

# THE HOUSING OF THE NATION

BY

**LIEUT.-COLONEL F. E. FREMANTLE**

M.P., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., D.P.H.

Consulting County Medical Officer of Health for Hertfordshire

*Author of 'A Doctor in Khaki' 'Health and Empire,' etc.*

With a Foreword by

**THE RT. HON. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.**

Minister of Health

We have got to get rid of two things, the shortage of houses and the disgrace of the slums.'—RT. HON. STANLEY BALDWIN, M.P. (Albert Hall, 4th December, 1924)

LONDON  
PHILIP ALLAN & CO., LTD.  
QUALITY COURT

# The Westminster Library

A Series of Volumes dealing with the History, Politics, and Economic Life of the British Empire.

Bound in Cloth 3/6 net each

*The following volumes are published :*

THE EMPIRE : A FAMILY AFFAIR

By PERCY HURD, M.P.

THE LEGACY OF LIBERALISM

By AL. CARTHILL

STATE SOCIALISM IN PRACTICE

By ARCHIBALD HURD

TRADE UNIONS

By W. A. APPLETON, C.B.E.

THE FINANCE OF GOVERNMENT

By MAJOR J. W. HILLS, M.P.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFENCE

By SIR GEORGE ASTON

SOME HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES OF  
THE CONSTITUTION

By KENNETH PICKTHORN

THE GROWTH OF THE CONSTITU-  
TION

By E. W. M. BALFOUR-MELVILLE

POLITICS RETOLD

By P. G. CAMBRAY

THE COST OF LIVING

By NORMAN DEARLE

THE ORIGINS OF EMPIRE

By IAN COLVIN

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Part I, 1824-1914; Part II, 1914-1924

By DR. A. SHADWELL

THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF  
SOCIALISM

By G. W. GOUGH

TORYISM AND THE TWENTIETH  
CENTURY

By MAJOR WALTER ELLIOT, M.P.

THE HOUSING OF THE NATION

*First Impression . . . . . April 1927*  
*Second Impression . . . . . September 1927*  
*Third Impression (Westminster Library) January 1928*

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by  
The Camelot Press Limited,  
London and Southampton*

TO MY WIFE,  
THE GREATEST EXPERT I KNOW IN THE  
ART OF HOME-LIFE,  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
FOR THE BUILDING UP OF HOME-LIFE  
THROUGHOUT THE LAND

A little house, a quiet wife,  
Sufficient food to nourish life,  
Most perfect health, and free from harm,  
Convenient cloths to keep me warm.  
The liberty of foot, and mind,  
And grace the ways of God to find.  
This is the summe of my desire,  
Until I come into heaven's quire.

—ROWLAND WATKYNs.

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN the many discussions of health questions during the past eight years in the House of Commons, it was a matter of the utmost difficulty to discover the experience and measures on which they were based, or the collateral measures with which in practice they must be related. Outside the House the public at large is directly concerned and greatly interested in the parlous conditions of housing, but finds it difficult to appreciate the national problem in all its aspects or to understand the action proposed or taken, whether by private members, Government or Opposition. Even lawyers and Local Authorities find difficulty at times in interpreting and administering the housing code ; so that the willing ratepayer and the ardent social reformer are in distinguished company in their perplexities.

It is hoped that this book may be found useful by all concerned in bringing together in right proportion the main facts and factors in the housing of the people, the general considerations affecting each issue and the successive steps taken by each Government in turn to solve an almost insoluble problem. It is but a handbook, a guide—in the true sense a political guide—which aims at outlining the right policy of prevention and cure for evils which endanger the whole body politic. I hope it may be as useful to my colleagues in the House of Commons, and to all to whom may fall the duty

or the opportunity to instruct and encourage public opinion on housing matters, as the writing of it has been to myself. It is on public opinion and personal determination that the solution must in the end depend.

I would with all gratitude acknowledge help from many friends—and not least from some who prefer to remain unknown; from colleagues in the House and out of it; from Lieut.-Col. Levita, Chairman of the Housing Committee, Mr. Frank Hunt, Valuer, and Mr. Topham Forrest, Architect of the L.C.C., Mr. J. P. Orr, C.S.I., C.B.E., late Director of Housing of the L.C.C., Mr. A. T. Pike, Secretary of the G.C. & T.P.A., Mr. Enoch Hill, Managing Director of the Halifax Permanent Benefit Building Society, Ltd., Mr. A. Goddard, Secretary of the Surveyors' Institution, Mr. T. Speake, Sanitary Inspector of Shrewsbury; and, not least, those whose melancholy duty it is in Government departments to furnish out of their all-embracing knowledge the replies to Members' questions in the House of Commons. To Mr. Neville Chamberlain my thanks are especially due for his finding time in the midst of the exhausting duties of his office to read the book in proof and write the Foreword, giving it the cachet of the Minister who has contributed, and will be recognised in future to have contributed, more than any other statesman to the eventual Housing of the Nation.



## FOREWORD

BY

THE RT. HON. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.,  
MINISTER OF HEALTH

THE housing problem, which has so long troubled the national conscience, has now reached a stage when a review of its history, progress and future is opportune, and Colonel Fremantle's book, which sets out the conclusions of a highly competent and experienced observer, will be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the literature of the subject.

In contemplating the situation with which we had to deal after the war, it should be remembered that our difficulties, perplexing and almost overwhelming as they appeared, were not entirely or chiefly of our own making; they have largely come down to us as an evil legacy from days when sanitary science was in its infancy, when industry was multiplying its activities at a pace which far out-ran the methods of control in vogue at that time, and when standards of living were much below those to which we have become accustomed to-day. To this inheritance of houses which have outlived their generation has been added the drying-up of the building industry under the paralysing influence of the Great War. It is no wonder that the results have been such as to appal the nation, which sees the highest form of civilisation degraded and shamed by conditions compared with which those of the savage in his grass hut,

surrounded by the forest or the open plain, seem infinitely preferable.

So far as new building is concerned, we can fairly congratulate ourselves upon the progress that has been made. Private enterprise has been re-established, and the output of houses is now far greater than ever before. In fact, it may safely be said to exceed the normal annual needs of the country by 100 per cent. Without undue optimism, therefore, we can anticipate that, within no very protracted period of time, the overcrowding, which has been the most serious feature of the situation, will have been overcome. Colonel Fremantle has followed other investigators in attempting to estimate the needs of the future. With all respect to him, I venture to doubt whether these calculations are of much value. The needs of the population are not to be measured merely by numbers. Other factors, economic, local, social, traditional, come in, and any estimates which do not take account of these are apt to be upset with disconcerting abruptness.

I think, then, that it is rash to commit ourselves to the view that any particular number of houses is yet required to overcome the accumulated shortage. I prefer, in this instance, to adhere to the dictum of Carlyle: 'Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.' For when overcrowding has ceased to exist, except as a local and temporary phenomenon, there will still remain the problem of the slums, and the housing of the people in our great towns.

This is the last, and perhaps the greatest, housing task before us. It cannot be too often, or too emphatically, stated that the housing of the people is

not merely a building problem. It is my deliberate opinion that much of the trouble which in the past has led to carelessness and destructiveness on the part of slum tenants, followed by deterioration of property and the lowering of the general standards of the neighbourhood, has been due to faulty management. The management of small-house property is a task requiring tact and sympathy, as well as technical knowledge. It is admirably performed by trained women, and I am convinced that in this direction there is room for an interesting and valuable extension of the sphere of women's usefulness.

I have before now expressed the view that one of the most serious obstacles to the application of proper methods of management to small-house property, on a scale large enough to give full scope to its benefits, is the fact that the ownership of such property in the dark places of our large towns is generally divided up to a bewildering extent. On the other hand, I should contemplate the management of great areas of this kind by the Local Authority with considerable misgiving. It may be that a solution of the difficulties may be found in some middle course, but at the moment it is sufficient for my purpose to point out that for an indefinite period we must anticipate that a very large population must continue to live near their work in the industrial centres, and that whether they are housed in cottages or in flats, management must still be the root of the matter as a social problem.

I am glad to note that Colonel Fremantle has given a good deal of attention to the subject of town planning and the special development of the town planning associated with the garden cities of Letchworth

and Welwyn. Public opinion moves slowly in this country, but every year sees a wider realisation of the truth that the planning of undeveloped areas, and the re-planning of those whose development has been allowed to grow haphazard, is the only way of avoiding incalculable waste in the future. The regional plan, which in some cases covers hundreds of square miles and includes the areas of numerous Local Authorities, is coming to be the rule in the spaces between the more progressive towns in the industrial districts; and there is at last good ground for hoping that Greater London itself will take in hand the problems which in its case are more serious and more urgent than in any other part of the country. As for garden cities, it is not surprising that they should still lag behind, for they need more than co-operation; they require capital, and capital is shy of new enterprises until confidence is fully established. But those which already exist are their own best propagandists, and perhaps before long it may be possible to formulate that policy for which Colonel Fremantle asks.

The Conservative and Unionist Party has good reason to be proud of its housing record. In the country districts, I believe the Rural Workers' Housing Act will prove a valuable addition to our legislation, and the growth of owner-occupiership, under the Act passed in 1923, is a source of deep satisfaction to all who believe in cultivating independence and self-reliance among our people.

In the work that has still to be done, I am sure that housing reformers will find Colonel Fremantle's book an invaluable source of information and guidance, and I cordially commend it to their notice.

# CONTENTS

		PAGE
	AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE . . . . .	vii
	FOREWORD . . . . .	ix
	By the Right Honourable Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Minister of Health.	
CHAP.		
I.	THE PROBLEM . . . . .	I
	Housing at its worst; national effects, material, mental, moral; local results; the three parts of the problem; axioms; the proper spirit.	
II.	THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF HOUSING BEFORE THE WAR . . . . .	15
	The Principal Act, 1890; slum clearance; Octavia Hill; Small Dwellings Acquisition Act, 1899; Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909; Public Health Act, 1875 and repairs; County Councils, Local Govt. Act, 1888; new building; decay of private enterprise.	
III.	DURING THE WAR . . . . .	24
	Effect of the war; estimated needs; the Hayes-Fisher Scheme, 1918.	
IV.	AFTER THE WAR . . . . .	34
	The Addison Scheme of 1919; and the results.	
V.	THE CHAMBERLAIN SCHEME, 1923 . . . . .	44
VI.	THE WHEATLEY SCHEME, 1924, AND OTHER SUGGESTIONS . . . . .	49
VII.	CONSOLIDATION . . . . .	54
	The Housing Act, 1925.	
VIII.	THE BUILDING OF HOUSES . . . . .	57
	The future housing programme; building by Local Authorities, by private enterprise, by public utility societies, by employers; by building societies, by owner-occupiers, by County Councils.	

CHAP.	PAGE
IX. THE SLUMS . . . . .	79
The present position ; procedure ; re-housing ; tenements ; higher buildings ; cost of clearance and compensation ; temporary expedients ; new methods.	
X. INSANITARY HOUSES . . . . .	94
Repair ; closing and demolition ; inspection ; back-to-back houses and obstructive buildings ; landlords and tenants ; education ; the Octavia Hill system ; improvement societies ; policy of Local Authorities ; overcrowding.	
XI. COSTS AND RENTS . . . . .	106
Labour, supply and cost ; materials, supply and cost ; builders' profits ; cost of houses ; rent.	
XII. NEW FORMS OF CONSTRUCTION . . . . .	126
Procedure adopted ; schedule of chief types ; their part in the housing scheme.	
XIII. HOUSING AND THE COUNTRYSIDE . . . . .	132
Historical ; village architecture ; axioms ; political tendencies ; post-war legislation ; improvement of cottages ; County Councils ; responsibility of electors.	
XIV. DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSES . . . . .	145
Town planning ; zoning ; regional planning.	
XV. GARDEN CITIES . . . . .	152
XVI. HOUSING IN SCOTLAND . . . . .	160
XVII. CONCLUSION . . . . .	173
APPENDIX I.—TABLES A-E (Net annual increase in number of houses 1901-14 and number completed each year 1920-6) . . . . .	179
APPENDIX II.—HOUSING BY CHARITABLE AGENCIES . . . . .	182
APPENDIX III.—WORK OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES . . . . .	185
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	186
INDEX . . . . .	187