The Congress considering that Commercial Courts judge mercantile disputes with less delay, less expense, and a more perfect knowledge of commercial usages than the ordinary tribunals, and that Chambers of Commerce render great services to trade, expresses the wish that commercial courts and chambers of commerce may be generally established.

"That it is desirable to realize a uniform system as regards weights, measures, and coinage; the tariff of international communications by telegraph and by the post (including the transmission both of letters and books); commercial documents; and generally with reference to everything that concerns international commerce."

III.—The present state of the Dwellings of the Poor, chiefly in Dublin.
By the Rev. Thomas Jordan, A.M.

[Read December 15th, 1856.]

For the last few years considerable attention has been given to the condition of the working classes. One of the most obvious tests of that condition is the state of their dwellings, and as I have daily opportunities of observing these, the present question is one that often passes through my mind. It is generally allowed that the dwelling or the house accommodation is closely connected with the improvement and elevation of the occupier. Let any one become acquainted with some of the poorer classes in the streets in which they generally live, and let him try to point out the duty of charity, the evil of drunkenness, or let him dwell on higher interests, and tell of the time and place when sorrow and death will be no more, he will find the most serious obstacles to his teaching in the state of things around him; that the wretchedness by which he is surrounded certainly does not open the poor man's mind to charity and love; that squalor and destitution are most serious hindrances to his entertaining those just views of Providence, which are as essential to human happiness as they are to leading the mind to more solemn convictions. "Dr. Southwood Smith," says Mr. Vanderkiste, the London City Missionary, "has remarked upon the peculiar depression of spirits and emaciation produced by inhaling the impure atmospheres of close, filthy, and ill-ventilated neighbourhoods. This amiable and learned physician considers such depression to be one cause of the intemperance of the working classes—a statement with which I entirely coincide. A common expression is, 'You feels low and dull like, and a drop of gin cheers yer.'" The Earl of Shaftesbury, at the ninth annual meeting of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Laboring Classes, said, "Depend upon it, this is the
great want of the day... I maintain and I am borne out by those of experience—by city missionaries, by scripture readers, by district visitors, by all who have acquaintance with the domiciles and habits of the working people,—that it is to no purpose to send the school-master, it is to no purpose to employ the missionary, it is to little purpose to visit from house to house, so long as you leave the people in this squalid, obscene, disgusting, and over crowded state."

This view, indeed, is not more clearly proved by the testimony of these eminent and experienced men, than by the reason of the case itself. That which is outward and visible must necessarily make more impression on us than what is merely abstract and mental. The law of our nature is, that what strikes the senses affects us more strongly than what is addressed to the mind or the heart, and hence it must be, that much instruction and reasoning are made of no effect by the physical state and the surrounding circumstances of those to whom they are addressed. The description of the state of room-keepers in large towns some few years ago was so distressing that it might seem overdrawn. I believe, however, that more of these were under-statements than over-statements of the facts. The following is the description given of a part of London in 1847, by the Illustrated London News:—"In Clerkenwell there is grovelling, starving poverty. In Clerkenwell, broods the darkness of utter ignorance. In its lanes and alleys, the lowest debauch, the coarsest enjoyment, the most infuriate passions, the most unrestrained vice, roar and riot. The keeper of the fence loves to set up in business there; low public houses abound, where thieves drink and smoke; Jew receivers lurk at corners; brazen, ragged women scream and shout ribald repartees from window to window. In Clerkenwell the burglar has his crib, the pickpocket has his mart, the ragged Irish hodman vegetates in the filth of his three-pair back. It is the locality of dirt, and ignorance, and vice—the recesses whereof are known but to the disguised policeman, as he gropes his way up rickety staircases towards the tracked housebreaker's den; or the poor shabby-genteel city missionary, as he kneels at midnight by the foul straw of some convulsed and dying outcast."

Mr. Chadwick's report to the Poor Law Commissioners, July, 1842, states, in reference to the district of Bethnal Green, "that the average age at death of the gentlemen residents is 45 years, that of the working population only 16."†

These statements show us that what we shall find true of our own city is not peculiar to it; that the darkest shadow is found by the side of the brightest prosperity; and that London, exceeding all other cities in power and wealth, has the very unenviable title of surpassing many in the degradation of its poor.

Such statements as those I have mentioned have had the effect of calling very much attention to these subjects; and in England accordingly we hear of a great deal having been done in order to bring about a better state of things. There are at present a number of

* Quoted by Mr. Cheyne Brady, R. D. S., 1854.
† Mr. Vanderkiste's "Dens of London."
societies in London for improving the dwellings of the poor, and in
most of the large towns in England and Scotland efforts are being
made in the same direction.

It may be well to consider our own country, and see whether there
is in it equal anxiety on the subject. The complaint with regard
to house accommodation in Ireland is very old and very common.
Indeed, few writers on the history or the state of our country have
failed to mention the wretchedness of our dwellings. The benevo-
lent and philosophic Berkeley asked, in his *Querist*, in 1735,
"Whether the habitations of Irishmen were not more sordid than
those of the savage Americans." Passing over a century, which is
a good span in a nation's history, and taking our place in 1841, we
may consider whether there be as great an improvement on the state
of things described by Berkeley as was to be expected. Our best
guide here is the returns of the Census Commissioners for that year.
The following analysis of their returns is taken from an excellent
work on the condition of the working classes by Dr. Willis.

"The total number of individuals living in Ireland in June, 1841,
was 8,175,124, living in 1,328,839 houses."

The Census Commissioners for 1841 and 1851 have arranged the
house accommodation under four heads. "The *fourth* comprises
all mud cabins having only one room; the *third*, a better description
of cottage, still built of mud, but varying from two to four rooms,
with windows; the *second*, a good farm-house, or, in towns, a house
in a small street, having from five to nine rooms with windows;
and the *first*, all houses of a better description than the preceding
ones."

Under these heads there are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Houses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>304,264 houses built of stone or brick; these are placed as 40,080 first class, and 264,184 second class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,024,575 cottages and cabins, composed wholly of mud; of these, 533,297 are placed as third class; and the remaining 491,278, of but one room, belong to the fourth class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accommodation for the entire number of families in Ireland
stood, therefore, thus:

- **31,333** families having first class accommodation.
- **241,664** " second "
- **574,386** " third "
- **625,356** " fourth " or lowest known accommodation.

Thus it appears that 81.46 per cent. of the entire population of this
island have only third and fourth class accommodation; and of these,
that 52.12 per cent. have but the mud hovel, or single room
accommodation. In the enumeration of the city of Dublin, 49,511
families are stated to live in 20,109 houses, which are respectively
divided into the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families Living in Houses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27,176 families living in 10,171 first class houses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,997</td>
<td>8,289 second &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,057</td>
<td>1,494 third &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>155 fourth &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To prevent our being deceived by the very small number of fourth
class houses, viz. 155, and the very small number of families, viz. 181, living in them, we are to remember that the same style of house affords very different accommodation according as it is occupied solely by one family or by several. A first class house in the city may be tenanted by six, eight, or even ten families, and thus may afford less accommodation to each than a mud cabin with only one room in the open country. In this respect the Census Commissioners lay down four grades of accommodation. One family occupying the entire of a first class house are supposed to have first class accommodation. One family in a second class house, or two or three families in a first class house, are considered as possessing second class accommodation. One family in a third class house, four or five families in a first class house, two or three families in a second class house are regarded as having third class accommodation. All others have accommodation of the fourth or lowest kind; as, for instance, six or more families in a first class house; four or five in a house of the second kind; two or more families in one of the third kind. Applying this rule, we may quote the analysis by Dr. Willis of the Commissioners' returns: "We thus find that the 49,511 families within the city of Dublin possess the following house accommodation:

5,605 families have first class accommodation.
8,412 ,, second ,, 
12,297 ,, third ,, 

And that the enormous number of 23,197, or very near one-half of the entire number of families, have the wretched and pestiferous accommodation of a single room; and that of these families 12,050 have this accommodation in houses of the first class, and that 10,151 have this same accommodation in houses of the second class."

I need not say that this is a humiliating account, and that it shows a state of the country which necessarily could have been but little better than it was a century before, when Berkeley found no adequate parallel for it but among the savage American Indians. The story is told of Cuvier, that having found in Paris the bone of an animal of an extinct race, he was able to make out from it the frame and structure of the entire animal, and that afterwards a specimen of the extinct race was actually found in a fossil state. A part of the condition of our countrymen is given to us in their house accommodation; surely we can argue out to ourselves what their social, intellectual, and moral condition must have been. Would that we could make our illustration perfect in all its parts,—that no live specimen could be found in our land to justify our inferences, and that we had to trust for their verification to the dim researches of the antiquarian and the happy conjectures of the philosopher! If we take the state of their dwellings as our guide, sad indeed must be the condition of the inmate which we picture to ourselves. "For some years past," says Dr. Southwood Smith, "there has been in the public mind a conviction that whatever improvement is effected
in the physical condition of the people, is conducive to a correspond-
ing elevation of their intellectual, moral and social, state.* It now
remains for us to see what improvement in the physical condition
of the people is shown by the returns of the Census Commissioners
for 1851.

The population of this country, as we all know, had suffered con-
siderable diminution in the ten years from 1841 to 1851. The
number of families at the latter period was 1,204,391, occupying
1,046,223 houses; and of these families, 147,553 were found in
135,589 houses of the fourth class. This shows a considerable
falling off in the number of houses of the fourth class, as will appear
more plainly from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF FOURTH CLASS HOUSES.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster .. .. 125,898 .. 23,613 .. 102,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connaught.. .. 121,346 .. 31,586 .. 89,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munster .. .. 164,113 .. 50,187 .. 113,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leinster .. .. 79,921 .. 30,203 .. 49,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for all Ireland 491,278 .. 135,589 — 355,689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"It thus appears," say the Census Commissioners, "that between
1841 and 1851, 355,689 fourth class houses, chiefly mud cabins, have
disappeared from Ireland; and that while there has been this de-
ccrease in the fourth class, there has been an increase in the number
of 10,064 habitations in the first class; of 54,574 in the second
class, comprising in the country good farm-houses; and of 8,415
in the third class, or houses containing from two to four rooms, but
principally built of mud." This certainly shows us an improvement
in house accommodation in the provinces,* but it is very questionable
whether an equal progress in this respect has been made in the
capital. The number of families in Dublin in 1851, was 57,318,
living in 22,244 houses. Of these, a surprisingly large number
possessed only fourth class accommodation:—

The number of families with fourth class accommodation (i. e. with one room)
in first class houses was 16,104
in second " 11,341
in third " 545
in fourth " 49

| Total of families with fourth class accommodation 28,039 |

This gives us, I need scarcely say, a very startling result. Very

* Results of Sanitary Improvements, p. 3.
† It must not be inferred from the above that the former inhabitants of these
355,689 fourth class houses have obtained better accommodation. The houses have
disappeared and so have the inhabitants. The latter have been carried off in various
ways—some by famine and plague; some by evictions, of whom a part have emi-

gated; others, unable to do so, have swarmed into the large towns and into the poor-
houses.

The large increase of houses of a better class has arisen from the estates of the old
proprietors being broken up into smaller portions, each of which must have its farm-
house. In other parts of the country a large number of mud cabins standing together
have given place to one substantial and comfortable dwelling for a steward or care-
taker. This caution seems necessary, as, by looking at the figures alone without the
reason for them, we might conclude that there has been as great improvement in the
condition of the people as in that of the houses.
nearly half the entire population of this great city are living in single rooms as their only house accommodation. Even a larger number are so circumstanced than in 1841. Our own city and the town of Belfast are the only places in the kingdom which show an increase in the proportion of families condemned to such dwellings. This no doubt has partly arisen from the very large numbers that have been driven into these towns from the country by distress of various kinds. In Dublin, for instance, there were residing 62,584 persons in 1841, and 101,558 in 1851, who were not born there. In Belfast the increase of the non-native population has also increased in a very large proportion. This does not entirely account for the increase of room-keepers in those places, for the rural population has migrated in large numbers (though not at all so large) to other towns as Galway, Waterford, Cork, where a similar effect has not followed. Though the number of room-keepers has increased, yet more of them are found in a better class of house. Upwards of 100 decayed houses have been taken down; which was not done before it was necessary, as they were in the last stage of ruin. The danger of the inmates in such places might be described in the words of the satirist,

"Villicus . . . veteris rimae quam textit hiatum,  
Securos pendente jubet dormire ruina."

"For thus the stewards patch the riven wall,  
Thus prop the mansion, tottering to its fall;  
Then bid the tenant sleep secure from dread,  
While the loose pile hangs trembling o'er his head."

As many as 2,205 cellars in the most miserable and most unwholesome parts of the metropolis, and which were densely inhabited, have been shut up. In going through the city we still observe some of these wretched abodes occupied. Many of them can only be entered by a visitor who is a stranger to them, by descending backwards, as a wild animal descends from the top of a tree. In a short time it is to be hoped the remainder will be shut up. There are now 109 registered lodging-houses within the city, which are intended to accommodate 2,156 individuals. The following statement with regard to the model lodging-houses is quoted from *The Builder* by Mr. Cheyne Brady: "In Marlborough-street (through the instrumentality of Sir Edward Borough, Bart., who has had this subject at heart for several years) a Model Lodging-house for fifty six single men was opened in June, 1853; and Mr. Thomas Vance has established Model Lodging-houses for men in Ryder's Row, which have proved so remunerative as to induce him to convert some old buildings in Lower Bridge-street into a lodging-house for families." Many of the extensive employers in the city have taken the greater part of a street into their own hands, and have made improvements on it for dwellings for their workpeople, or have actually built cottages expressly for their use.*

It is pleasant to dwell on these improvements. In the wilderness of filthy lanes, alleys, and courts, they are little green spots on

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* This course has been adopted by Messrs. Pin at Harold's Cross; the proprietors of the Great Southern and Western Railway; Messrs. Jameson and Co., North Anne-street; Messrs. Jameson, Bow-street; &c., &c.
which the mind can rest. Admitting these improvements, there is still much at which humanity shudders. It is but too common to find more than one family in a room. Some of these rooms are lodging places at night, where there are several beds in the room which has been so densely occupied through the day. One would form the most correct opinion of these abodes by entering one of them at an early hour in the morning, out of the open air. Take one of the courts in these parts as an instance, which is an average specimen, for in such things one must "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." In the court there are eight front doors, or rather door-openings; four rooms in each house; a family in each room. The houses have no rear at all to them. The water is carried by the residents from some distance. The entrance to the court is very filthy, though the court is swept once every morning in the year. The rain in many cases comes in through the roof and into the room on the ground floor. The rent of one of these rooms is one shilling a week. Here the most simple and necessary articles of furniture are wanting. In the decay of Rome one of the ancient writers complains that the whole furniture of his friend, who was leaving the city, was packed up in a single vehicle,

"Sed dum tota domus rheda componitur una."

"Now had my friend, impatient to depart,
Consigned his little all to one poor cart."

In the cases to which I refer, the household goods could be contained in very small dimensions. A chair, a wash-hand basin, a towel are in many cases things unknown. There are scattered through these parts some whose homes are much more comfortable than these, tradesmen and others in the receipt of good wages; but such cases as I have mentioned are not rare. An eminent modern economist describes the existence of the greater part of the inhabitants of Ireland as depending on very humble supports, viz., potatoes, water, salt, simple raiment, a blanket, a hut, an iron pot, and the materials of firing.* This description is not likely to injure us by fostering our national vanity. No less humiliating is it to behold the interior of some of these abodes of misery, where the furniture certainly but little exceeds what is here enumerated as the requisites of an agricultural cabin. That there is generally felt a need of improving this quarter of the city, is shown by the constant expression of a desire to have a new street made through it, as has been suggested, from St. Patrick's Church to the Broadstone Railway Terminus, or from Bridge-street to the same place. This project has been in contemplation for a long time, but has not been carried out, owing to the very great expense it would involve.

It may be well to remark, in conclusion, a common objection to the improvement of dwellings for the poor, that any such plan involves a loss and a depreciation of the property as it stands at present. Nothing could be more senseless than to propose an apparently benevolent project founded on injustice to the owners of property. Justice takes precedence of generosity, not only accord-

* Senior's Political Economy.
The Disposal of our Convicts.

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ing to a popular maxim, but also according to the soundest principles of morals. So far, however, is it from being true that proprietors of houses would suffer by such plans, that the very reverse is the case—property is made more valuable. A single case may be referred to in proof of this.

"The Windsor Royal Society, whose patroness is Her Most Gracious Majesty, and of which his Royal Highness the Prince is also president, was formed in May, 1852, with the express object of showing that better accommodation can be provided for the working classes than previously existed, at a cost which will be remunerative. The directors of this society purchased, for £412, one of the large houses in Church-street, London, the residence formerly of noble families attached to the court, but in latter days used for the most ignoble purposes, and suffered to fall into the last stage of dilapidation. This house they thoroughly repaired, drained, and ventilated, and provided with every convenience at a cost of £365."* This, together with the other works of the company, has been found to yield a return of five per cent. on the outlay. Other works of a like kind by similar societies have been found equally remunerative.

This groundless objection being removed, the possibility of effecting an improvement without any great sacrifice is manifest, and its desirableness cannot be doubted by any who value the intellectual and moral elevation of the people.

IV.—On the Disposal of our Convicts.—By P. J. McKenna, Esq.

[Read 15th December, 1856.]

There are few social questions of the day of greater importance than that relating to the disposal of our convicts. Seldom have there been shown more ignorance, prejudice, and irrationality than are to be found in the observations made both in public and private upon this difficult and important topic. It is especially irksome to find men of education and intelligence adopting, without consideration or enquiry, the opinions of newspaper writers, whose object in the present day seems to be to reflect public opinion rather than to instruct or inform it. The public is irritated, and justly so, by the outrages of the ticket-of-leave men in England; and I am quite prepared for their running away with the subject, and losing their senses in talking about it, with the first impulse of that irritation; but that they should whirl along with them many who might fairly be expected to form sound conclusions, and to help in stemming the torrent, must be a matter of deep regret to all who have inquired into and take an interest in this subject. I consider it a duty to assist in setting the question fairly before the public, however small that assistance; and if, in stating my opinions and the

* The Practicability of Improving the Dwellings of the Laboring Classes, by Cheyne Brady, Esq. 1854.