

been steadily borne in mind, and in no ordinary degree our Society can boast that it has created, on many great and pressing questions, that anxious public discussion which is the surest herald of actual, of legislative reform.

IV.—Abstract of Paper *On the Dwellings of Working Men in Cities, and the efforts that have been made to improve them.*—By R. Denny Urlin, Barrister-at-law.

[Read Wednesday, 16th December, 1863.]

I HAVE undertaken to bring forward this subject, not that I hope to state anything which shall be new, but because the subject appears one which should no longer be overlooked by this Society.

In the first place, I venture to lay it down as undeniable that the condition of the working people in our cities is very much to be deplored. It is sufficient to quote from an address delivered by the Earl of Shaftesbury, a description which is nearly as applicable to Dublin as to London:—

“The domiciliary state of whole legions of our fellow citizens has been with me, for some time, a subject of observation and inquiry: and I do not hesitate to assert that it lies at the root of nineteen-twentieths of the mischiefs that we seek to redress. Not only the actual dwelling, but the situation of it, the character, physical and structural, of the locality, whether it be street, or court, or alley, or some deep, dark, and poisonous recess, never penetrated, except by its own wild and unknown inhabitants, must be included within the term ‘domiciliary state;’ and in those places,—low, narrow, with a death-like darkness, impervious to light or air (the work of greedy speculators uncontrolled by law)—are aggregated all the fearful influences that breed evil, and neutralize good wherever it seeks to establish a footing among those neglected classes. Fever and disease of every kind prevail; a poor standard of physical strength, the result of the fœtid atmosphere they inhale by day and by night, deprives them of power to do able-bodied work; while loss of energy and depression of spirits drive them to seek life and support in vice and intoxication.”

“Their modes of existence are sometimes diametrically opposite. A large mass is found in the perpetual din and whirl of close-packed multitudes. A smaller, in the remote and silent retreats of filth and pestilence (through which no thoroughfare passes), dwells in a kind of savage solitude, seldom emerging by day from their hiding places, and rarely visited. But whether in great or small numbers, whether in the most active or the most tranquil quarters, all are equally shut out from the possibility of domestic life. A dozen families in a single house, though barely sufficient for two; as many individuals of both sexes and of all ages in a single room, the common and only place for cooking, washing, and sleeping; the want of fresh air, the defect of water, of every decency, and of every comfort, give proof enough. We need not wonder why the gin-shop and the tap-room are frequented; why crime is so rife; why children are ragged and ignorant; and the honest dignity of the working-man’s home degraded or forgotten. These poor people, by no fault of their own—for they did not create the evil, nor can they remedy it—are plunged into a social state which is alike dishonourable and unsafe to our common country.”

It matters little where the enquiry is made, the artizan will usually be found living in a room where there is too little light, too little air, bad drainage, an insufficient water supply, and a disregard of cleanliness. There is in every city a number of gloomy streets

and alleys which have seen better days, and are now—in various stages of decay—given up to the working people, the bees of the social hive. They must live near their employments and near the markets, and are therefore compelled to become the occupants of these faded, poverty-stricken tenements. Their landlords, as a class, are bent on realizing the largest amount of profit, without regard to the health or comfort of the tenants. Miserable as may be the cabin of the peasant, pure air circulates round it, and it has no direct tendency to shorten the life of its occupant. It is otherwise with the poorer inhabitants of our cities. In cities and towns the mortality among the working classes is high; and is due less to their occupations or to their want of food, clothing, or other comforts, than to the condition of their dwellings. It is conclusively shown that in a given street where the population is of the same class, the usual rate of mortality shall be 25 in the 1,000, but that in two or three houses which have been built or refitted with a due regard to ventilation and sewerage, the rate of mortality shall be but 13 in the 1,000. It is therefore possible to extend the average duration of life among the industrious classes, by simply improving their abodes.

And the inhabitant of a dark and filthy room, when the hours of labour have ended, can have no wish to return to it, while he has every temptation for seeking the comparative comfort of the public house. A miserable dwelling has a definite effect upon the mind and habits of its occupant. The Bishop of Ripon declares that “The physical circumstances of the poor paralyze all the efforts of the clergyman, the schoolmaster, or the city missionary, for their spiritual or their moral welfare. . . . Every effort to create a spiritual tone of feeling is counteracted by a set of physical circumstances which are incompatible with the exercise of common morality.” The effect of a squalid, miserable home on the minds of children must be to prepare them for abandoning without regret their native land. In a new country even the poorest man may indulge in dreams of better days, with hope of their realization; and even while he remains poor he may live in a comfortable home, where, obtaining the respect of others, he may respect himself.

Emigration, however, does little to benefit the condition of those who remain. The town populations are constantly replenished from the provinces, and the streets and alleys are as densely thronged as ever. Every city improvement or new railway displaces persons who must find dwellings elsewhere; and in this way the destruction of some houses of the poorer kind aggravates the crowded state of the rest. This branch of the subject has received much attention in Paris, and care has been taken to build up in the suburbs houses for workmen to replace those which have been levelled in the creation of new boulevards.

We cannot expect our government to improve the dwellings of the poor. The work must be done by private zeal and enterprize. And it is a work which the poor cannot accomplish for themselves. They have not yet learned what an influence on life and health is exercised by pure air, light, water, and cleanliness. Their landlords are as little likely to improve dwellings which are at present

highly remunerative and cannot be reconciled to sanitary laws without considerable further outlay. In this and in other cities, there are a few large employers who care for the condition of those by whose toil they are enabled to accumulate wealth—but the number of such is small. The view which *capital* takes of its responsibilities towards *labour* may be the correct one; but under this system the gulf widens between the rich and the poor. I do not assert that the working man has a *right* to anything beyond his weekly wage, even while his exertions are building up the fortunes of his employer, but it may be prudent of those who employ labour, to bestow thought on the condition of those beneath them. It is better for many reasons that employers and employed should be more closely connected by ties of sympathy and mutual good will.

But even did the large employers of labour better the condition of their workmen, there are thousands whose homes would still remain unimproved. Their employments are fluctuating, or their employers cannot aid them. It is indeed of the utmost importance that private efforts should be continued, and extended; that the absolute necessity of sanitary regulations should by every means be impressed on the minds of the poor. With this view it should be made a part of the systematic teaching in all national and other schools, that life and health to a very great degree depend on certain conditions which have been placed within human control. Every teacher should himself be fully instructed in, and should be bound to inculcate, the virtues of whitewash and of open windows.

To learn a practicable remedy for the miserable dwellings which crowd our poorer streets and lanes, we must enquire into the results of societies which have been founded in other parts of the United Kingdom.

About the year 1844, there was founded the London Society for improving the condition of the labouring classes. The first experiment was the opening of a model lodging house. Three old houses were purchased and refitted, at an expense of £1,163. They were opened, at the usual prices charged for similar accommodation, and have since afforded a home for about 80 working men. The annual receipts amount to £414, from which must be deducted various expenses, leaving a clear annual income of £172. This is equal to a dividend of 14 per cent. on the outlay; and is the most favourable result, financially, which the Society's operations reveal.

Another experiment was the erection of a handsome "*Model Lodging House for Families*." It was considered essential to disconnect the sets of rooms, so as to ensure the privacy of families, and also prevent the spread of contagious disorders. This was done by means of external galleries or corridors. There are wash-house and bath and drying-ground. The building is fire-proof—the floors and roofs being arched with hollow bricks—and the *extra* cost of the fire-proof construction, was one per cent. on the entire outlay. The building and land cost in all nearly £9,000; and for this sum the Society has to show 54 comfortable homes for families, which produce a clear income, after payment of all outgoings, of £413 per annum.

Further, the Society in 1850 erected a model building in Portpool-

lane, for 20 families, and also for 128 single women, who only pay a shilling a week each. There are public wash-house, drying-room, &c. This cost about £9,533, and produces, after payment of all expenses, a clear revenue of a little over £300 a year. This is the least remunerative of the Society's undertakings.

I have arranged in a tabular form the results of 5 of the Society's buildings, selected as most likely to show the average results of experiments on various scales and in different localities.

Year ending December 31st, 1862.	Portpool Lane. Dwellings for 20 families and 128 single women. Cost £9,533 15s. 7d.	George's street. Dwellings for 104 single men (with se- parate dormi- tories), at 2s. 4d. a week each. Cost £6,426 14s. 2d.	Streatham street. Dwellings for 48 families, fire-proof, with baths, wash house, and drying ground. Cost £8,916 15s. 11d.	Charles street. Lodging house (altered) for 82 single men, at 4d. a day or 2s. a week Cost £1,163 14s. 2d.	Hatton Garden. Model Lodging House for 54 single men (separate dor- mitories). Cost £1,077 14s. 7d.
Gross rentals from ten- ants	£ s. d. 527 4 6	£ s. d. 669 7 6	£ s. d. 758 1 9	£ s. d. 414 12 10	£ s. d. 337 13 0
Rent, rates, taxes, wa- ter, gas, insurance, salaries, wages, re- pairs, washing, and all other outgoings	222 14 9	431 7 1	344 7 9½	242 9 1½	249 16 2
Net rent—profit ..	304 9 9	238 0 5	413 13 11½	172 3 8½	87 16 10

It is unnecessary to specify the other undertakings of this Society. The conclusions which may be arrived at are as follows:—
1.—Commodious homes for families may be built in cities in fire-proof blocks, at a cost averaging about £150 for each dwelling. These buildings may be expected to yield a dividend of from 3½ to 5 per cent. 2.—Existing houses may be refitted on sanitary principles as lodging houses, which will produce a dividend of from 10 to 14 per cent.

Their sanitary results have been remarkable. Since their construction, London has twice been visited by a fatal epidemic; but although the vicinity of the model building has suffered, the contagion has been arrested at the threshold. Typhus is unknown; and although the average rate of mortality in the districts has been from 26 to 28 in 1,000, in the Society's premises it has been less than 16 in 1,000, *i. e.* lower than at *Eastbourne* or *Worthing*, the healthiest towns in England.

The second great society is the "*Metropolitan Association for improving the dwellings of the industrious classes.*" This society has 8 buildings, which accommodate 414 families, and also two large lodging houses, one for 234 and the other for 128 single men. The capital is raised in shares, and the liability of shareholders is limited by Charter.* It appears that the outlay has been nearly £90,000;

* The late lamented Earl of Carlisle was one of the promoters of, and largest shareholders in, this society

that for the year ending March, 1863, the gross rents have amounted to £8,186, from which must be deducted the rent, taxes, rates, gas, and all other outgoings amounting to £4,674. The balance of profit is £3,511; out of which a dividend of 3 per cent. free of Income Tax has been paid, and £238 has been carried over to a Guarantee Fund increasing that fund to £2,008. The late Dr. Southwood Smith, who was one of the Directors, wrote as follows:—"If the whole of the metropolis had been as healthy as the Metropolitan Buildings, Old Pancras-road, on an average of three years, there would have been an annual saving of about 23,000 lives!" a calculation which bears out the startling assertion made by Mr. Simon, the medical officer of the City of London, that "of the 52,000 deaths which occur annually in the metropolis of Great Britain, one-half might have been averted by the use of means at our disposal, whilst the untold amount of acute suffering and lingering disease caused by neglect is beyond calculation."

The mortality last year among all the tenants of the association was at the rate of 20 in 1,000. The general rate of mortality in the City of London being 28 in 1,000, and in Whitechapel 36 in 1,000. The Metropolitan association has branches in *Ramsgate* and in *Bristol*. The former pays a dividend of 4 per cent. on an outlay of £1,676. The latter pays a dividend of only 2½ per cent. on an outlay of £5,837. As in the case of the other large association, I append a tabular statement showing the financial results of five of the Society's undertakings, which may be taken as fairly representing the rest.

Year ending March 31st, 1863.	Albion Build- ings, Bartho- lomew-close, for 24 fami- lies. Cost £2,381 18. 1d	Nelson-square, Bermondsey. Buildings for 108 families. Cost £23,051 18s. 2d.	Pancras square. Model build- ings for 110 females. Cost £18,306 18s. 3d.	Queen's Place, Dockhead. Building re- fitted for 10 families. Cost £111 8s 2d.	Albert-street Chambers, Mile-end Model lodging house for 234 single men. Cost £13,772 7 3
Gross rentals from te- nants	£ s. d. 253 0 9	£ s. d. 1,573 7 0	£ s. d. 1,625 10. 7	£ s. d. 102 19 0	£ s. d. 1,160 8 6
Rates, taxes, water, gas, insurance, sala- ries, wages, repairs, washing, and all other outgoings ..	92 15 6	498 4 4	645 11 5 (including 89 13 2 rent.)	81 9 9 (including 48 2 4 rent.)	999 2 7
Net rent—profit ..	160 5 3	1,075 2 8	979 19 2	21 9 3	161 5 11

Few visitors to the exhibition of 1851 omitted to notice the "Model Cottages" erected by the late Prince Consort not so much to induce persons to build exactly on the same plan as to show that by a small outlay comfortable and handsome cottages might be built. In 1852 the *Windsor Society* was founded for building such cottages. It is found that their superior ventilation, drainage, and

airiness resulted in a degree of healthiness among the occupants which is above the general average of the town. The dividend is at the rate of 5 per cent.

Another instance of the successful building of model cottages is found at *Shadwell*, Middlesex, where Mr. Hilliard has erected 28 of them, each for 4 families. Each home for a family costs about £122; and the net return is at the rate of 6 per cent. Some remarks made on the subject of this enterprise by Mr. Glover the Medical Inspector, exhibits the effect produced by Model buildings. "The erection of these Albert Cottages, provided with arrangements essential to health, comfort, and morals, is producing the happiest results in the neighbourhood. Tenants have become sensible of the discomforts and evils of their unwholesome dwellings, and will not remain in, or take, houses without many improvements which formerly they were content to do without, and landlords are finding it to their interest to improve their old houses, and in constructing new ones to provide superior accommodation and conveniences."

About one-third of the sum munificently devoted by Mr. G. Peabody to the relief of the London Poor has been already expended in the erection of blocks of residences at Islington and Spitalfields. When the entire sum of £150,000 has been so laid out the Trustees expect the income of their ten buildings to amount to £6,000 per annum, which rental will be periodically reinvested in similar buildings.

In about thirty other places in England and Scotland Societies have been formed for building up homes for the industrious poor: and the results have been on the whole encouraging.

In *Dublin* some attempts have been made to provide improved dwellings for working men. About the year 1853 a model lodging-house was established in Marlborough-street, and soon afterwards one in Capel-street; but the latter has now become an hotel for a similar class of tenants. Its history suggests that the artizan or clerk wants more than a place of rest—he needs food and refreshment. The model lodging-house for families in Lower Bridge-street, Dublin, is a somewhat irregular pile of buildings, partly of recent construction. They have the advantage of excellent drainage and of an abundant supply of water. They will accommodate about thirty families, who are weekly tenants, paying rents varying from 1s. to 3s. 6d. per week. There is no difficulty in finding eligible tenants. It so happens that the tenants are mostly employed either as hatters or as letter-carriers. No tenant is allowed to work at his trade on the premises. My informant said that the amount of wages of the working man had nothing to do with the comfort of his dwelling. The workman receiving but 12s. a-week is often as comfortably lodged as his fellow whose wages are 20s. or even 28s. a-week.*

I shall not discuss the dwellings of the agricultural poor. The

* These buildings are the property of Mr. Vance; and I am not able to state whether his praiseworthy undertaking has yielded an adequate return on the outlay. Any notice of the attempts made in Dublin to better the condition of the poorer classes would be incomplete without some reference to the excellent Dormitories and Night Refuges with which the name of the Rev. Dr. Spratt is honourably connected.

condition of farm labourers is often lamentable; but they are more happily situated than city artizans. Admirable cottages have been built in many places by landlords. They are often built in disregard of sordid considerations, often from benevolent motives, often with a view to ornament the entrance to the demesne.

But this passing thought of rural cottages leads to another. Is it possible for the city workman to find a home away from the city, to which he can return after his work is ended? a cottage home with a plot of ground which his children may cultivate? The father of the family would no doubt be away from home during the day, and would find a long walk a serious addition to his toil. There would also be difficulties in the way of purchasing necessaries. I am not aware that the experiment has yet been fairly tried. The present fares charged by railways would render the thing impossible. But with weekly tickets at reduced rates there might be a chance of establishing suburban villages for city working men.

The most effectual method of improving the dwellings of the city poor, has been now indicated. An association should be formed in every city and large town; and it is better that the basis should be *commercial* than *charitable*. The working man, labouring honestly, and earning wages, is willing to pay the value of all that he receives; and to treat with him otherwise is to injure his self-respect and to degrade him. For a filthy, unwholesome tenement he pays as much as he ought to pay for an airy and healthful abode. Those who wish to provide him with such a home must enter into competition with the sordid landlords who now trade on his necessities. Such an association, if formed in Dublin, would purchase houses in various parts of the city. The existing buildings must be fitted anew, gas and water supplied, sewerage and ventilation made perfect. Houses in courts and blind alleys should be avoided: for in them there cannot be ample circulation of air. The occupants must, by strict regulations and frequent supervision, be induced to carry out the sanitary part of the scheme. It is shown by the experience of twenty years that these refitted buildings are remunerative.

Dublin offers peculiar facilities for carrying out this plan, as it possesses many streets which have fallen in public estimation, where large and substantially built houses may be procured on most moderate terms. It is too much our daily habit to pass the ends of dark city streets, without even giving a thought to their inhabitants. Home is to us a sacred word, suggestive of many things. What is the home of the working man? But the question may touch us yet more nearly. This city has unaccountably escaped attacks of epidemic disorder. Do not conclude that there is an immunity against these attacks. We may yet be assailed by an enemy, which sleeps in foul alleys and obscure corners. Ever active and progressive science is discovering that death may be wafted unseen in the polluted atmosphere.

There are reasons enough, therefore, to lead our thoughts to the dwellings of the poor. By improving them we may more closely attach our poorer fellow-citizens to the land of their birth—we may destroy possible sources of contagion and disease—and we may elevate the industrious classes by giving them abodes in which home affections and home virtues will flourish.