairs and lack of privacy. With age and infirmity, they are virtually prisoners in the buildings, and small children under school age are also rarely able to leave them. The chief objection to tenement life, however, is that it exercises no "uplifting power" over the people; their elevation is in the geometrical sense only. It rarely produces that pride of possession, so conducive to the growth of self-respect and so frequently observed in the best of the families transformed from slums to a cottage and garden. We

know that the tenement slum is the worst of slums ; the environment definitely causes greater moral deterioration than life among the alleys, courts and warrens of mean streets. Most of the older barrack-like tenements furnish proof of this, whilst many of the workers' tenements in Continental countries present similar conditions. Of the tenements on New York's east side, in particular, there may be other slums in the world as bad, but few worse. The establishment of just an average crowd of slum families in large tenement blocks will create manifold difficulties of management, taxing to the limit the most adequate system of control, and what the results are likely to be in those buildings where the "untouchables" predominate hardly bears thinking of. The problem has to be faced, however. Careful planning and brilliant design should do much to inspire, but upon management and studied control we must rely to stimulate thoughts into action and fumbling efforts into habits.

The planning and development of clearance areas as sites for tenements is not only the most expensive method of rehousing, but is attended with greater difficulties than the simpler method of accommodating displaced persons in houses erected on other land in advance of the work of demolition. The preparation of schemes for irregularly shaped areas, badly situated or of insufficient size, invariably involves the clearance and planning of much larger sites. Where a number of small clearance areas are scattered about a commercial district, wedged between warehouses and factories, the whole area may have to be acquired for satisfactory redevelopment. In some of the large clearance schemes of London and other cities, the area of the land acquired is as great as 8 or 10 acres for a single scheme. One advantage of a larger site is that it can be redeveloped on comprehensive lines, and if the whole is not required for rehousing and open spaces, part may be reserved for commercial and industrial purposes.

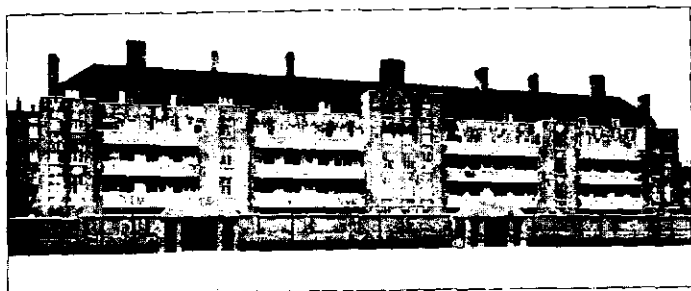
Land values vary considerably in different cities, but so far as London is concerned, the cost of acquiring and clearing sites in the industrial boroughs varies between £10,000 and £12,000 per acre; roughly the same as the cost of pre-war acquisitions for slum clearance, which is tantamount to a considerable reduction.

The actual work of clearance often presents great difficulty, particularly if most of the tenants are to be rehoused on the site of the clearance area. This necessitates the scheme being developed piecemeal. By removing some of the tenants, probably into temporary accommodation in the vicinity, if none other is available, and by a general moving process, a portion of the site can be cleared and upon this erected one wing or section of the tenement block. The accommodation thus provided permits of more of the area being cleared and the buildings completed, the clearance of that portion of the site reserved for open space being carried out last. Many clearance areas, especially in some of the industrial cities, will for various reasons be unsuitable for development as rehousing sites, and in such cases, displaced families will have to be accommodated on other central sites or in tenements being erected in connection with other clearance areas, the authority either selling the areas or, if they have not been compulsorily acquired, allowing them to be retained by owners and developed for industrial or commercial purposes.

The air-space requirements for tenement buildings should be the same as for cottages, for if 300 square yards of open space, inclusive of roads, etc., i.e. approximately four-fifths or 80 per cent. of the area allotted each house, where the density is twelve to the acre, is necessary with this method of rehousing, nothing less should suffice for high storey tenements. Arranged in these proportions, 20 per cent. of the site occupied by buildings and the remainder open spaces, the density of dwellings in a five-storey block is approximately 50 to the acre, rather

less than an average slum density. A smaller proportion of the site is occupied by roads, with a corresponding increase in the amount allotted to gardens, playing fields, etc.

If large working-class tenements of five storeys or more are to be a feature of our densely populated areas, architects should be permitted sufficient scope to ensure that the buildings will improve the architectural amenities of a district, and although it is only right that personal tastes in external features should not be allowed to defeat efficient internal planning, design should not be entirely subordinated to use and economy. Schemes already carried out in some cities have, it is true, considerable architectural merit. After the Georgian style, they have solidity and strength; elevations are imposing, if not beautiful; russet-red brickwork tones well with white or cream window sashes and frames, stone string courses, cornices, etc., high-pitched tiled roofs, large block chimneys and the ornamental iron balustrading of access balconies, but many blocks have been erected to the barrack-like designs of older tenements. If we are to prevent a repetition of past evils in the new tenements, which under ordinary circumstances will be expected to last a century, something more than multi-slotted brick boxes, surrounded with narrow strips of tarred paving, must be provided. To a layman, it would seem that the design of large tenement buildings calls for the development of new methods, new materials and entirely different styles, abandoning the dull characterless standards of tradition. One not unnaturally turns for inspiration to the wonderful examples of community tenements in some of the great cities of Europe and more especially in Austria and Germany. Reports from housing enthusiasts who have visited some of the Viennese schemes state that as regards magnitude, lay-outs and amenities, they far surpass anything yet done in this



Imposing elevation of block on Collingwood Estate. Note external access balconies.



A large block in the L.C.C. Tabard Garden Estate (see p. 149).

(Reproduced by kind permission of Architect's Dept., L.C.C.)

country. Illustrations, too, depict enormous structures, gleaming white in brilliant sunshine, clear skies above and scarcely a shadow visible. The places, in fact, seem to be uninhabited; no dust, no smoke, no litter, or indeed anything to disturb the serenity of the scene. Everything helps to make a very charming picture: beautiful façades, rear elevations with long ribbon-like sweeps of accessible balconies and projecting verandas decorated with flowers provided by the municipality, spacious squares, grass-plots, ornamental gardens, bathing pools, fountains and statuary.

The attractive appearance and the general lay-out of some of these schemes completely justify the universal admiration they have excited, and many of the details of planning and design might well be copied here, but there are several important reasons why continental practice in tenement-building is not entirely applicable to rehousing schemes in the large cities of this country. Firstly, the largest of continental cities are considerably less in size than the vast urban aggregations of our industrial areas, which means that there is usually more land available, rendering the acquisition of large sites less difficult and, generally speaking, less costly. And secondly, their standard of accommodation is far below our minimum requirements for working-class families. In Vienna, for example, more than half the dwellings provided by the municipality consist of two rooms only, with a total superficial area of 432 square feet, and there are many single-room dwellings. It is said that accommodation has had to be restricted to the economic capacity of the working classes, although it is generally known that they have never been accustomed to the same accommodation per family as English working classes. The net effect of this, the concentration of large numbers of flats in one district and the grouping of amenities, has enabled tenement dwellings to be provided at less cost than the

same number of self-contained cottages. In some of their large tenement groups, there are as many as 1,500 dwellings, supplied with every conceivable social amenity, steam laundries, different varieties of bathing conveniences (in accordance with continental practice, baths are not provided in each flat, but for groups), schools, a kindergarten, crèches, doctor's residence, shops, cinema, etc., and owing to low costs it has been possible to allow a substantial margin for decorative design.

The conditions operating unfavourably to ambitious planning in the populous areas of this country arise principally from the land problem and the high cost of building. Land is the key to the whole slum question ; it does not exist within reasonable distances in sufficient acreage to permit of the erection of large group tenements. Restricted sites necessarily cramp design ; ugly settings mar architectural beauty, while smoke and soot can be expected to quickly efface the artistic effects of colour schemes, also dulling the verdure of trees and grass in open spaces.

Excessive site values, a higher standard of accommodation and the increased cost of superior workmanship make tenement-building the expensive undertaking it is in London and other places. With an average cost of 15s. per foot super, it is obvious that the curtailment of all but essential work is imperative in order that rents may not be prohibitive. Elaborate ornamentation is therefore impossible, but originality in structural design, new methods and materials and courageous planning may produce work of which future generations will be proud.

Orientation of buildings, all the more necessary in large blocks of high-storeyed flats, and internal planning are among the most important features of tenement design. All living rooms and bedrooms should be so situated that they are able to receive for some part of

each day the direct rays of the sun. Each flat should be self-contained, the accommodation consisting of a large living room, scullery, w.c., bathroom, ventilated larder and two or three bedrooms, and it is essential that upper floors should be made sound-proof. Means of access will consist of either internal stairways and corridors or balconies at the rear. The former method has the advantage of greater privacy, but the difficulty of keeping stairs and passages clean and the lack of ventilation through windows and ventilators remaining effectually sealed, which soon fills the building with the characteristic slum reek, has led to the more frequent adoption of the balcony method in recent schemes. The lack of privacy attributed to this method of access may be largely overcome by restricting the number of flats served by each balcony.

A feature of great importance in tenements to be occupied by slum dwellers is the finishing surface of walls, etc. The material used should be capable of resisting rough usage and infestation by vermin; neither should there be any sharp angles, corners or crevices to harbour dirt, dust or vermin.

II

The provision of new houses or tenements for families displaced from the slums does not, unfortunately, mean that our troubles are over; fresh problems await the local authority or the utility society when the slum-dwellers take possession, and without underrating the obstacles which lie in the path of slum clearance or the many practical difficulties of rehousing, one cannot help feeling that the care and management of these people once they become tenants of local bodies will prove to be the biggest problem of all. Most of the difficulties associated with the work of pulling down and building anew can be measured in terms of houses, land and finance,

and may be overcome by careful planning and the zealous application of an authority's legal powers. Recalcitrant owners, the occasional interposition of unintelligible judicial decisions notwithstanding, can by force of law also be yoked to the van of housing progress, but the problem of slum dwellers is a widely different one. The object is different too. It is not to divest them of material possessions, as with owners, but to change coarse habits, so firmly established through generations of slum life that they have become as second nature; to change their hearts and their outlook on life; to inspire them with a sense of duty to the community, to their neighbours, their children and themselves. In short, the problem is the regeneration of a mass of people who have fallen far below the accepted standards of decent living, and in assuming responsibility for rehousing them, local authorities and voluntary societies also accept this liability, that is, if this great national effort is to be only moderately successful, or perhaps a failure.

The enormity of the task does not really dawn upon most of us until we witness a procession of slummers entering trim little houses on an attractive estate or a handsome block of tenements, surrounded with trees, swards and gardens, over which but a short time before gay bunting fluttered and the soulful speeches of civic dignitaries made philanthropic bosoms swell with pride. Enthusiasm becomes tempered with misgiving as furniture in varying states of shabbiness begins to arrive in horse-drawn vans or motor lorries. If the distance is not too great, father hires a hand-truck and makes several excursions. We see him, probably assisted by one or two loutish sons, deftly manœuvring the truck with its swaying pile of iron bedsteads, chairs, table, sofa, etc., while mother follows with a rickety perambulator full of pots, pans, buckets and night commodes, several small fry hanging on to her skirts. An older girl carries the

youngest, a dirty, dribbling infant, who between vigorous sucks at a dummy and blinks of bewilderment, squalls its way out of slumdom, a ragged urchin bringing up the rear, leading by a long piece of string the least member of the household, a thin mangy mongrel.

The furniture is carried into the house with much banging, clattering, shouting and swearing; the older children clump up and down stairs, hang out of the windows, try the w.c. flushing cistern as often as possible, jump about in the bath, etc., snotty-nosed infants wipe their dirty hands over bright new paintwork, while mother hastily fixes a none-too-clean lace curtain to the front window. The "moving" over, a fire is lit, the frying-pan spits and all members of the family noisily partake of an evening meal, having undoubtedly enjoyed the adventures of the day. With the poorest of slum families, whose few sticks are fit only for the refuse destructor, it seems obvious that some form of assistance will be required to provide them with barest necessities in the way of house furniture and similarly with the furnishing of extra bedrooms for some of the large families. In fact, the transportation and settlement of slum dwellers into new houses calls for special welfare work, apart from subsequent care and management.

One of the greatest difficulties of this exodus of families from the slums to new houses is to prevent them taking their vermin with them. In many cases their clothes, bedding, furniture and fabrics are badly infested with bugs and other pestiferous insects, and disinfection cannot be effectively carried out whilst families are still occupying the condemned houses. The procedure now being adopted in connection with the clearance schemes of many towns is to remove the contents of each verminous house to a specially constructed airtight chamber, provided by the local authority, where all vermin are destroyed by several hours' exposure to

hydrogen cyanide (HCN). After being freed of gas, the furniture is taken to the new house. In some towns, an ordinary pantehnicon, properly sealed, is used for the purpose. The people themselves, while their furniture is being treated, are taken to a public bathing station for washing and delousing, their clothes being rendered innocuous by steam disinfection. Those who are in employment go through the same process upon leaving work. In this way the people and their belongings enter the new houses or flats clean and free from vermin, probably for the first time in their lives. Unless these very stringent precautions are adopted, however, the new premises soon become verminous. Even with thorough disinfestation, some families in the space of a season are again infested, although many, glad to be rid of the intolerable itching and scratching, try very hard to keep free. Among the lower classes, however, it is difficult, owing to the filthy habits of a large section of them. Fleas and lice are brought home by children from school, by elders from factories, public houses, cheap dance halls, etc.; a second-hand mattress will introduce bugs and the incessant cleaning and watching which is necessary to keep a house and its occupants free is too much of an effort for many of the women, who allow vermin to again obtain a strong hold.

The success of any housing venture depends almost entirely upon methods of management and the relations between landlord and tenants. When we remember that among the people who will be displaced by the present slum clearance campaign are some of the very worst tenants it is possible to imagine, probably with alien trash thrown in, it is only too clear that the responsibilities of the landlords, whether municipality or society, will be enormous. Of course, all slum dwellers are not bad; some need only the chance, others help and encouragement, and many more just a little discipline

to make them lead cleaner and better lives, but although the disreputable element may be no greater than the proverbial 10 per cent. nothing is more certain than that this submerged tenth are going to prove the acid test of public housing. If they cannot be disciplined and are evicted from municipal or society-owned houses through filthy and destructive habits and non-payment of rent, scattered abroad, sharing houses with more of their ilk or, minus the protection of the Rent Restriction Acts, ejected from house after house by private owners and agents, then there will always be a slum problem in the cities and towns of this country. Each family will represent the nucleus of a new slum and there will never be any limit or finality to the problem.

In some rehousing schemes, the proportion of bad tenants will be so great that ejectment will be frankly impossible. In cases where the number of irredeemable slummers is sufficiently small, it may be advisable to remove them from a particular scheme and house them elsewhere in order that the mass of tenants may be protected from their demoralizing influence, the capacity of such persons for evil being out of all proportion to their number. Looking ahead, it seems to be only a matter of time before something of this kind will be generally adopted; a policy of separation and segregation for those who have drifted so far down the human scale as to be unfit to live with their fellows, although perhaps it may not follow quite the same lines as sanitarians have so ardently advocated for the past half-century. As the work of slum clearance progresses and in every district large numbers of the poorer classes become tenants of public authorities, circumstances will compel such a weeding-out process. The vicious slum-making element will have to be separated from decent working-class families and also those whose redeeming features are few, but sufficient to permit hopes of their eventual reclamation

being entertained. It may be a very gradual and informal affair at first but ultimately will develop into a definite legal process, with these people forming a scheduled class, subject to special bye-laws and concentrated in blocks or groups of houses reserved for the purpose, where drastic sanitary policing will be possible. This will probably consist of daily supervision of the people and their dwellings by sanitary officials, compulsory cleansing of verminous or dirty persons and premises, with especially strong powers to remove children from the control of cruel and dissolute parents or from moral danger. It might even be possible to make them pay off rent arrears by means of enforced labour!

Prisons, however, do not prevent crime, and segregation, or sanitary imprisonment, will not make men and women clean, physically and morally, or cause them to discharge with any greater enthusiasm the functions of domestic life or their parental duties, but at least it will give some measure of protection to the community, to public health especially, and will enable more sympathetic measures to be adopted with greater prospects of success for those who suffer only from the twin evils of poverty and apathy.

Any suggestion to sternly handle slum dwellers is certain to arouse intense indignation on political and religious grounds, worked up to fanaticism among groups dominated by the "all-men-are-bruvvers" creed, but until some such measures as those outlined are rigorously enforced, there is little hope of effecting permanent improvement of housing conditions. Sympathy and kindness are wasted on filthy, verminous, drunken, shiftless people, many of whom are either criminally minded or mentally deficient. In no other country of the world have these human qualities been extended to the lower classes as they have in Great Britain in recent years, and by the lawless and depraved section, in police courts, public institutions and everywhere, they have been

disgracefully abused. This post-war era of leniency towards vice has proved so costly a matter that it is certain neither the country as a whole, nor districts individually, can afford the expense of being indulgent to destroyers of property from the slums.

One has only to visit housing schemes where slum families of the worst type have been dumped down, often in or adjacent to residential areas, to see the havoc they play with homes and amenities. Not even frequent external decoration can conceal evidence of damage and deterioration; the usual chalk-marking on brickwork, scribbling on woodwork, broken windows stuffed with paper, etc.; here and there blousy trollops squatting on steps or lolling against doorposts. The characteristic slum reek, albeit in a slightly more attenuated form but none the less nauseous, greets one from open doorways, and the rooms exposed to view appear just as dirty and unkempt as those of slum houses. Wallpapers show large brown patches of discoloration, the result of many pawings from grubby hands; holes have been picked in the plaster by children and not infrequently one finds 4-inch nails driven into walls to hang pictures or clothes, and at the back of the property, a collection of heterogeneous structures, made from boxes, packing cases and corrugated iron, the erection of which probably afforded the man of the house, with his undoubted flair for creating noise and tumult, inordinate pleasure. Ruffianly children and adolescents are responsible for considerable damage; in a spirit of wholesale destruction, they break down trees planted in the greenswards, uproot shrubs and flowers, pull down fences and smash windows, doors, locks, etc., in public buildings. There seems no limit to the devilish mischief of such hooligans, who damage even those things provided for their own use and amusement.

At a model mining village built in a new and rapidly developing coal-field and laid out with all the elabora-

tion of modern town planning, a chapel was erected to provide for the spiritual needs of the population, largely drawn from the distressed areas. It was generally felt that a place of worship would help to foster a desire for improvement in uncouth miners and their families transplanted from dark and dismal northern colliery towns to the beautiful countryside. On the Saturday night previous to the opening Sunday, hooligans smeared excreta all over the entrance doors and turned the small church porch into a midden. This loathsome incident can be vouched for. It is characteristic of lower-class hooliganism.

The ordinary regulations made by local authorities for the management of housing schemes, having for their objects the prevention of subletting, damage to property and the preservation of external appearances, have in the past been powerless to check the malpractices of vicious families. Nothing but the sternest and at times ruthless control can hope to prevent this wanton destruction, amounting in some municipal estates to as much as 20 per cent. of the net revenue.

For the hopeful residue of the people displaced, it is now entirely accepted that a direct personal interest in their welfare must replace existing methods of house management, if the greatest good is to be derived from this vast programme of slum clearance and rehousing. The late Miss Octavia Hill initiated and successfully operated a system of house management which is particularly suitable for rehousing schemes. The extremely gratifying results from the slum work of voluntary societies have been largely due to the employment of her methods. The schemes of philanthropic enterprise have, of course, been relatively small in extent, rendering easier of attainment what is the mainspring of the system, i.e. individual care and attention of house and tenant, and although the difficulties of inaugurating similar methods of control

for the schemes of local authorities, especially in some of the large industrial centres, will be enormous, there can be no doubt that their adoption will be in the interests of housing reform. The extent to which such a system would ease the burden of repairs falling upon the rate-payers would offset the additional cost of its operation.

The cardinal feature of the Octavia Hill system is that it recognizes woman as the key to the slum problem. Women are accordingly employed as house managers and to them are entrusted the tasks of not only collecting rents (by no means an easy matter among people who have not been in the habit of paying regularly and in full) and maintaining the property in a satisfactory state of repair, but of helping, encouraging, advising, teaching and setting on the road to thrift and happiness poor feckless females of the slums. The system is based upon a sympathetic understanding of the problems of life among the poorest class of the community, and its workers need extensive domestic as well as a certain amount of technical knowledge; and, above all, they should be endued with patience, endurance and womanliness. They should not be religious or social cranks, but unbiased, thoroughly practical and not at all soft-hearted, for many of their charges will need severe handling. To be able to see through the artifices of spongers, their false poverty and faked illnesses; to distinguish between the sincere efforts of some and the pretence of others; to know the best attitude to adopt towards the failings of various families, when to sympathize, when to help, when to stand aside and when to give it straight from the shoulder, demands a knowledge of human character not often found in woman or man, but these are the essential qualifications in persons appointed to manage rehousing schemes and their occupants.

The greatest obstacle to the universal adoption of the Octavia Hill system is the securing of skilled women,

trained in the methods, in sufficient numbers. In some private schemes, the work is entrusted to voluntary social workers, and by the smaller authorities this method could still be followed, but it would be a difficult, if not entirely impracticable, arrangement for rehousing schemes of large municipalities, where in a single scheme the duties might be sufficient to require the whole-time services of several salaried women officials. It should not be impossible, however, in the course of a few years to build up a service of women property managers as a specialist branch of local administration.

There are, of course, many who believe that work of this description is more sincerely and efficiently performed by voluntary than by paid workers, but the problem of slum dwellers is too great to be solved by philanthropic means, even if we remove the irredeemables and concentrate on the hopeful remainder. Neither Miss Hill nor her assistants were able to improve the worthless rabble who constitute the former, and, to-day, voluntary societies resort to the remedy of eviction with destructive tenants and bad payers. The older tenements of the Peabody Trustees and others have maintained their air of respectability only because of constant watching and the prompt ejection of undesirables. As previously stated, it will be extremely difficult for authorities to shift their responsibilities in this way, or one might see blocks of buildings and housing schemes practically denuded by wholesale evictions. They will be forced to face the situation, and the work will be too unpleasant for any but permanent salaried officials. Voluntary workers can hardly be expected to endure the violent abuse which will be the certain reward of all who interfere with the habits of such people, and it takes more than a disinterested love of humanity to persist when friendly overtures are received with derisive jeers and filthy language.

In large tenement buildings, it has always been customary to install resident caretakers, preferably men of the ex-policeman or N.C.O. type, in addition to those responsible for rent collection, etc., and the employment of Octavia Hill methods would not render these men unnecessary, since certain daily duties, such as sweeping and cleansing of stairways, opening of windows and ventilators, and getting their children in by 9 a.m. are imposed by regulation on all occupiers of flats, and the presence of a uniformed attendant is the best means of enforcing them and generally of keeping order in the buildings and precincts.

Very few authorities have adopted the system of control briefly outlined, or indeed any really efficient methods of management for houses built by them, which is not the least of the reasons why so much criticism has in the past been levelled at local housing administration. Often control is so divided that there is no personal interest in tenants whatever; a serious omission, for it cannot be too strongly stressed the influence that the *person* of a landlord has upon householders. Most of them like to feel that they know him or her as an individual and not as a mysterious civic body, represented by a coat-of-arms or "a young bloke from the office." As it is, the surveyor's department is usually responsible for repairs, the accountant's for rent collection and probably for letting the houses also, direct or in conjunction with a housing committee, with no reference to medical and sanitary officers, who alone have a more detailed knowledge of the people, their habits and circumstances, than councillors or either of the departments concerned. For want of regular house-to-house inspections, houses are allowed to become filthy and verminous, which is only brought to notice on a change of tenancy. Neither has there been any alteration in management for those rehousing schemes undertaken in advance of the five-year

programme of 1933 ; families have been removed from the slums, put into new houses and left to smash and spoil undisturbed.

It is true many of the large authorities have created separate housing or estate departments, but, here again, it is the architectural or building side which has been highly developed and little attention given to management. However, there is a gradual awakening, both in the central department and among local authorities to this phase of the subject, that it also is a specialist job and not to be relegated to a clerk in the department.

The only point remaining is under which bodies can the most efficient management be secured ? Local authorities, voluntary societies, or a combination of both.

For some years now there has been a considerable body of opinion against further municipal house-building and to the vesting in local authorities of entire control of property built at such enormous cost to public funds. Many of the defects in municipal methods of house management could easily be remedied without drastic change of control, but the question that far-seeing people are asking themselves is this : Is it a desirable or safe condition of affairs for local representatives returned by the votes of electors to be the landlords of a relatively large proportion of those electors, probably amounting at the present time to one-eighth or one-sixth and in a few instances to one-quarter of the total population, and, as houses become ripe for demolition, in the future to even greater proportions ? The answer to this question is to be found in the conduct of local authorities themselves.

The changed political outlook of the working classes since the War has nowhere produced such reactionary results as in local administration. Successive governments have been charged with imposing class legislation

upon thrifty and industrious people for the maintenance of drones and wasters, but to see the thing done in real style, one must go to those areas where the local authorities are dominated by Communist demagogues. Championing the lower classes and their "right to live" to the exclusion of all others, they squander public money and are forever in conflict with Government auditors as the result. With special reference to housing, their intrigues among tenants lead to fearful rows in the council chamber. Individual councillors will incite defiance of officials acting in the discharge of their duty and even offer personal resistance in their zeal to uphold the cause of the "oppressed" (mostly for propaganda purposes, of course!) The following was one such incident :—

A council tenant owed over a year's rent. There were seven or eight children, but the man and also one son were in regular work and he could very well have paid had there not been too many public houses between the place of his employment and his home. Owing to the auditor's insistence, the council were obliged to obtain an ejection order. The police ejected the family and put their furniture into the road to the accompaniment of a chorus of abuse from the crowd which had collected in anticipation of trouble. After the police had left the scene, up strode a member of the Council, full of righteous indignation, as though he had only just been acquainted with the iniquitous procedure. He had frightened a junior clerk at the council offices into giving him a key of the house, and, standing on the doorstep, made a speech full of threats towards those who had allowed this dreadful thing to happen (in fact he was the chairman of the committee responsible!), called for volunteers, and the furniture was returned to the house amid cheers from the crowd. A collection was afterwards made around the various trade unions of the district to pay off the arrears.

The antics of elected representatives, however, do not surpass those of tenants sharing similar political views. These often form committees composed of the loudest-mouthed ignoramuses, men and women, to be found on the housing scheme to "protect their interests," which consist of sending petitions to the council arrogantly demanding reductions in rents, the provision of spa-like amenities and practically everything under the sun for the children. Their chief ambition is to send deputations to the council to air "grievances." Arriving in force, ominous splashes of red in the feminine attire, tousled locks and untidy dress of cynical young men and the flushed pugnacious countenances of the older ones, all helping to give them a wild, revolutionary appearance, they talk at great length about inconsequent trifles, addressing each other frequently as "comrade." To an unprejudiced observer, it is apparent they have no real grievances and are nothing but a crowd of political agitators, with red flag, hammer and sickle in the background, acting in collusion with more of their kind on the council itself. Rent strikes may be organized by such people. One of them, by methods of computation known only to himself, will arrive at the conclusion that rents are too high by a shilling or so. This goes from door to door, the main topic of conversation for days, until even the best of the people believe they have been unmercifully swindled. The perennial petition is drawn up and sent to the council demanding the rents be reduced and a lump sum (also compiled by the financial wizard) returned to them, failing which a rent strike is declared. While this is in progress, as a result of extra shillings in the household coffers, wives deck themselves in cheap finery and beer flows plentifully. The awakening, of course, comes later.

Unpleasant incidents such as these do not occur in housing schemes managed by authorities whose business

is conducted free from the pernicious influences of party politics, neither do voluntary societies experience such difficulties. If the tainted sentiments of class warfare are permitted to interfere with the efficient management of property occupied by slum families, nothing is more certain than that the results will be disastrous. Neither the system of management nor the responsible officials should be at the mercy of any party. It is manifestly wrong that weak, characterless people, needing more than anything to be made independent and self-supporting, should be able, through their elected representatives, to control the houses they live in and the fate of officials sent to *control them*.

For these reasons, and also because municipal housing in the large industrial areas is becoming a colossal business, alteration of existing methods of control is obviously necessary, and notwithstanding the country's unfortunate war-time experiences of national boards, the inauguration of some such system for the management of public housing, even if not for the actual erection of houses, appears to be inevitable.

CHAPTER VI

SLUMS IN THE MAKING

MANY slum conditions in the central districts of towns and cities are the indirect result of their haphazard outward growth; that devastating sprawl which each year pushes farther and farther from town-dwellers the lands and green fields of the countryside. In the early days of industry, manufacturers were content to live in unpretentious but commodious dwellings near to their works; tradesmen lived above their shops; lawyers, medical men and the better classes resided in the centre of towns, with workers' cottages built around. To escape contact with the rapidly multiplying lower classes and the filth and degradation that was then half England, later years witnessed the commencement of an outward trek, which has never since ceased. At first it was confined to the wealthy upper ten thousand, but in recent years has been actively participated in by the vaster middle-class population. In part, it has been necessary to meet the needs of an expanding population, but higher education, which has given people an ever-increasing love of the country, has had much to do with the movement. So rapid has development proceeded that those living in the country a decade or so back now find themselves in the heart of rising towns.

This method of town growth has produced large expanding environs occupied chiefly by the middle and better working classes, who are ever striving to put a convenient distance between them and the unwholesome core peopled by the lowest class. Where the latter encroaches upon

residential areas, there is a penumbral zone of deteriorating property ; at one time good class houses occupied by the best and cleanest of people. In almost every large city can be found streets of tall, old-fashioned houses or terraces of the early villa type gradually slipping from a position of respectability owing to the ingress of the poor. As these families come in, so decent people leave, for, as a great politician once said, whilst many might be prepared to die for democracy, there are few who desire to live with it.

Such streets are not yet slums, but close observers may watch the process by which they are becoming so. As each resident owner and good tenant leaves, house after house is taken by families of varying degrees of roughness. These at once proceed to let off rooms, including basements and attics, to other families. Depreciation begins immediately and goes on unabated, until even the more decent of the first-comers are driven out, their places taken by still less desirable families, and so the descent towards slumdom gathers speed. What was once a nice quiet road becomes a street of noise and dirt, reverberating with the endless squabbles of large families, and the cacophonies of loud-speakers and gramophones. Youths and children tear up and down the street on motor cycles and bicycles, violently ringing bells or blowing horns. If an overwrought neighbour asks for a little less noise, he or she is greeted with abuse. "Is this yore street?" "We got as much right 'ere as you!" "If yer don't like it, clear out," which is, of course, the only remedy. Unshaven men in dirty shirt-sleeves lounge about doorways, noisily coughing and expectorating, and occasionally giving vent to a throaty bellow as an acquaintance passes by. Washing is hung from upper windows, girls comb each other's hair on the balconies, and the whole place assumes the garrulous, boisterous, swashbuckling atmosphere of a poor neighbourhood.

Even the municipality begin to neglect the street ; road surfaces and gutters for long periods stand in need of repair and seem to be always littered with paper, straw and horse-droppings, owing to the less frequent and hurried visits of road sweepers.

Many of the older suburbs of London's inner ring furnish examples of this relentless decay ; the uneconomical wastage of property which more than squares in the nation's balance sheet the "unearned increment" on land and estates being developed in the outer ring. There is something extraordinarily pathetic about those districts of the metropolis and other cities which have "gone down" ; houses which, in their time, accommodated sedate and affluent Victorians and still endeavour, despite the hard blows that passing years have dealt them, to preserve a little of the dignity once theirs ; the drawing rooms where many a pretty miss coquetted with her bewhiskered swain given over to the rough usage of a lower kind, and the once heavily curtained and carpeted bedrooms defiled by filth and vermin.

Although it may be argued that this insatiable demand for houses in newly developing outlying areas is just the normal result of an increasing population and, what is probably a more cogent reason since the War, the extraordinary increase in the number of separate families, the whole movement has the appearance of a "black rot" in the heart of cities spreading to the periphery ; an importunate rabble gradually extending their quarters and driving all before them. (Similar results are produced by the invasion of residential areas by industrial concerns.) The economic stress has undoubtedly intensified the process, forcing reduced better-class families, usually employing several domestics, to give up their large premises and seek smaller houses farther out. This alone has in many districts caused streets of fine old family mansions to be converted into numerous flats and single-room lettings.



Dingy narrow street, not yet a slum, but slowly and surely becoming so (*see p. 168*).



Seashore development, from the rear. View of sea blotted out.



A camp of "temporary buildings."

(see p. 178).

To check this sprawling and sporadic growth is to check the premature deterioration of property; the unnecessary and unreasonable loss of market value, resulting in wholesale conversions and often needless demolition; but how it is to be done is in truth a problem.

In the never-ending growth of London, with its nine millions population and area of nearly two thousand square miles; its property congestion; the paradox of dense overcrowding among an abundance of vacant accommodation; hundreds of empty houses in many parts and scarcely a room, or even a corner of a room, in others; its poverty and the unparalleled vastness of its housing problems; in all this we see a large-scale picture of the fruits of uncontrolled and haphazard local development. In recent years it has spread at a phenomenal rate. What were villages ten years ago are now towns of 30,000 or more. Greater London has swallowed nearly all the country villages of Middlesex, this county now being one vast urban aggregation, the last of its rural districts disappearing in the recent regrouping of local government areas. Suburbia is creeping over the Middlesex border into Hertfordshire. Surrey is the scene of feverish development and rural areas are fast disappearing. Sweeping changes have been made in Kent; tongues of London are lapping up farmland and open country. Growth has been no less rapid in Essex, large towns having sprung into being where once nothing but green fields and marshland existed. And so all around we see this continuous outward migration of London's population, until the city straddles six counties and threatens the leafy lanes of south Bucks. Although the greatest area is occupied by dwellings, the environs of London are proving an increasing attraction for industrial undertakings, a number of residential districts, especially in the north-west, having been invaded, and if not actually spoilt, at least considerably devalued.

Of the many suggestions put forward for dealing with this problem, all are dependent upon the acquisition of land. Take, for example, the ambitious proposal to surround London with a green belt of open country; certainly a great boon to the public, if practicable, but under existing legislation the cost of financing such a scheme would be absolutely prohibitive. The setting-up of satellite residential districts, or of completely self-contained industrial garden cities, at convenient distances from the big city, although a slightly more feasible proposition, would have to be wedded to the green belt idea, or at least to some form of building restriction, otherwise the intermediate areas would attract the attention of speculative builders, who would obviously nullify the whole plan. The decentralization of existing suburbs into self-contained units, as separate and distinct from the parent city as possible, would also involve the acquisition of land, and probably built-up land, by municipalities. In any case, such land, vacant or otherwise, would be flanked by densely populated districts and therefore very expensive.

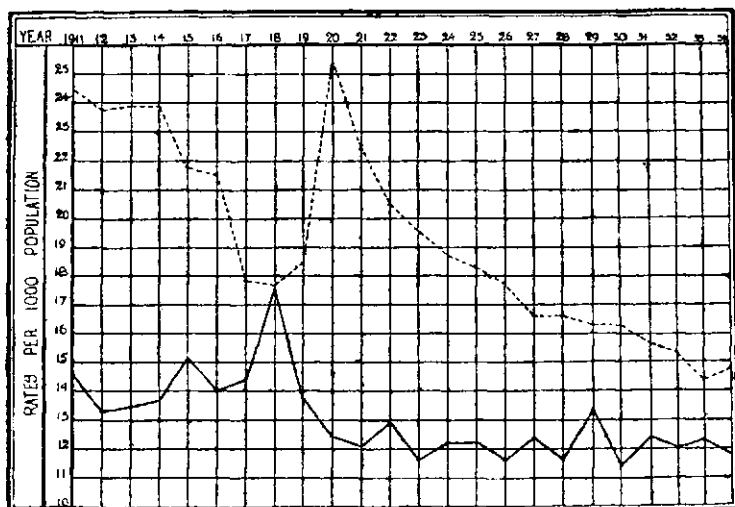
It must not be overlooked, too, that garden cities, satellite towns, etc., do not appeal to the average working-class Londoner. He likes the big city and wants to stay there. Families who have gone to Becontree and other large L.C.C. suburban schemes, although they were not forced to go, needed a good deal of persuasion, and there was small chance of them getting a house otherwise. Many would gladly return to crowded Southwark and Shoreditch if they could. And although the first garden city of Letchworth has now justified the enterprise of its founder, many remember the place in pre-war years as a centre for cranks—long-haired lunatics striding about its streets in sandals and Roman togas. To achieve success as a working-class housing movement, any garden city or satellite town must develop as an industrial centre as well as for housing purposes.

The building of four- or five-storey flats in the suburbs for professional and black-coated workers, instead of mile after mile of stereotyped villas, would help to check the spread of town growth by accommodating more people on less land. Rising land values will eventually create a demand for this type of housing. Already private enterprise is erecting large blocks in many parts of London and the suburbs, apart from the rehousing schemes of the L.C.C. and local authorities, but all the while cheap land is available speculators will build houses in preference to flats.

Many hope to see an economic solution of the problem in a stabilized population, to which condition our falling birth-rate of the past decade has brought us considerably nearer, but there will continue a gradually diminishing demand for houses several years after 1940, the year it is predicted the country's birth- and death-rates will balance and subsequently remain practically stationary, since the number of separate families will increase annually until the children born in the last years of high birth-rates have arrived at a marriageable age. If this condition actually occurs, house-building booms, such as the present, will probably never occur again. The most unfortunate aspect of our declining birth-rate, however, is its almost entire application to professional and middle class, and also the better working class; the poorest and lowest families breed as promiscuously as ever. The serious consequences of such an inequality, both to the State and the race as a whole, are too obvious to mention; in fact, limitation of a birth-rate under such circumstances is an extremely doubtful advantage. The unwieldy growth of towns may certainly suffer a check, but not the evil of property deterioration. This precursor of slums will continue its way unassailed, as the lower classes increase and spread at the expense of decent citizens. Birth control, practised by the latter through force of

circumstances, has made very little progress among the poor.

It would be a genius indeed who could devise a really practical solution to this great problem of mass urbanization and all the evils which follow in its train. A stabilized population may do something, but so far as it is possible to see, nothing can stop the wrong people breeding. To anyone knowing and fully appreciating the manifold difficulties of stemming such a tide of natural progress,



Graph of birth and death rates of England and Wales 1911-34. The peak death rate caused by influenza epidemic of 1918 and peak birth rate in 1920 due to demobilization of preceding year.

Birth rate ----- Death rate ———

there seems to be no way out. Our only consolation, if indeed it can be regarded as such, is that England does not suffer alone. All the industrial nations, even the Dominions and newer countries of the world, are afflicted with this malady of town growth and are applying all sorts of remedial measures to combat it. We even see

the curious phenomenon of "back to the land" movements in lands yet barely explored.

Controlling future industrial locations might be the means of correcting to some extent the position. A revival of agriculture and rural industry could not hope to attract sufficient of the working class from towns to affect the housing conditions in London and the large industrial areas, but we are undoubtedly entering upon a phase of industrial metamorphosis. Soon there will be new industries for old and controlling the disposition of these would, if it were possible, be an excellent method of relieving congestion of population in many districts. Public-spirited companies have already shown the way by taking their plants to the country and establishing model villages or townships for the workers. Similar industrial satellite towns, planned on garden city lines and situated some fifteen or twenty miles from London, might easily have been developed in conjunction with the housing schemes of municipalities and private enterprise from the many factories and commercial undertakings which since the War have created confusion and manifold housing and planning difficulties in the metropolis. Although there may still be a few parts of the country where it is not too late to do something of the sort, the needs of the distressed areas now prevent the general application of this partial solution of the housing problem. The poverty of these districts cannot be sacrificed for so noble a project as the planning of new towns and cities.

Time there was when labour flocked to industry; now it seems industry must go to the built-up areas, where anything from 30 to 90 per cent. of the working population is unemployed; to the river reaches, where ships once waited their turn to berth, and now long lines of them wait to be broken up; to the shipyards and foundries, once deafening with the noise of hammering blows on metal, the blast furnaces, which no longer light

the sky, and the abandoned collieries, pathetically dotted about the surrounding countryside. The basic industries are so closely related that when the shipyards were busy so were the huge iron and steel works and the score of mines around, but though the North is striving in every possible way to attract business, no one really believes these great trades will flourish as in the old days.

Assuming that it is possible for all new industries to be located in existing industrial areas, this would not obviate the necessity for regional planning, for even if the population of the country as a whole diminishes in the future, development will continue in many districts which, of course, means that they will grow at the expense of other areas. This will be observed more particularly after the total number of separate families in the country proceeds to decline.

It is all too evident that the areas from which emigration will be greatest will be those at present suffering most keenly from unemployment. To many of the coal-fields, for example, prosperity will never come again; the fight for coal has become uneconomic. Already the black and dusty townships of the Rhondda Valley and the scattered villages in hill and dale of Durham County, with their empty shops, offices, etc., have a bankrupt appearance. Again, disarmament, tariffs and the diminution of world trade have brought disaster to the shipbuilding districts of Tyneside and the north-east, and because shipyards, like collieries, cannot be adapted to any other industrial purpose, towns relying solely upon them for a livelihood will never fully recover from this blight of stagnation. The mill towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire may also expect a diminution of population. The exodus has in fact already commenced, assisted at present by grants-in-aid from the Ministry of Labour. Increasing numbers of young workers and their families from Wales and the North are coming to south-east England. Soon this

process will result in numerous empty houses, depleted schools and redundant public services in the districts they leave behind them, and eventually we may see somnolent towns, with many old folk and few children ; grey-haired men clustered about dreary street corners, despondently waiting for darkness to close a day which has been as dull and uneventful as all those that have gone before.

In the new locations of population, houses, schools and other facilities will have to be provided. Truly a vast waste, but seemingly unavoidable !

And what of the south-east, the magnet attracting population and trade ? Shall we see it one vast urbanized area comprising nearly half the country's population, ungainly sprawling from Bucks to Thanet, from the Chilterns to the Channel ?

Passing from regional planning, with its wide and ever-extending areas of administration, its co-ordination of public services and authorities, to simple town planning is merely a change of focus, from long range to close-up. As the former controls large-scale development and the conservation of the countryside as a whole, so the latter deals with the growth of individual towns and areas fitting into the regional plan, preserving local amenities, historical buildings and natural beauty spots. Carefully organized and courageously enforced, a town planning scheme is the only means of putting a stop to the thoughtless destruction and vandalism of our time.

Englishmen seem bent on destroying the beauties of their country. In this motor-mad age, they are behaving very much as their progenitors did in the age of steam and coal. The industrial revolution threw up ugly towns in restricted areas, but the revolution in transport is creating havoc all over the country. Nowhere seems safe ! Almost every country road and lane is afflicted with the horrors of ribbon development, appearing as though

some maniac passed through, indiscriminately pelting the fields with spores of ugliness, from which have grown the bungaloids and other neoplasms of builders' "art." Large estates of the old landed gentry, to which the characteristic beauty of rural England is largely due, are slowly but surely disappearing under the weight of taxation and death duties. They are being broken up and exploited by land speculators and builders, who reap from them a golden harvest. The mellowed brick and stone, tile and thatch of farmhouses and cottages, which blend so beautifully with the soft colours of an English landscape, are being desecrated by "modernization." A few pink and white villas dotted about here and there and a whole neighbourhood is ruined.

Nowhere is one better able to see the results of uncontrolled development than along the Kent and Sussex seaboard. Almost every part is within easy reach by rail and road of London, and there scarcely remains a strip of coastline between the various towns which has not been horribly disfigured by cheap bungalows and week-end shacks. In many districts, sea-views have been entirely blocked out, and foreshores, where inhabitants were wont to wander at pleasure, enclosed. Strangely enough, local people rarely have any hand in these hideous developments. They helplessly watch others invade the district and take from them their birthright; occasionally they derive benefit from trade, but the real pickings are not theirs. The sea, of course, can never lose its charm, nor the green and white cliffs their majestic splendour; the rolling hills of the hinterland, however much defaced, will always retain beauty of line and colour, but developments such as these on land between hills and sea, as well as spoiling the road approaches and environs of towns, have created insanitary conditions surpassing those of the worst of city slums.

Praise is due to those estate developers who have

adopted the best principles of town planning, setting aside land for open spaces, planting trees and providing wide grass verges to roads, restricting business sites and building artistically designed houses in keeping with the surroundings, but the development of many so-called building estates is a money-making ramp from beginning to end. Land on the fringe of towns, but under the administration of rural authorities who possess flimsy building bye-laws and no town planning powers, is the usual scene of land sharks' and jerry builders' nefarious practices. The land, bought at agricultural prices from some poor bankrupt of a farmer, can be sold comparatively cheaply (say £1 per foot) since the lay-out is designed to secure a maximum of small building plots of about 20 feet fronting on to "roads." Cheap land always attracts poor people who in turn bring along the shabbiest of builders and their nasty little bungalows. Using the cheapest materials, hastily thrown together by inexperienced labour, these gentry produce a motley collection of rude shacks, which as long as they remain are an eyesore and a grave sanitary problem. Some are built of sappy timber on concrete or brick piles; others with timber framing and asbestos or corrugated iron sheets; a few of soft porous brickwork, probably covered with stucco in sickly hues. The best that can be said of them is they possess sufficient air space; they are, in fact, dotted about the fields like so many superior chicken houses, but little else complies with modern housing standards. There may be no public services whatever and often "estates" are so situated that water supply and sewerage could only be provided at tremendous cost; this fact, however, does not deter residents from constantly demanding these services from the local authorities. The houses are small and comfortless, draughty and damp. They probably have nothing but rainwater for drinking purposes; no means of drainage; no public lighting; unmade roads

which, during the winter, are impassable—a mass of flooded ruts. Property such as this is much worse than many of the houses condemned as unfit for human habitation in the slum areas of towns.

Once started, these estates continue to develop in a vulgar haphazard fashion. Roadside lock-up shops appear; then a general stores is opened or an ultra-speculative builder may erect a pair of shops; his optimism, however, is not reflected in the poor dupes who take the premises and stonily wait for customers that never come. Buses call for passengers and a messy little garage with its obtrusive petrol pump and advertisement signs completes the feeble imitation of town life.

This crazy type of housing development is entirely post-war and is the immediate result of the revolution in transport. With their widening of country lanes and sweeping away hedges, banks and trees; with their hard white concrete roads running like terrible gashes through scenes of rural beauty, the Ministry of Transport and the county councils have unintentionally helped it forward. Arterial roads, cheap motor cars, country-wide bus services, etc., have induced a steady infiltration of urban population into the rural areas, but why, with all the evidence that exists of bad building and town growth of the past and with all the powers, based on nearly a century's experience, which local authorities possess for combating these evils, it should have ever been possible to create such conditions in any part of this highly organized country, is beyond understanding. The spirit of an age is expressed in the architecture of its buildings; these unwholesome aggregations clearly show the cheapness, shoddiness, degraded tastes and grotesque shams of the present generation. Though not slums, according to a strict definition of the term, they constitute one of the most serious problems of the day.

The enormous increase in the use of temporary dwell-

lings is another problem of great importance to many authorities. There are no real legal obstacles to dealing with those collections of huts, vans, railway coaches, corrugated iron structures, etc., which arose from the post-war housing shortage, and which are in continuous occupation by persons of the working classes. They can be demolished under slum clearance procedure or by means of individual demolition orders, and although the moving camps of showmen, gypsies, hawkers, etc., have a special place in legislation and are outside the scope of the Housing Act, they are controlled by special bye-laws. The stationary camps of temporary dwellings which have shot up so rapidly of recent years in seaside, riverside and country districts have always been in a different category; sandwiched between housing enactments and building bye-laws. They have been erected without approval, unless the local authority possess special powers. Each structure may be owned by the occupier and situated on a small square of land also owned by him, or collections of them are in an open field, to the owner of which annual ground rents are paid, or lastly land and huts may be owned by a single person who farms them out for holiday periods. They are rarely occupied continuously or for substantial parts of the year or by persons of the working classes, which has exempted them from the provisions of the Housing Act, 1930, and benefiting by the ambiguous legal position, these horrible disfigurements of the landscape have survived the efforts of authorities to remove them. The absence of proper water supplies, the grossly insanitary methods for the disposal of wastes, the density of structures and the overcrowding of individual huts are not only a menace to the occupants but to the surrounding district.

Many local authorities, watching these mushroom growths, strengthened their bye-laws and adopted special powers for controlling temporary structures (Section 27,

Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907) too late to do more than stop further misdeeds, since neither alterations to bye-laws nor newly adopted enactments can be made retrospective. This has been a serious obstacle to those urban authorities who in the recent reshuffle of local government areas have found themselves saddled with large camps of temporary dwellings. Although possessing the necessary powers themselves, these cannot be applied to the added area so far as misdemeanours of the past are concerned. In fact, it was not until High Court decisions of fairly recent date had decided the point that movable structures, wheeled vehicles, etc., that had ceased to be mobile, were regarded as "temporary buildings" at all. The popular impression was that if they were occasionally moved about the site the local authority had no power to require their demolition under bye-laws or Section 27, above referred to. As well as refuting this, case judgments have elucidated the fact that there is no limit of time within which proceedings for demolition may be taken under the Act. Any building erected after its adoption may be dealt with. The invalidity clause of building bye-laws, on the other hand, exempts buildings which have been erected for more than twelve months from its provisions. In the Housing Act, 1935, however, there is a section which appears to remove some of these difficulties. It states that clearance area or demolition order procedure may be applied to huts, vans, etc. which are used for human habitation and have been in the same place for at least two years, but whether the term "human habitation" will go so far as to cover the week-end motorist occupying a shack for a few Saturday nights during the year remains to be seen.

Camping is yet another indication of the penetration of town dwellers into rural life as the result of easy transport. Motor cars have created the week-end habit

and doubtless cooped-up citizens of the smoky city derive relaxation and enjoyment from a short stay in the open country. The irony of the situation is that the beauty and peace they seek vanishes with their coming. A lot may be said in favour of a town-to-country movement, and the benefit it must eventually confer upon the health and happiness of a large section of the public, but present methods are hopelessly wrong. With great masses of the people spending their lives under roofs in factories, offices, shops, trams, tubes, 'buses, etc., and no contact with the sky and outer air, legislation could not possibly forbid camping. In the past decade, it has definitely become part of the social life of young people, who in this restless age prefer a shack in the woods to the staid company of their elders in boarding houses. Properly developed and controlled and with all essential services, seaside and country camps of small one- or two-roomed buildings need not necessarily disfigure a district or constitute a menace to the health of its inhabitants but, up to the present, camping developments in most districts have been of the distinctly unsatisfactory kind, and problems beyond the means or ability of local authorities to remedy are being created everywhere.

The only possible remedy that a local authority has against the despoiling of its district is in a town planning scheme, which when adopted by the council under the Town Planning Act, 1925, now supplemented by the Town and Country Planning Act, 1934, and approved of by the Ministry of Health, will definitely put a stop to these hideous developments.

The principal object of a scheme is to ensure that the area for which it is prepared shall develop in an orderly and graceful manner, with proper regard to health, public convenience and economy. The task is essentially an architectural one, usually taking one or two years to complete, and when finally approved has the force of

law, with heavy penalties for any infringement of its requirements. Even while a scheme is in course of preparation, a local authority, by refusing to grant interim development orders, may reserve the right to require any alterations to existing buildings and new buildings to be subsequently removed without compensation if it is found that they do not fit into the completed scheme.

Briefly, the methods are these. A local authority, either individually or conjointly with adjoining authorities, looks at its district and decides upon what broad lines it wishes development to proceed. Each part is then considered in its relationship to the whole ; what function it may usefully perform to the community. In this way, various parts are zoned for residential or industrial purposes ; certain streets or roads as shopping districts ; woodland and other beauty spots as permanently open spaces and land, which is unsuitable for building purposes by reason of flooding, inaccessibility, etc., as prohibited sites.

With new buildings, a town planning authority may reject plans which comply in every respect with local bye-laws but are bad in design or do not tone with the surrounding developments. For example, they may refuse architectural freaks or incongruities, houses and bungalows of mean and trivial proportions or of vulgar colouring, shoddy materials, etc. They are able to prevent the erection of industrial buildings in residential areas. They can demand alterations in design and construction, and generally control the building trade as bye-laws have never been able to do. But the great advantage of a town planning scheme from the standpoint of good housing is its ability to secure group development in areas where public services are available and to check sporadic building and ribbon development with no services. In built-up areas, it may by setting back corners, opening out streets, etc., and by controlling alterations

and conversions of existing buildings and their future use, be the indirect means of maintaining and even improving housing standards. It is possible, for example, to prevent the conversion of the parlours of dwellings in a residential road into nasty little shops ; often the commencement of property deterioration.

Only when an authority has a scheme in operation and the benefit of expert advice do they realize the extensive use to which their powers may be applied, both in regard to new developments and alterations to existing buildings. Town planning is in no sense a cure for the evils already committed ; these can only be remedied under housing or public health legislation as occasion arises. It cannot specify minimum values of property on given sites ; this is the prerogative of the estate developers, but its influences for generally improving the style of building are far-reaching.

There are still many local authorities who have neglected to adopt this all-important Act, but as time passes and a larger and larger area of the country comes under its sway, it is doubtful if any developing district will be really able to stay outside, for itinerant land speculators and jerry-builders, with their uncanny skill in seeking out safe billets, will descend upon it like an avalanche, although, even if town planning legislation were compulsory, it is only reasonable to suppose that there would be local authorities who would sidetrack the issue and subordinate the conditions of a scheme to the needs of speculators.

What is every bit as serious a problem as the disorders created by the absence of skeleton zoning and planning, although probably it is not so conspicuous except to those whose daily duties bring them into contact, is the enormous deterioration in building standards of recent years. Apart from the building follies of the rural areas, which speak for themselves, materials and workmanship in the

mass-produced terrace houses and villas of speculative builders have not for fifty years been so bad as they are to-day. Most noticeable is the inferior work of present-day craftsmen. Certainly they are not entirely to blame, for price-cutting and piece-work gives them no time, and shoddy materials no ability to produce a good finish. The question to-day is not "How well can you do a job?" but "How quickly?" Here, as elsewhere, however, it is only too evident that the misapplication of trade union principles and this post-war freedom, with its round of cheap pleasures, has resulted in a type of worker not particularly interested in his work. So that if scamping of detail helps the builder, it suits him just as well, since it gives time for lead-swinging.

Among the most important misdemeanours are the formation of foundations with rubble fillings, concealed by a covering layer of concrete, the use of cheap substitutes for damp-proofing and the omission of footings. Brickwork may be so roughly thrown together that at the end of the day walls have to be made plumb with hammer and straight-edge. Coke breeze blocks, although usually allowed for partitions, are often used for external walls. They have no damp resistance and are by no means incombustible, although the author has more than once seen them built into chimney flues. Floor joists and roof rafters are often of insufficient scantling and joinery is invariably badly made and ill-fitting. It is not an unusual circumstance for walls to show patches of damp or the roof to leak, or if the house has been built upon clay or other unstable subsoil, for the foundations to slip and walls crack before the men are off the building.

In the design of small houses, many of the evils of slum dwellings have been repeated. Road frontages are insufficient, density is excessive, floor levels are too low. There is the ugly back addition to restrict sunlight and

ventilation and most of the rooms are far too small. At present, the salvation of such property is that it is owner-occupied, but so soon as letting is resorted to, deterioration will be rapid. The environment may be better than in older houses, but dilapidations will be infinitely greater.

It is not easy to suggest a remedy, because in addition to the changed British working man, we have now a type of get-rich-quick builder. He is wily and slick, and sees a multitude of loopholes in building bye-laws which were not discernible to his forebears. To a surveyor's department of a local authority, he stands in much the same position as the housebreaker to the policeman, the butcher and milkman to the sanitary inspector, etc. In other words, he needs some catching, although if building inspection were more thorough in most districts and prosecutions for breaches of the bye-laws more frequent, conditions might be improved.

There is no doubt whatever that the relaxation of bye-laws clauses of post-war housing acts and the extremely unwise policy of the Ministry of Health in facilitating, if not indeed encouraging, wholesale departures from the established building code, initiated this downward movement and a more than stern reversal of the policy will be necessary to effect an improvement in building standards. It is argued that such a course was imperative to provide cheap working-class houses to meet the acute shortage, but actually it did nothing of the kind. All that it seems to have done is to create potential slums and to ensure that England will have a housing problem a hundred years hence, not perhaps with such a stranglehold upon the community as now, but sufficient to keep a few thousands of inspectors busy.