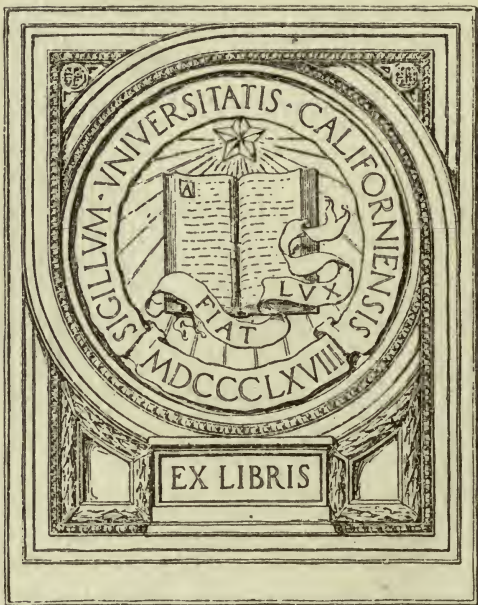
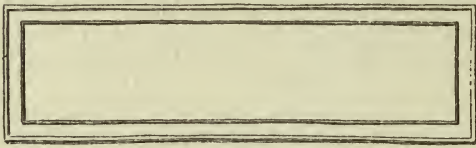


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RURAL HOUSING



RURAL HOUSING

WITH A CHAPTER ON
THE AFTER-WAR PROBLEM

BY

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WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THE problem of rural housing is both an acute and an urgent one. Great as is the interest being taken in this subject, and considerable, in some respects, as has been the improvement effected in recent years, it is important to realize that we are really making no substantial advance towards its satisfactory solution.

It is a problem of considerable complexity, and to solve it accurate knowledge is essential both as to existing conditions, the influence being exerted by legal enactments and the obstacles in the way of its solution.

In the chapters which follow, I have endeavoured to accurately and fairly consider these different aspects from the standpoint of one engaged in practical administrative work and acquainted with the great difficulties in the way of satisfactory progress.

Although housing should be of vital interest to politicians it is in many ways unfortunate that it has been made, to some extent, a party question. This book is not concerned with political capital, only with promoting efficient rural housing.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance given to me by Mr. W. J. Read, F.I.C., M.Sc., in connection with

the photographs illustrating existing housing conditions. Fig. 23 is reproduced by the courtesy of the "Medical Officer," while I have to thank Dr. Burnet, County Medical Officer of Health, Cornwall, for the loan of the block for Fig. 18, and Dr. Robertson (M.O.H., Godstone) for Figs. 20, 21 and 22.

I am indebted to a number of surveyors in the county of Somerset for information given, and in particular to Mr. R. E. Jackman, for preparing the plans for Figs. 1, 2 and 17, and to Mr. N. G. Fish, for a number of special details.

WILLIAM G. SAVAGE.

Weston-super-Mare.

December, 1914.

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RURAL HOUSING AFTER THE WAR.

I.—THE GENERAL EFFECTS OF THE WAR UPON THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

It cannot be said that the war has made all things new, but it certainly demands that everything should be looked at from another point of view. Few social problems have been more affected by the war than the problem of housing. On the one hand its general effect has been seriously to increase the difficulties, on the other it has markedly smoothed the path of progress. The difficulties are material and chiefly in the direction of an enormously enhanced cost of construction both now and for many years to come, and an aggravation of the housing shortage from the nearly complete cessation of building and an acceleration of the rate at which houses are becoming unfit for habitation from the lessened money spent on their preservation and repair.

The factors making for a simplification of the problem are mainly non-material, and arise from the wider interest in the subject exhibited by the educated public, from a determination that what was sanctioned by custom and indifference in the past cannot be tolerated in the future and by a realisation by those in authority that the matter is both urgent and solvable.

On the whole the writer is of opinion that the will to deal effectively with the problem is likely to afford a greater stimulus than the increased difficulties are likely to retard it, so that the prospect of an effective solution really looms brighter in consequence of the war.

(1) *The Position Before the War.*—This is stated in more detail in Chapter X., page 271, but the summary on page 273 as to the rural housing problem may be quoted here:—

“ Existing cottages are wearing or have worn out; economic causes prevent private enterprises erecting more in anything like sufficient and compensatory numbers; the Local Authorities will not build if loss is likely to fall upon the rates, and the powers to make them are ineffective; the State, through the Local Government Board, exhorts and stimulates, but provides no pecuniary help; the problem is being solved in each place in which it arises by the migration to town or colony of some of the best of the agricultural working classes.”

(2) *The Effects of the War upon Additional Cottage Building and the Repair of Existing Houses.*—

A few houses for the working classes were in course of construction at the opening of hostilities, and these have been for the most part completed, but during the whole four years of war, house-building has been largely at a standstill in both rural and urban areas.

To appreciate the full significance of this it must be remembered that previous to the war there was a dangerous housing shortage, and the rate of production was falling at an accelerated rate below the rate of requirement.

Except in particular areas—munition manufactory centres and the like—the shortage is not specially apparent in rural areas during existing war conditions. This is accounted for by the tremendous removals of populations to form our armies and supply the munition areas, accompanied by the telescoping of families together to form one household instead of two.

With the re-establishment of normal conditions the present state of affairs is likely to revert to pre-war conditions with an even greater acute shortage, unless we can postulate a wholesale refusal on the part of the countryman and the countrywoman to return to rural life—a possibility so calamitous that it alone should serve as a potent spur to remedial activity.

Houses are not immortal; they inevitably decay, and the less efficiently they are kept in

repair, the more rapid and irremediable the decay. The attraction of money to other sources, the absence of the stimulus of the supervision of the officers of Local Authorities, the increased cost and difficulties of obtaining materials for repairs and, in particular, the difficulty—in many cases the impossibility—of obtaining the skilled labour required, have all operated in very greatly diminishing the necessary work of keeping waning cottages in habitable repair.

It follows, therefore, that there are a very large number of houses—urban and rural alike—which are in bad repair, and only tolerated because there are no others to take their occupants if they are condemned. A fair number of these can, and probably will, be made habitable after the war, but for many others the processes of decay are so advanced and the structural arrangements in themselves are so inherently bad that they will not be worth spending money upon, and are only fit to be scrapped and replaced.

(3) *The Number of New Houses required in Rural Areas after the War.*—While estimates have been made by different Authorities as to the number of houses required in both urban and rural areas, it must be admitted that it is extremely difficult to arrive at any reliable figures. Three hundred thousand houses for the whole of England, of which about 100,000 are for rural areas, is a figure mentioned and frequently adopted. Three hundred thousand is the figure announced by the Minister of Reconstruction as the minimum required. It may be so, but it is well to realise that such a figure is very much a mere guess, and cannot very well be more than a guess since the number is governed by many factors which no one is in a position to estimate correctly. For rural areas in particular a factor of great importance is the extent of agricultural revival, and the substitution of methods of agriculture which require the employment of more men upon the land in preference to pre-war methods with few men per farm.

At least 30,000 new houses will be required in agricultural areas if the two million additional acres of grass land are ploughed up.

The returns asked of Local Authorities in England in the autumn of 1917 and tabulated in the early part of 1918, showed that these Local Authorities considered that some 150,000 houses (urban and rural) were required, or rather that given sufficient financial assistance, they were willing to prepare schemes for this number. Undoubtedly such estimates were much below requirements, while in about 15 per cent. no returns were made by Local Authorities.

For example, in the County of Somerset the detailed returns are accessible to the writer, and show an estimated need of about 2,250 urban and rural cottages. Personal inquiries showed that in most of these areas in estimating housing needs no provision was made for replacing unfit houses, this factor not being considered at all. The writer is not in a position any more than anyone else, to give definite figures, but from careful calculations fortified by his knowledge of local housing conditions, he would be inclined to estimate the need in that administrative county at about 6,000 houses, of which 3,700 are required in the rural districts. This is two and a half times as great as the estimates of the Local Authorities.

There is a further factor which affects materially the numerical problem which is not taken into account in the above figures, and which does not receive much attention. It is frequently said and printed that the men of our brave civilian armies deserve all we can do for them, that we cannot allow them to return to conditions which existed before the war, that they must come back to a better, brighter England, and to cleaner, healthier homes. Do we mean all that, or is it bunkum and lip service? Do we mean to apply it to housing? If so, it will be necessary to alter materially our conception of what is meant by a house "unfit for human habitation." That is a legal phrase and as such is interpreted legally, and is so used above in the remarks as to unfit houses. But between conditions which can be construed as *legally* making a house "unfit for human habitation," and so give legality to its closure, and the healthy human home to which we pay so much lip service there yawns a wide gulf, how wide and how deep only those intimately acquainted with housing conditions know. In rural areas a house may have as its only water supply a well fifty yards away from which water has to be pumped and carried with exacting labour, may have neither provision for washing of clothes nor bathroom, it may be without paving around it so that dirt is constantly being carried into the living room, and this without the interposition of any hall or lobby between the living room and the outside, it may have but two intercommunicating bedrooms access to which is only obtained through the single living room. All these things and more may obtain, and yet such a house is most difficult to condemn as "unfit for human habitation" under the existing legal powers. If all such houses

are to be treated as unfit and more built to replace them the number required will be quadrupled and more. It is obviously impracticable to replace these houses for many years to come, but it is well to be reminded both of their existence and of the necessity of temporarily leaving them in occupation, lest when the many houses mentioned above are provided we settle down in comfortable complacency and think we have fulfilled our visions and our promises.

(4) *Effect of the War on the Cost of Providing Houses.*—As regards the cost of providing working class houses, after the war, it is impossible to state this with any approach to accuracy as this will depend upon factors, many of which are as yet unknown. The standard of comfort adopted and the assistance of Government as regards the control of the prices of building material are both important factors. On the other hand, we do know that the cost must be very materially increased owing to the rise in the cost of labour, of building materials and rate of interest to be paid. It is estimated that two-thirds of the cost of a house is expended in labour when account is taken both of labour in making the building materials and the labour actually engaged in the building operations. If we calculate an increase of wages of at least one-third over pre-war prices, it alone will add an increase of rather over one-fifth to the cost of each house. At the present time, building materials and accessories are increased 70 to 100 per cent., and authorities have calculated that the increase is likely to be about 60 per cent. in the year following the war, and at least 30 per cent. even when normal conditions are established. The rate of interest is likely to be about 2 per cent. higher than before the war.

In a valuable memorandum issued by the National Housing and Town Planning Council, (drawn up by Mr. Harold Shawcross and Mr. H. R. Aldridge) dealing with the comparative increased cost of houses from these factors the following figures may be quoted. They deal with the rise in cost of a good quality cottage in a rural area which could be provided by a Local Authority before the war at a cost of £220.

Cost of Construction.		Rate of Interest.			
		3½ per cent.		5½ per cent.	
Basis of Calculation.	Amount.	Yearly Rental.	Weekly Rental.	Yearly Rental.	Weekly Rental.
	£	£ s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
An average pre-war cost ..	220	13 4 0	5 0	18 14 8	7 3
50 per cent. over pre-war cost	325	—	—	26 13 0	10 8
75 per cent. over pre-war cost	377½	—	—	30 14 1	11 10

The £220 is made up of £200 building, £10 land, £10 road, and other development charges. The 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. increase does not include the land, which is assumed to be still £10.

In each case the yearly rent includes allowance for sinking fund, 30 per cent. added for repairs, management, insurance and voids, rates at 4s. in the £ on assessments of £10 (except in the case of £220 at 3½ per cent. when assessed at £8 10s.).

This table shows that a cottage costing £220 before the war could be let at an economic weekly rent of 5s., that increase of rate of interest to 5½ per cent. alone would increase this to 7s. 3d., and that with a 50 and 75 per cent. increase in costs of construction this would be increased to 10s. 3d. and 11s. 10d. respectively.

As the houses constructed immediately after the war may well cost these highest figures, it will be seen that the increased cost will considerably more than double the original rent on an economic basis.

Speaking generally these figures suggest that a rent of from 10s. to 12s. a week per house would have to be obtained to make the houses self-supporting.

(5) *Factors Influencing the Rents Payable in Rural Districts.*—The outstanding factor is the wages likely to be paid. The Corn Production Act gives power to fix a rate of minimum wages and Section 5, Clause (6) states:—

" In fixing minimum rates under this Section, the agricultural Wages Board shall, so far as practicable, secure for able-bodied men wages which, in the opinion of the Board, are adequate to promote efficiency, and to enable a man in an ordinary case to maintain himself and his family in accordance with such standard of comfort as may be reasonable in relation to the nature of his occupation."

With the minimum wage of 25s. mentioned in Clause (7) of Section 5 it is obviously impracticable to obtain a rent of even 8s. per week for a house and, even if wages rise much higher, it is fairly certain that it will be many years before the wages paid will be sufficient to pay an economic rent.

The problem is further complicated by the rents to be paid by non-able-bodied men and those who are not wage earners such as old age pensioners, retired policemen, etc.

The size of the gardens should be a factor in the rent paid as although for example an increase of the area of the land on which the house is built from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acres will raise the rent by 1½d. per week (at £50 per acre) this increase is far less than the increase in value to the labourer.

II.—THE FINANCIAL PROPOSALS OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR DEALING WITH HOUSE PROVISION.

The need for many additional houses and the impracticability of looking to private enterprise to provide them being accepted, it follows that some form of financial assistance must be forthcoming either from the State or the rates.

The Government solution as set out in the letter of March 18th, 1918, of the Local Government Board, is a partnership between the two as regards sharing the cost.

The essential suggestion is the following :—

" The full cost of the scheme should, in the first instance, be met out of funds of the Local Authority by means of a loan to be raised by them and for a period of years, which my Lords think should not be less than seven, the necessary State assistance should be given in the form of a grant of a percentage of the loan charges sufficient to relieve the authority of 75 per cent. of the estimated annual deficit. The deficit in each case should be estimated, with due regard to the actual increase in the cost of construction in the particular locality, on the basis of the estimated annual expenditure and the estimated annual income over a period of years."

" At the end of the period above referred to, the property should be valued, and 75 per cent. of the excess (if any) of the amount of the loan outstanding over the then value of the property should be met by the State, either by writing off a portion of the outstanding liability (if the money was borrowed from State sources), or by the Government undertaking responsibility for the appropriate proportion of the loan charges for the remainder of its currency."

In addition there is a special clause, particularly intended for agricultural areas, under which the Local Government Board :—

" Should have discretion, in cases in which 25 per cent. of the deficit in respect of any scheme would exceed the produce of a rate of a penny in the £ on the area chargeable, to increase the grant beyond 75 per cent., subject to the condition that the amount of the deficit to be borne by the Local Authority shall not be reduced below the produce of a rate of a penny in the pound."

Further clauses explain :—

That it is only in the very exceptional circumstances of the national emergency that the Government are proposing to give substantial financial assistance to Local Authorities for the extension of housing schemes.

That the financial assistance only applies to returns sent in without undue delay, and that (apparently) these grants will not be available for an indefinite period.

That the schemes must be in relation to a particular site, must be commenced within two months from the date of the sanction of the Board to the loan, and must be completed within a year from date of sanction.

Put into simple language it would appear that for approved schemes the Government is prepared to assist financially to the extent of 75 per cent. of the estimated deficiency, while in special cases where the remaining 25 per cent. is more than 1d. rate an additional grant may be made at the discretion of the Board to bring it down to a 1d. rate.

It is important to consider the probable effect of these proposals upon the provision of cottages throughout the country and more particularly in rural areas.

In the first place there are considerable obscurities in the circular which may considerably affect the financial position. At the end of the short loan period (not less than seven years) the property is to be valued and the State is prepared to meet 75 per cent. of the excess of the amount of the loan outstanding over the then value of the property.

The basis of valuation is all important, but is not disclosed. In answer to correspondents who have realised the existing unsatisfactory position the Local Government Board have stated that they propose that an independent valuer should be appointed, and that the basis of valuation should be that between a "willing buyer and a willing seller." If this means that the valuation is to be assessed upon the actual value of the houses based upon the rent which "a willing buyer" of any class would be willing to give (*i.e.*, a basis of rents obtainable for similar houses in the area) then Local Authorities will be heavily penalised since the houses will be priced at a figure which will be considerably above their actual value to the Local Authority, since they will not be able to charge these high rents. The State will only pay over 75 per cent. of the excess of the amount of the loan over the then value of the property, so that the higher the valuation fixed upon the house the less the contribution from the State. The Local Authority will be left with property which will be valued at a figure which may be the true value in the open market but will be below its value to the Local Authority, since they are not selling the houses but will probably have to continue to let them to selected tenants at rents below the market price. The only method of valuation which will be fair to all parties is that the houses should be valued on the basis of the rents which actually will be received.

The subject is intricate, and for a clear statement of its difficulties and importance to Local Authorities the reader is referred to an illuminating memorandum by Messrs. Shawcross and Aldridge, Chairman and Secretary of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, (Memorandum No. 5, Series B. (1918).

Again the 75 per cent. assistance is to be given upon an *estimated* and not an actual deficit and this complicated the financial position. The power to limit the loss on the rural authority to a 1d. rate is merely at the discretion of the Local Government Board, and the mere fact that there is this uncertainty is a powerful deterrent to Rural Local Authorities who invariably look askance upon embarking upon housing schemes with an unknown financial liability.

Even assuming that the obscurities in their meaning will be cleared up on lines favourable to Local Authorities it is to be feared that they are not very likely to have the proposed effect, and to offer any satisfactory solution of the housing shortage and elimination of unfit houses.

Before the war, Local and particularly Rural Sanitary Authorities almost invariably took up the standpoint, actively or passively, that they were not prepared to finance the provision of houses out of the rates. A few of the more progressive were prepared to take the trifling risk of a small addition to the rates having to be made if schemes were not fully self-supporting, but there is scarcely an example of a Rural Sanitary Authority embarking on a housing scheme of their own volition with the full knowledge that there would be an undoubted deficit to be made out of the rates. Housing schemes by Local Authorities are few and far between, and practically all are in areas where for one reason or another it could reasonably be anticipated that economic rents would be obtained.

There is but little evidence pointing to a definite change of attitude on the part of Rural Sanitary Authorities or an increased willingness to burden the rates with an uncertain financial deficiency on housing schemes.

It has been explained that wages are not likely to rise sufficiently to enable the rent of 9s. to 11s. per week to be paid, which will be necessary if the houses are to be self-supporting. It is therefore evident that there must be a considerable loss on housing schemes. If this is the case, it is obvious that to get houses constructed by Local Sanitary Authorities the Government must do one of two things.

(1) Make the financial circumstances so attractive that the reluctance to build will be converted into a willingness to carry out housing construction and schemes.

(2) Take the standpoint that it is the *duty* of Local Authorities to provide houses in their districts if they are required, as much as it is to provide pure water or other public health measures, and that the financial terms offered are a help towards their carrying out this duty and a concession to the special and peculiar circumstances of the case resulting from the war. This standpoint must be made effective by a clear pronouncement that if the Local Authorities, with the aid of this financial help, will not carry out their duties within a definite time, then the work will be placed in the hands of other bodies (Local Government Board or County Council) who will do the work and charge the cost to the Local Authorities who have failed to perform their statutory obligations.

It will be seen that the Government proposals neither fulfil the first nor take the attitude of the second. The Government proposals definitely involve the local rates with a loss on housing schemes which may, however, be limited to a 1d. rate. This loss is not for one or two years only but will be for many years, probably sixty years, certainly thirty years. The revaluation at the end of seven years or other period will not relieve this rate but may increase it, since there will probably be a lowering of value of the houses at the end of this period owing to their being built during an era of excessively high prices.

In addition there is the question of houses built after the subsidy period, which the memorandum definitely states is for a limited period. Further houses may be required several years hence, and it may be impossible for Local Authorities to build them to compete with the subsidy houses without a further loss and consequent additional call on the rates. The proposals definitely eliminate competition from private enterprise for many years to come, so that the Local Authorities must still be looked upon to provide any additional houses required.

The Government proposals certainly do not take the second standpoint. The existing duties of Local Authorities in the direction of constructive housing are very ill-defined (See Chapters II. and VII.), while the powers of coercion are largely illusory.

That this standpoint is not adopted is very clearly shown by the fact that there is no time limit fixed by which schemes are to be prepared, there is no penalty for non-compliance, and nothing is said as to obtaining powers to call upon other bodies to do the work if the Rural and Urban Authorities neglect their duties.

Further the proposals have the objection that the greater the delay in action by Rural Authorities, the less their burden is likely to be. Houses are wanted at once after the conclusion of war, yet the longer the delay in building the lower the cost is likely to be, due to the falling of construction costs towards normal prices. There is no reward for promptness, no punishment in the way of lessened grant for delay.

In view of these considerations it is to be feared that these financial proposals will not have the effect looked for, especially in rural districts. Local Authorities will still tend to minimise their needs, to fail to close unfit houses and generally to keep down their schemes to the smallest possible, and to carry them out with the greatest possible delay.

It may also be mentioned that no added facilities are given to acquire sites as required and at reasonable prices and this may be a considerable difficulty even in purely rural parishes.

There is further no hint that the most undesirable practice, which so largely prevails with the direct assistance of the Local Government Board, of charging losses on housing schemes on the parish instead of on the whole rural district will be modified or altered. The circular uses the expression "the area chargeable," without any further definition.

Nothing is said about assisting Public Utility Societies and how far they may benefit by the terms offered.

The matter may, however, be looked at from a more favourable point of view if two postulates could be granted (a) that the Local Government Board would be prepared to state that in rural and small urban areas they would definitely agree that liability should be limited to a 1d. rate, and (b) that with this guarantee the Local Authorities would be prepared to finance housing schemes, provided they did not involve more than 1d. on their general district rates (not on individual parishes.)

There is yet another angle from which the matter may be considered. Personally the writer feels that the present should be an unique opportunity to put the whole housing question upon

a satisfactory basis, an opportunity which is unlikely to occur again. The subject is bound up with other broad general considerations which make the whole problem one which can only be solved in a satisfactory manner, if treated as a whole. Such questions are the provision of additional main and smaller roads, urban and rural planning and the development of industry, agricultural and industrial. To treat each small urban and rural authority as if each could live to itself alone, and to invite them to consider their housing needs as separate entities bearing no relation to one another, is to lose a golden opportunity of reorganisation. This is emphatically a problem for large administration bodies such as County Councils.

One plan would be for the County Council to utilise the county rates up to 1d. in the pound for this purpose, and this would probably be nearly sufficient, with the Government subsidy, to put the housing in their area upon a satisfactory footing. This might, however, be inequitable in its incidence and a better procedure would be for the County Council to settle the houses required, and to charge the expenses to be paid to the Local Sanitary Authorities who would then own the houses. The former plan could be done without fresh legislation under Section 13 of the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909, with the consent of the Board, but the latter would require legal sanction. Section 13, unless applied over the whole county is such a stupid section that it is useless.

The writer considers that the proposal of the National Housing and Town Plan Council as introduced at the various conferences held under their auspices would not only be by far more acceptable to Local Authorities and in consequence obtained a readier response, but in the end would not be more costly to the Central Authority. The proposal which received most support at these important conferences was:—

“That a grant be made of the whole of the difference between the actual cost of approved schemes, and the pre-war cost leaving the Local Authorities to deal, by means of increased rents or otherwise, with the added charge due to higher rates of interest. Further that for rural districts and for ‘necessitous urban areas,’ the Government should make additional grants in cases of approved schemes.”

There are three other points which merit careful consideration.

Effect of a Permanent Housing Subsidy.—Unless economic rents can be obtained which seems unlikely, the present form of assistance offered is a subsidy to wages, and has all the disadvantages of such an arrangement, as explained on page 276. A temporary subsidy was an urgent necessity before the war, and may now be said to be an absolute necessity to solve the immediate problem, but that is a very different thing to a permanent subsidy. It is to be hoped that when the prices of building material come down materially, it will be possible to again build houses to be let at an economic rent.

Sites.—The difficulty of obtaining sites has not been removed or diminished by the Government financial proposals, and no steps have been taken to facilitate and cheapen the requisition of sites, a matter of very great practical importance.

It is not realised what an important part this question of sites plays in rural housing. It puts into the hand of one or two individuals the power to block housing schemes and is widely used. What happens is that the parish fearful of a local housing rate is afraid of advocating houses. The local landowners are either averse to more houses or are willing to obtain a cheap popularity locally, and refuse to sell suitable land. This blocks the scheme as the arbitration powers are too costly to be worked.

If the Local Government Board would only interpret Section 31 of the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act 1909, as Parliament evidently intended it to be interpreted most of this and a good many other rural housing difficulties would disappear. The demand for houses in a parish is quenched because the Rural District Council take the line (and generally gets the Board to take this view) that the charge for the scheme is on the parish and not on the district as a whole. Remove this and enforce Section 31 as in the Act, making the charge on the parish the rare exception, and there would be a plentiful application for houses and a free offer of sites for most of the parishes needing them; at any rate as soon as one scheme in that rural district had been put in hand.

Anyone acquainted with the psychology of the minds of members of Parish Councils and

Rural Sanitary Authorities will realise the enormous importance of this point, and indeed, it is at the root of the whole problem in rural areas.

If Rural Housing Authorities could be assured that their losses upon Housing schemes would be limited to the produce of a penny rate, which they would invariably be required to levy upon the whole of their area, the difficulties in the way of adequate housing provision in rural areas would largely disappear. Such a limitation to a penny rate is of course an inducement to Local Authorities to fix the rents required at an unnecessarily low figure, and the Local Government Board would have to be protected from this tendency by being given ample powers to see that the rents charged were as high as could reasonably be obtained in the locality.

Rents of Existing Houses.—One point which is not at all clear is as to the rents which will be charged for the new subsidy houses. Presumably as high a rent as is likely to be obtainable will be charged. While this is hardly likely to be an economic rent, it will probably be well above the current rate ruling in the locality, and will set a new standard as to rents. These houses will not compete with the existing houses for it will almost certainly be the case that there will be only just enough houses to go round. With the increased wages paid, will follow an increased ability to pay a rent higher than before the war and probably a large proportion of house-owners will raise their rents. They will take the standpoint that before the war their rents represented an unremunerative investment, and that even the increased rents will give them a rate of profit markedly below other classes of investment. Also costs of repairs, etc. will be higher. It is a matter of considerable practical importance to consider whether such increased rents should be permitted or what, if any, action should be taken.

A considerable proportion of these houses are of very poor quality and to allow owners to profit by the existing shortage and other conditions arising out of the war which prevent private enterprise from filling the gap savours to the writer of a bad type of war profiteering. These cottages are not worth more than the pre-war rents, and the increased profits are snatched at the expense of the higher agricultural wages which again are largely paid for by the increased cost of food which falls upon the consumers generally and with greatest severity upon the workers in the large towns.

On the other hand where there are cottages of good type built by landowners and others often at pecuniary loss and without regard to profits it seems not unreasonable that these should share in the general rise. In the writer's view this seems an excellent opportunity to deal with these existing houses and get Sections 14, 15, and other Sections of the Housing Act, 1909, which have hitherto been largely a dead letter property enforced.

All the existing houses should be graded into three classes :—

Class A.—Passed as fully satisfactory—allowed to charge any rent obtainable.

Class B.—In good condition, but not up to modern standards. Not legally "unfit for habitation." Could be improved by expenditure. To be allowed some definite increase of rent.

Class C.—Structurally defective, of very poor quality, and only allowed to be occupied because of existing scarcity or because suitable for old single couples, etc. No increase of rent allowed, apart from any to cover cost of prescribed works.

Houses classed in a lower grade could be transferred to a higher if the work done to improve them justified the transfer, and this would act as a direct stimulus to houseowners to improve their property.

The grading should be done by the Local Authorities with an appeal to the County Council or Local Government Board, preferably the former, whose decision should be final, unless a further right of appeal is allowed to the Local Government Board over the County Council.

As the grading must of necessity take some time all the houses except those known to be *Class C.*, should be provisionally classed as *Class B.*, but this provisional classification not to be extended beyond two years.

The chief difficulty in the way would be the incapacity in housing matters of a good many of the Officers of Rural Sanitary Authorities but this could be got over by empowering County Councils to appoint trained housing inspectors to supervise. There would have to be a provision for re-grading periodically.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL
HOUSING PROBLEM

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RURAL HOUSING

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL HOUSING PROBLEM

THAT the housing of the rural labourer is a problem few will deny. It is admitted by all responsible authorities; the differences of opinion occur as to the proper methods of solution.

To obtain a clear understanding of this problem—as for all social questions—it is necessary to study the historical aspect and trace the causes which have led to its development. For the following account the writer makes no pretence to originality, but is indebted to a number of valuable books and special Government reports on the subject.

The first part of the eighteenth century, before the enclosures, appears to have been the most prosperous for the English peasant. Dunlop* states that there were three primary elements in his prosperity, *i.e.* :

(a) The existence of wide areas of common pasture land ;

* *The Farm Labourer*. T. Fisher Unwin. 1913.

(b) The possession of various openings for his labour and consequently various sources of income ;

(c) A great multiplicity in the uses of agricultural holdings, involving a great variety of social grades and opportunities of rising in life.

Judged by modern standards, the quality of the houses of the agricultural labourer must always have been poor and insanitary. So indeed were many, if not most, of the larger houses ; but those of the labourer, rural and urban, must have been especially insanitary, although, no doubt, very considerable variations were met with. In particular, great variations would be noticeable between the general quality of the cottages in the primary villages and those which had been built outside (" closed " and " open " villages).

The English village developed out of the manor, the landlord, large tenants and labourers all forming one organisation of labour. The village was inhabited by the manorial lord and his tenants. The cottages in the village were erected by the lord of the manor for the use of his servants and his tenants and their servants. These facts remained generally true even after the break up of the manorial system.

Between the different manors stretched extensive tracts of uncultivated and uncleared land. In

these tracts outside the village community settlers gradually built houses, forming a class frequently spoken of as squatters. They built themselves houses upon the commons, or in the woods, usually some distance away from the villages, and often cleared land in the vicinity of their houses. As Hasbach* remarks :

“ It is clear that while some of them could show a title by prescription most were possessed of no right at all.”

It is evident from recorded information that a large proportion of the squatters' cottages were very deplorable habitations structurally, though many were redeemed to some extent by having land attached to them. The cottages in the villages proper were, for the most part, built by men with money to command and so presumably would be, and undoubtedly were in fact, both better built and maintained in better condition. Overcrowding was prevalent in both classes, certainly in later times.

The development of the rural labourer as he now exists may be said to have started about the time of the accession of George III (1760). As Dunlop says (*loc. cit.*, p. 16) :

“ First the labourer lost the commons which had been a mainstay of his existence ; then he lost his home manufactures. He became a

* *A History of the English Agricultural Labourer.* 1908.

member of a mere proletariat, dependent upon wages which did not rise sufficiently to compensate him for the loss of his other sources of income."

The enclosure of the commons and their effect on the rural labourer is a well-worn subject upon which it is not necessary to dwell, apart from drawing attention to its very important influence upon the development of the housing question.

The altered conditions led to a considerable migration from the country districts, due partly to widespread discontent with the existing conditions and prospects, partly to the fact that less labour was required for the cultivation of the land under the new conditions of farming.

From 1760 to 1790 and later, many of the cottages were pulled down. The factors which led to this are clearly stated by Dunlop (*loc. cit.*, p. 46) :

"The large farmer, who threw, perhaps, half-a-dozen farms together, pulled down many of the cottages, or allowed them to fall into ruin, maintaining only sufficient house room for his own labourers, whom he frequently crowded into the old farm houses. Such a policy enabled him to throw the land attached to cottages into his farm, reduced the expenses of repairs, and saved him in poor rates. The rise in poor rates, consequent upon the loss of the labourer's stock and common rights, played

a very important part in the new deficiencies of housing. So heavy were they, that the opportunity of saving expense in rates by decreasing the number of possible paupers was a real inducement upon landlords to pull down or shut up cottages."

In Tudor times the evil of diminishing the rural houses was clearly recognised, and in a series of Depopulation Acts very severe penalties could be inflicted upon landowners who converted arable land into pasture or who allowed agricultural labourers' cottages to fall into decay. Such landlords had to have the land tilled again and the cottages rebuilt and relet. Apparently these Acts had fallen into disuse.

After the enclosures and the alteration of the economic basis of the rural population which they involved, the condition of the English peasant became a very unsatisfactory one and, as is well known, the Poor Law had to step in and give him financial assistance, an arrangement which, by offering a palliative without affecting the causes bringing about the condition, aggravated the evil instead of solving it. Naturally the labourer's cottage deteriorated with his social deterioration.

The low wages given were insufficient to maintain the labourer, and the remedy which was adopted was a system of allowances from the Poor Law. Each able-bodied labourer had an allowance made him

according to the number of his family. The famous Speenhamland system was adopted by the magistrates at Speenhamland in Berkshire in 1795 and spread rapidly. A wages scale was drawn up based upon the size of a man's family and the price of bread. If the wages received fell below this minimum income the deficiency was made up by an allowance from the rates. Inevitably the Poor Rate rose enormously. This was levied on the *parish*, and in the "close" parishes led many landlords to diminish their liabilities by demolishing as many cottages as possible. The erection of new cottages would be discouraged. One effect of this was to drive many persons into the "open" parishes, causing overcrowding and the erection of many houses on pieces of waste land and wherever they could be crowded in. They were built and owned by landlords who provided them as a business speculation, and the higher the rent and the less done to them by way of repairs the greater the profit. Naturally many were of a very poor quality. Groups of houses of this character are often found in country villages at the present time.

The Unions Chargeability Act of 1865 equalised rates throughout the Poor Law Union, thus bringing to an end the inducement to limit the houses in the "close" parishes.

A very interesting illustration showing the comparative growth of "open" and "closed" villages is quoted by Hasbach (*loc. cit.*, p. 195) and is given

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in the following table, which deals with six neighbouring Norfolk villages :

TABLE I

Villages.	Condition.	1801.		1821.	
		In-habited Houses.	Popula-tion.	In-habited Houses.	Popula-tion.
Lakenham - -	" Open "	84	428	403	1,875
Caistor - -	" Close "	25	206	38	164
Markshall - -	"	2	18	3	23
Keswick - -	"	11	67	14	104
Stoke Holy Cross -	"	45	224	55	303
Trowse Newton -	"	86	428	130	549

Villages.	Condition.	1831.		1841.	
		In-habited Houses.	Popula-tion.	In-habited Houses.	Popula-tion.
Lakenham - -	" Open "	917	3,810	973	4,006
Caistor - -	" Close "	45	193	35	147
Markshall - -	"	4	32	4	24
Keswick - -	"	21	120	21	117
Stoke Holy Cross -	"	66	350	86	453
Trowse Newton -	"	129	583	132	562

The important influence upon the housing question of a high poor rate and the method of charging it upon the parish is again and again emphasised by Dr. John Simon (later Sir J. Simon) in his Seventh Report as Medical Officer to the Privy Council, published in 1864. This report contains and deals with

a special investigation by Dr. Hunter on rural housing.* Hunter examined 5,375 occupied houses. Simon states the case in his characteristically illuminating manner. As he puts it, under the influence of the Poor Law provision concerning settlement and chargeability, each parish has a pecuniary interest in reducing to a minimum the number of its resident labourers.

“ In parishes where property is much subdivided, this relation between poor rates and resident labourers may be but indistinctly felt, or however much felt, would be recognised as an infliction which cannot be easily evaded. But large proprietors feel the burden very definitely and considerably, and while feeling it, cannot but know that they have facilities, which are deemed not to be illegal, for shifting it away from themselves. They have but to resolve that there shall be no labourers' dwellings on their estates and their estates will thenceforth be virtually free from half their responsibility for the poor.”

Hunter's report contains numerous instances of this practice, showing how the population had increased while the actual number of houses had diminished. The following almost taken at random may be mentioned :

* Appendix 6, *Inquiry on the state of the Dwellings of Rural Labourers*, by Dr. H. J. Hunter.

At Gayhurst (Bucks.), where in 1851 88 persons occupied 23 houses, in 1861 129 persons occupied only 21 houses. "In 19 of the Dorsetshire parishes the cots have been destroyed in the face of an increasing population." In 1851 there were 7,971 residents in 1,783 houses, while in 1861 there were 8,480 residents in 1,677 houses. Of these parishes the most striking instance was Charlton Marshall, where, of 167 houses standing in 1851, only 124 remained in 1861, while the number of occupants rose from 463 to 553.

In Somerset, in the 55 parishes investigated, there was an increase of 2,018 persons, with a decrease of 325 in the number of houses, and the people who were 4.5 to a house in 1851 were 4.9 per house in 1861. In a place like Bruton, for example, the two census returns showed an increase of persons from 1,885 to 2,023, and a decrease of houses from 427 to 417.

The wholesale destruction of houses led to very deplorable and hasty housing in the "open" villages. Simon states:

"In the open village, cottage speculators buy scraps of land which they throng as densely as they can with the cheapest of all possible hovels, and into these wretched habitations (which even if they adjoin the open country have some of the worst features of the worst town residences) crowd the agricultural labourers of England."

Hunter, discussing the "open" village, says :

"The labourers' houses are usually in rows, built with their backs against the extreme edge of the plot of land which the builder could call his run, and on this account are not allowed light or air, except from the front."

Naturally overcrowding of the most gross and appalling character was rife. Hunter's report is full of it and the following are but two instances : In Bedfordshire in the straw plaiting district he instances 150 houses visited ; of these 94 had but one bedroom, and in these 94 were 264 adults and 210 children. In a ganging district in Lincolnshire (*i.e.* Langtoft) in 12 houses in a row, each had but one bedroom (12 ft. 2 in. by 9 ft. 5 in.), and these twelve bedrooms were occupied by 38 adults and 36 children.

The overcrowding was aggravated by the great prevalence of one and two bedroom cottages. Of the 5,375 houses inspected, no less than 2,195 (40·8 per cent.) had but one bedroom, 2,930 had two bedrooms (54·5 per cent.), while only 250 (4·7 per cent.) had more than two bedrooms. The report however does not state how far smaller houses only were selected for inspection. The number of persons in these 5,375 houses were 24,770, consisting of 13,432 adults and 11,338 children, equal to 4·6 persons per house or 2·8 to a bedroom. In the single bedroom houses there were no less than 4

persons for each bedroom, made up of 2·2 adults and 1·8 children.

Simon evidently considered that the state of the agricultural labourer as regards housing was at this time worse than in previous years, for he remarks that the state of the labourer in this respect had greatly deteriorated,

“ house-room being now greatly more difficult for him to find, and when found, greatly less suitable to his needs, than perhaps for centuries has been the case. Especially within the last twenty or thirty years the evil has been in very rapid increase, and the household circumstances of the labourer are in the highest degree deplorable.”

Evidence of the very bad existing housing conditions is also abundant in an earlier Report,* published in 1842, of which Chadwick (afterwards Sir Edward Chadwick, and one of the great pioneers of public health) was the secretary. The following are typical descriptions :

“ The cottages of the poor are mostly of a bad description, frequently mud floor, and often situated close to the dykes, where the water for the most part is in a state of stagnation.

* “ Report from the Poor Law Commissioners on an inquiry into the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain.” 1842.

Oftentimes not more than one room for the whole family ; sometimes two, one above the other ; with the really poor, the latter is seldom to be met with. . . . The accumulation of filth is attributable to the want of proper receptacles for refuse, and the indolent and filthy disposition of the inhabitants ; in no instance have such places been provided. The floors are seldom or never scrubbed. . . . The windows are kept air-tight by the stuffing of some old garment, and every article for use is kept in the same room. The necessary is close to the building, where all have access, and producing a most intolerable nuisance."

In another district the Medical Officer of the Union states :

"The state of some of the dwellings of the poor is most deplorable as it regards their health, and also in a moral point of view. As it relates to the former, many of their cottages are neither wind nor water-tight. It has often fallen to my lot to be called on to attend a labourer when the wet has been running down the walls, and light to be distinguished through the roof."

In another rural area we are told :

"Most of the cottages are of the worst description, some mere mud hovels, and

situated in low and damp places with cesspools or accumulations of filth close to the doors. The *mud floors* of many are much below the level of the road, and in wet seasons are little better than so much clay."

The whole Report bears eloquent testimony to the deplorable conditions of rural housing, and the nearly universal indifference exhibited by private owner and public authority. The associated prevalence of fevers of all kinds, and other forms of disease, is again and again described.

The Reports of the Commission of 1867 furnish further information in regard to the bad condition of rural housing, as well as abundant evidence as to the very bad conditions under which the agricultural labourer lived. Since the period is nearly identical with that covered by Sir John Simon's inquiry, dealt with above, it is unnecessary to give further details.

The Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, issued in 1885, shows that at that date the conditions were only slightly improved compared with those of 1867.

A study of the volumes devoted to the agricultural labourer by the Royal Commission on Labour, issued in 1893-94, shows that, while the conditions were still very unsatisfactory, on the whole there had been a distinct improvement between 1885 and

1895. The Report of Mr. Little* in particular puts the matter very clearly. His general conclusions are as follows :

“ The supply of cottages is not now generally defective in respect of numbers, owing partly to the decrease in the rural population, and partly to the large number of cottages which have been built by large landowners and others who can afford to build without an expectation of a profitable return for their outlay.

“ The distribution of cottages is irregular and their situation often very inconvenient for the inhabitants.

“ The accommodation provided in respect of the number, size and comfort of the rooms, the sanitary condition, and the water supply are lamentably deficient generally, and require amendment.

“ The action of the local sanitary authority, though vigorous in some districts, is, in many places, ineffective, and it is everywhere impeded, and sometimes arrested, by the knowledge that the owners of insanitary dwellings have not the means to remedy the defects, and that the consequences of closing such dwellings would be to make the present inhabitants homeless.

* Royal Commission on Labour. Vol. V., Part I., “ General Report by Mr. William Little, Senior Assistant Agricultural Commissioner, 1894.”

“The rent which is received for cottage property in rural districts is not sufficient to make the building of good cottages directly profitable.

“That rent has generally no relation to the size of the cottage, the cost of its construction, the accommodation which it affords, its condition as regards repair or sanitary arrangements, or to the earnings of the occupier.”

Many of those conclusions are equally applicable to-day, and show how little the problem has advanced since 1894.

The same relationship between the quality of the cottages in “open” and “closed” villages described above is noted as existing :

“As a rule, when a village belongs entirely or chiefly to one landowner, the cottages compare very favourably with those of ‘open’ villages, where the property is divided and no one person has a feeling of paramount responsibility with respect to the village.

“Invariably the worst specimens of cottages are those which have been built by squatters on ‘wastes,’ cottages which are leaseholds, and those which belong to the parish.”

The rents paid twenty years ago were very much the same as now paid, on the whole perhaps a little lower. Mr. Little states :

“ The rent paid for cottages hired by labourers varies from 9d. to 7s. a week, the most usual sum charged being apparently about 1s. 6d. a week, or £4 a year.”

The individual reports show that considerable variations existed in different districts.

The next Report of special importance is the Report of the Select Committee on Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill, issued in 1906. This committee was especially impressed with the need for more cottages. They reported :

“ The Committee have had abundant evidence before them as to the insufficiency of cottages in rural districts. . . . The house famine in town and country which often exists in regard to the working classes is incontestable.”

They also found that there was no lack of evidence that much of the existing cottage property was in an unsanitary and indeed deplorable condition.

As will be explained in subsequent chapters, the housing question to-day is even more a question of sufficiency of houses than it is one of the quality of those existing, and to complete the historical side of the subject a few particulars as to the variations which have taken place in the rural population are of interest.

The following table shows the variations in Urban and Rural populations since 1851.

TABLE II

CENSUS RETURNS, ENGLAND AND WALES, 1851-1911, URBAN AND RURAL POPULATIONS.*

Year.	Population.			Percentage Proportion to Total Population of England and Wales.	
	England and Wales.	Urban Districts (as existing at each Census).	Rural Districts (as existing at each Census).	Urban Districts.	Rural Districts.
1851	17,927,609	8,990,809	8,936,800	50·2	49·8
1861	20,066,224	10,960,998	9,105,226	54·6	45·4
1871	22,712,266	14,041,404	8,670,862	61·8	38·2
1881	25,974,439	17,636,646	8,337,793	67·9	32·1
1891	29,002,525	20,895,504	8,107,021	72·0	28·0
1901	32,527,843	25,058,355	7,469,488	77·0	23·0
1911	36,074,492	28,162,936	7,907,556	78·1	21·9

* As arranged for the Harben Report on Rural Reform, 1913.

This table shows that, while the total population has more than doubled between 1851 and 1911, the population of the rural districts has declined by more than a million. Great as is this decline it does not disclose the whole of the deplorable diminution in the countryside. Many so-called "rural" districts are partly urban in character, and include small towns, and, in particular, semi-urban districts in the vicinity of the large towns. In many of the former to a slight extent, and in most of the latter to a marked degree, the population has

increased, although none of it is really rural. This increase tends to mask the large decrease in the purely rural parishes, so that in the latter the decrease has really been much greater than that shown in the table.

The decline is most marked between 1861 and 1871, for the reasons described above, and between 1891 and 1901, while, as the above table shows, there was an actual rise of over 430,000 between 1901 and 1911, when the urban and rural districts (defined as such) are considered. When, however, actual rural populations are considered it will be found that the decline has continued.

To illustrate this and other points I have dissected out and carefully compared the variations in population extending over twenty years in all the individual parishes in a typical rural county—Somerset. The results are shown in Table III.

The census population for the rural and urban districts of Somerset in the Administrative County (*i.e.*, excluding the County Borough of Bath) are :

		Rural.	Urban.	Total.
1891	- -	261,005	125,270	386,275
1901	- -	241,702	143,399	385,101
1911	- -	231,491	157,356	388,847

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TABLE III.

Population variations within twenty years in individual Parishes in Somerset, 1891-1911.	Rural Districts.													All Rural Districts.					
	Axbridge.	Bath.	Bridgwater.	Chard.	Clutton.	Dulverton.	Frome.	Keynsham.	Langport.	Long Ashton.	Shepton Mallet.	Taunton.	Wellington.	Wells.	Williton.	Wincanton.	Yeovil.	Totals.	Per- centage of each group.
Increase or decrease not over 12 -	8	4	10	6	2	1	5	5	1	6	5	8	4	2	4	6	8	85	19
Slight decrease (12-25) -	2	2	4	5	2	5	3	1	3	2	3	5	5	1	7	9	7	66	15
Fair " (25-50) -	6	1	7	6	4	1	4	2	9	2	9	8	3	4	7	7	3	83	19
Considerable " (50-100) -	4	2	10	7	3	4	6	1	7	2	0	4	2	2	9	6	7	74	17
Marked " (over 100) -	5	2	4	4	0	0	5	1	3	1	1	4	2	4	3	5	8	52	12
Slight increase (12-25) -	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	21	5
Fair " (25-50) -	3	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	1	2	17	4
Considerable " (50-100) -	2	0	0	0	3	0	1	2	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	15	3
Marked " (over 100) -	4	4	1	2	7	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	28	6
Not calculable owing to boundary alterations between census periods - - - - -	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	15	-
Total Parishes - - - - -	37	18	39	32	25	13	28	14	27	21	24	37	17	14	34	37	39	456	-

Table III shows that in 19 per cent. of the parishes the population was practically unaltered, in 63 per cent. there was a decrease of population, while in 18 per cent. there was an increase.

This decline in such a preponderating number of parishes is not brought out when the total rural populations are considered.

A study of the twenty-eight parishes in which an increase of over 100 in the population has taken place within the past twenty years brings out the following causes of increase :

Immediate proximity to a town	-	-	12
Development of coal mining	-	-	10
Presence of large institution (asylum)	-		1
Development as a residential area-	-		1
A small town extending as a holiday resort	-	-	1
Parish developing as a country town	-		1
Railway developments	-	-	2

These figures show that practically every case of material increase of a rural parish population in Somerset is due either to industrial development (in this case coal mining), or to housing developments upon the fringe of the towns, although actually in parishes reckoned as part of the rural districts.

Practically all the purely agricultural villages have declined in population, often to a marked extent.

The fifty-two parishes showing a marked decline are for the most part agricultural parishes.

The great decline in the agricultural population is further shown by consideration of those engaged in agriculture as given in the census returns.

TABLE IV

NUMBER ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE, ENGLAND AND WALES,
1831-1901*

Census Year.	Males engaged in Agriculture.	Proportion per cent. of Total Males aged 10 and upwards.	Females engaged in Agriculture.	Proportion per cent. of Total Females aged 10 and upwards.
1831	—	31·51	—	—
1841	—	25·93	—	—
1851	1,544,087	23·5	168,652	2·4
1861	1,539,965	21·2	115,213	1·5
1871	1,371,304	16·8	85,967	1·0
1881	1,288,173	13·8	64,216	0·6
1891	1,233,936	11·6	51,045	0·4
1901	1,153,185	9·5	38,985	0·3

* *The Progress of the Nation*, by G. R. Porter. 1912.

When the number of "Agricultural Labourers and Shepherds" are separately considered the decline is still more evident :

1851	-	-	-	-	-	1,110,311
1861	-	-	-	-	-	1,098,261
1871	-	-	-	-	-	923,332
1881	-	-	-	-	-	830,452
1891	-	-	-	-	-	756,557
1901	-	-	-	-	-	609,105

This is also shown in the following table :

TABLE V.

ENGLAND AND WALES. MALES. PROPORTION PER MILLION OF POPULATION AGED 10 YEARS AND UPWARDS ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE.*

Occupation.	1881.	1891.	1901.
Farmers, Graziers - - - - -	21,831	19,063	16,709
Farmers, sons or other relatives assisting in the work of the Farm - - - - -	8,074	6,353	7,348
Farm Bailiffs, Foremen - - - - -	2,080	1,719	1,864
Shepherds - - - - -	2,453	2,037	2,089
Agricultural Labourers, Farm Servants -	86,713	69,390	48,109
Domestic Gardeners, Gardeners, Nursery- men, Seedsmen, Florists - - - - -	15,584	16,455	17,391
Others - - - - -	1,592	1,496	2,000
Total engaged in Agriculture -	138,327	116,513	95,510

* Census, 1901, General Report with Appendices. 1904. Cd. 2174.

The above brief summary shows that the problem of rural housing is no new development of modern life, although as it presents itself to us to-day it has developed certain qualities which were not frequent in earlier decades.

To-day the fundamental factors are an actual shortage in very many of our rural parishes of cottages of any quality—good, bad or indifferent—a higher standard of life, a quickened sanitary conscience which declares that many of the existing cottages are insanitary and unfit to live in (the destruction of which would increase the shortage), and a nearly total cessation of building of cottages in purely rural areas, due to the inability to build at a figure which will secure an economic rent.

RURAL HOUSING LAWS



CHAPTER II

RURAL HOUSING LAWS

THE object of the present chapter is to give an outline free from technicalities of the legal responsibilities of the different public authorities as regards rural housing. In a later chapter is discussed the reasons why these powers have not been more effective.

As shown in Chapter I, the evils of rural housing were abundantly demonstrated in official reports as early as 1842 and 1864, but no effective steps were taken to deal with defective rural housing until the passage of the 1890 Housing Act, although the 1885 Housing Act extended certain urban powers to rural districts. The 1890 and 1909 Acts are the essential Housing Acts. Even after the 1890 Act sanitary reformers for a good many years largely concentrated their attention upon the evils of urban housing, the conditions of which were certainly bad enough to warrant any amount of investigation, and rural housing has only comparatively recently received the degree of attention which its importance warrants.

Of legal powers earlier than 1890 dealing with houses, the most important are a few sections of the 1875 Public Health Act. Section 91 defines certain

conditions which are deemed to be nuisances and these include : (1) Any premises in such a state as to be a nuisance or injurious to health ; (2) Any house or part of a house so overcrowded as to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the inmates, whether or not members of the same family.

Section 92 makes it the duty of every local authority to cause to be made from time to time inspection of their district, with a view to ascertain what nuisances exist calling for abatement and to enforce the provisions of this Act in order to abate the same.

Subsequent sections deal with the methods of abatement to be adopted, while Section 97 specifically deals with unfit houses. Section 97 enacts that where the nuisance proved to exist is such as to render a house or building in the judgment of the court unfit for human habitation, the court may prohibit the using thereof for that purpose until, in its judgment, the house or building is rendered fit for that purpose.

The Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, was a definite attempt to grapple with the problems of bad housing, but was especially directed against housing evils in towns. It has three essential parts : Part I., which deals with unhealthy areas and does not apply to rural districts ; Part II., which deals with unhealthy dwelling houses ; and Part III., which gives local authorities power to provide houses.

Part II. contains very valuable powers and provisions. This part of the Act places upon Local Authorities the general duty of the detection and condemnation of unfit houses. Section 32 provides :

“ It shall be the duty of every Local Authority to cause to be made from time to time inspection of their district with a view to ascertain whether any dwelling house therein is in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation.”

This and other sections provide for measures being taken to secure the closure, and if necessary the demolition of such houses.

Sections also provide that specially defective houses shall be brought to the notice of the Local Authority. Thus Section 31 gives four or more local householders powers of complaint in regard to alleged unfit houses, while Section 30 enacts :

“ It shall be the duty of the Medical Officer of Health of every district to represent to the Local Authority of that district any dwelling-house which appears to him to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation.”

Section 52 enacts that a representation from the County Medical Officer of Health, transmitted by his County Council to the Local Authority, shall have

the same effect as if made by the District Medical Officer of Health under Section 30.

The remaining clause of importance, Section 45, gives County Councils considerable powers of intervention, and is more conveniently considered with the other County Council powers.

Part III. is constructional, and gives Local Authorities power to provide houses. As enacted this part could only be put in force in rural districts after it had been adopted by the District Council, and after several formalities had been carried out, such as the consent of the County Council.

The 1909 Housing Act makes this part to take effect without adoption.

Part III. of the Act of 1890 empowers Local Authorities to acquire land and to erect buildings suitable for dwelling houses for the working classes, and to convert any buildings into such dwelling houses.

Section 59 empowers the Local Authority not only to erect new buildings, but to purchase and convert existing houses with a view to making them suitable for working-class dwellings, etc.

This power appears to have been but very little used by Local Authorities. Probably this is largely due to the fact that the loans for repayment would be only given for short periods, so that taking this and the heavy cost of reconstruction, the proceedings would be as expensive as a new housing scheme.

It is a difficult and expensive business to convert an old insanitary cottage into a satisfactory dwelling-house, and the Local Government Board apparently does not favour the procedure.

Section 67 gives the Public Works Loan Commissioners power to make advances for forty years. The term of borrowing is extended to eighty years by Section I. of the Act of 1903.

The powers for the compulsory acquisition of land were very unsatisfactory, and were only resorted to by Local Authorities in an extremely small number of cases. They have been extensively altered by the Act of 1909.

Part III. was unsatisfactory in many of its powers and provisions. Its adoption was purely permissive, and as far as rural areas were concerned it effected practically nothing, being adopted by only eight rural authorities in the whole of the nineteen years it was operative in its permissive form.

The Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909, represents a great advance in administrative procedure, and it is important to have clear ideas as to what it is intended to effect.

From the inspection side the most important feature of this Act is that it provides for a thorough survey of rural houses. Section 32 of the 1890 Act is withdrawn, and a much more definite section (Section 17) takes its place on the Statute Book. Section 17, sub-section (1) states :

“ It shall be the duty of every Local Authority within the meaning of Part II. of the principal Act to cause to be made from time to time inspection of their district, with a view to ascertain whether any dwelling-house therein is in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation, and for that purpose it shall be the duty of the Local Authority and of every officer of the Local Authority, to comply with such regulations and to keep such records as may be prescribed by the Board.”

In pursuance of their powers the Local Government Board have issued (September, 1910) very definite regulations—The Housing (Inspection of Districts) Regulations, 1910. Stated briefly, they require that the Local Authority shall arrange for the following :

(a) Establish a definite procedure to carry out the inspection of their district as required by Section 17 of the 1909 Act.

(b) Make provision for a thorough inspection to be carried out from time to time, according to the varying needs or circumstances, of the dwelling-houses or localities in the district of the local authority.

(c) Cause to be prepared from time to time by the Medical Officer of Health, or by an officer designated by them but acting under his

direction and supervision, a list or lists of dwelling-houses the early inspection of which is desirable in the opinion of the Medical Officer of Health.

(*d*) Arrange that the records of the inspections are to be detailed and include certain specific information. This is effected by the Board specifying the matters which must be investigated and the form of records which must be kept.

(*e*) Arrange to regularly take the housing records into consideration and take the necessary steps required.

The regulations also require that the Medical Officer of Health shall deal with housing defects in a specific manner in his annual reports recording the work done.

Here, for the first time, it is laid down that a systematic housing survey should be made in accord with definite regulations and that administrative machinery should be adopted for bringing the results before the local authority.

This Act also simplifies the machinery for dealing with unfit houses. Under the 1890 Act, Closing Orders were made by a Court of Summary Jurisdiction; under the 1909 Act (Section 17 (2)) they are made by the Local Authority itself, the owner being given a right of appeal to the Local Government Board.

A difficulty under the old Acts was the persistence of unsightly closed houses which sometimes became the resort of undesirable persons. Section 18 requires that when a closing order has remained operative for a period of three months, the local authority *shall* take into consideration the question of the dwelling-house, and if it has not or will not soon be made fit they must proceed to order its demolition.

An important proviso is contained in Section 14, which enacts that in any contract, made after the passing of the Act, for letting for habitation a house or part of a house at a rent not exceeding £16 in a rural district, there shall be implied a condition that the house is at the commencement of the holding in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation with the following exception :

“ When a house or part of a house is let for a term of not less than three years upon the terms that it be put by the lessee into a condition reasonably fit for occupation, and the lease is not determinable at the option of either party before the expiration of that term.”

This section is an extension of Section 75 of the principal Housing Act, *i.e.*, the Act of 1890. Section 15 establishes a new and important principle in regard to contracts for letting houses to which Section 14 applies. It is designed to secure that the houses shall, during the holding, be kept by the landlord in all respects reasonably fit for human

habitation, and it provides machinery for remedying any default on the part of the landlord in this respect. Sub-section (3) makes it the duty of the Rural Council, if they think this implied condition is not complied with, to require the landlord to execute the necessary works and, if he does not comply, to themselves carry out the work and recover the expenses. The landlord can declare his intention, by written notice, of closing the house, and thereupon a closing order is to be deemed to have become operative in respect of the house. The landlord is given a right of appeal to the Local Government Board.

On the constructional side the 1909 Act contains a number of very important provisions. From the date of the passing of the Act, Part III. of the principal Act extends to and takes effect in every urban and rural district. Also extensive additional powers are given for the acquisition of land and for the construction of cottages. These may be summarised as follows :

(a) A local authority may be authorised to purchase land compulsorily for the purpose of Part III. of the principal Act by means of an order submitted to and confirmed by the Local Government Board.

(b) A local authority may, with the consent of and subject to any conditions imposed by the Local Government Board, acquire land by

agreement for the purposes of Part III. of the principal Act, notwithstanding that the land is not immediately required for those purposes.

(c) Increased facilities are given to Local Authorities for borrowing money from the Public Works Loan Commissioners for longer periods and at cheaper rates.

(d) Public Works Loan Commissioners are enabled to advance money to a public Utility Society up to the amount of two-thirds of the value of the estate or interest in the land or dwellings proposed to be mortgaged.

The acquisition of land for housing schemes when owners will not sell at a reasonable price, has always been a stumbling block. Formerly the compulsory powers conferred by the Public Health Act, 1875, had to be used, and compulsory purchase was a difficult and expensive matter. The 1906 Departmental Housing Committee strongly drew attention to this and reported :

“ At present one of the chief obstacles in the way of local authorities who desire to put the Housing Acts in operation is the complicated nature of the machinery by which land can be compulsorily acquired.”

In the 1909 Act this difficulty was recognised and clauses were added to make compulsory purchase simpler and less expensive. Under this Act the local

authority obtains its compulsory purchase powers by means of an order submitted to the Local Government Board, and confirmed by the Board, according to the procedure set out in the first schedule to the Act. In rural areas, if no objection has been raised by any person interested in the land, there need be no inquiry and the Board confirm the order, but when objection is made a local public inquiry is held. Steps have been taken to reduce the cost of this inquiry by prohibiting either party to be represented by counsel or the calling of expert witnesses, without the consent of the Board. After inquiry the Board may confirm the order, and their confirmation is final. The difficult questions of compensation are to be settled by a single arbitrator appointed by the Board, who also fix his remuneration.

The costs of acquisition are kept low by the provision that no additional allowance is to be made on account of the purchase being compulsory, and by the provision of a definite scale of costs. The Local Government Board is given power under Sub-section (9) of the first schedule to fix such scale of costs with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor, and by an Order dated September 5th, 1912, rules were made under this provision.

The Act of 1909 not only prescribes the duties of Local Authorities as regards matters of housing inspection and construction, but also takes steps to make these powers and duties effective. Experience of local sanitary authorities, and especially of rural

authorities in regard to earlier Housing Acts, had shown that to a large extent powers given were not exercised, and it became evident that unless considerable powers of supervision and if need be, of compulsion, were available, particularly as regards the provision of additional houses, satisfactory results were not likely to result. The 1909 Act contains considerable powers of supervision and of compulsion exercised through the Local Government Board and county councils.

POWERS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD

Section 10 gives considerable authority to the Board, but can only be set in operation by a complaint to them, by the county council, the parish council or parish meeting comprised in the district, or by any four inhabitant householders of the district, that the local authority have failed to exercise their powers under Part II. or Part III. of the principal Act in cases where those powers ought to have been exercised. The Board can then cause a public local inquiry to be held. If, after holding such an inquiry, the Board are satisfied that there has been such a failure on the part of the local authority, they are empowered to declare the authority to be in default, and to make an Order directing that authority, within the time limited by the Order, to carry out such works and do such things as may be mentioned in the Order for the purpose of remedying the default.

The Board are instructed to take various factors into consideration before they enforce Part III. If the Order is not complied with the Board can empower the County Council (with their consent) to carry out the necessary works.

If the Local Government Board consider that a local authority has failed to cause to be made the inspection, etc., of their district required by Section 17 the Board may make an Order, which may be enforced by mandamus, requiring the local authority to remedy the default and to carry out any works or do any other things which are necessary for the purpose under the Housing Acts, within a time fixed by the Order.

POWERS OF COUNTY COUNCILS

Section 10, mentioned above, gives county councils the right to complain, under certain circumstances, to the Local Government Board.

Section 12 of the 1909 Act supersedes Section 6 of the 1900 Act. By Section 6 a county council could only be set in motion by a resolution of a parish council.

Section 12 states :

“ Where a complaint is made to the council of a county by the parish council or parish meeting of any parish comprised in any rural district in the county or by any four inhabitant householders of that district, the county council may

cause a public local inquiry to be held, and if, after holding such an inquiry, the county council are satisfied that the rural district council have failed to exercise their powers under Part III. of the principal Act in cases where those powers ought to have been exercised the county council may resolve that the powers of the district council for the purposes of that Part be transferred to the county council with respect either to the whole district or to any parish in the district, and those powers shall be transferred accordingly, and, subject to the provisions of this Act, Section 63 of the Local Government Act, 1894, shall apply as if the powers had been transferred under that Act."

It will be noted that while this section gives certain powers to county councils, the latter can only be set in motion after specific complaint, while the powers are permissive, and it is not the duty of the council to enforce them.

Under Section 13 a county council where they are of opinion that for any reason it is expedient that they should exercise, as respects any rural district in the county, any of the powers of a Local Authority under Part III. of the principal Act (after giving notice to the council of the district of their intention to do so), may apply to the Local Government Board for an order conferring such powers upon them.

The Board may confer all or any of the powers of a Local Authority under Part III.

It must be carefully noted that the expenses incurred by a county council, under any such Order, are to be defrayed as expenses for general county purposes.

Section 68 requires every county to appoint a Medical Officer of Health, and gives the Local Government Board power to prescribe his duties. This officer is in a position to acquire considerable information in regard to housing in his county in the following ways :

(a) All copies of representations, complaints or information as to unfit houses which under Section 45 of the principal Act have to be made to the County Council, must, under a personal penalty, be forwarded to the County Medical Officer of Health by the District Council clerk.

(b) The District Medical Officer of Health has to supply all reasonable information to the County Medical Officer of Health.

(c) In the prescribed duties of a County Medical Officer of Health it states :

“ The Medical Officer of Health of the County shall inform himself as far as practicable respecting all influences affecting or threatening to affect injuriously the

public health in the County. For this purpose he shall visit the several County districts in the County as occasion may require."

Under Section 68 the County Medical Officer of Health has powers of entry upon premises similar to those of a district Medical Officer of Health.

If, therefore, a County Medical Officer of Health can find time, he has been given the powers to engage in such special housing inquiries as his information may lead him to consider necessary.

Under Section 45 of the 1890 Act, the rural sanitary authority has to forward to the County Council a copy of any representation, complaint or information, made or given by the Medical Officer of Health or any inhabitant householders made to them or to their Medical Officer of Health, respecting any dwelling house being unfit for human habitation, or respecting an obstructive building. When closing orders are made, copies of such closing orders have to be forwarded, while the district council has to forward such particulars respecting the proceedings taken as the County Council require. The County Council is given power, in cases in which they consider that proper closing orders have not been made to themselves, after a formal resolution has been passed, make the closing orders and see them enforced.

The above broadly summarises the powers under this important Act as regards rural housing, while in

addition, a number of minor but useful powers are conferred, such as the prohibition of the erection of back to back houses after the date of the passing of the Act, the power given to the Local Government Board to revoke unreasonable by-laws and the increased powers of entry.

With the more specific powers given in the Housing Acts may be mentioned Section 7 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885, which states :

“ It shall be the duty of every Local Authority entrusted with the execution of laws relating to public health and local government to put into force from time to time as occasion may arise, the powers with which they are invested, so as to secure the proper sanitary condition of all premises within the area under the control of such authority.”

Comparing the 1909 Housing Act with previous Acts, it shows a noteworthy advance in the provision of suitable machinery to deal with housing defects and deficiencies.

Under the earlier Acts very little inspection or constructive work was carried out as regards rural districts. It was, it is true, the duty of the Local Authorities to make general housing inspections, but the duty was too vague and permissive. A general instruction to the sanitary inspector—not infrequently with an unformulated intimation that excess of zeal was not required—to report all unfit

houses as he came across them was, in the main, all that was done, and while a few rural districts caused regular systematic inspection of the houses in their districts to be made this was quite exceptional. Of constructive work, as already mentioned, there was scarcely a trace in rural districts.

The great merits of the 1909 Act are that as regards systematic inspections, what was vague and ill-defined has been made obligatory and systematic, that on the constructional side greatly increased facilities and powers have been added, while the justifiable suspicion as to the necessity for supervision of local authorities has been met by the increased supervisory powers given to the Local Government Board and the county councils.

The above gives the essential powers which are available for dealing with the different housing problems. The limitations of these powers and why more is not being accomplished under them will be clear from subsequent chapters (particularly Chapter VII).

EXISTING HOUSING CONDITIONS

Unit of
California



FIG. 3.—Houses built upon waste land. They abut on one side on the road, and on the other upon fields, and have no gardens back or front.

Most of the houses are owned by the occupiers.

The houses are of the poorest description and are full of sanitary defects. When photographed they had been improved to some extent, chiefly by making the windows to open and by the provision of rain gutters and down-shuting in front.

There is no space for sanitary conveniences, but wedged between the houses, usually in sheds, are what used to be offensive privies, and are now pail closets. There is no land available to empty the contents.

The water supply is from contaminated shallow wells, this block having two, also between the houses. Steps have been under consideration for the past four or five years to obtain a pure piped supply.

The space on the right in the foreground shows the remains of other cottages which have now been demolished.

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CHAPTER III

EXISTING HOUSING CONDITIONS

IT is a matter of considerable difficulty to convey in a single chapter and without undue detail, an accurate picture of existing housing conditions. The chief difficulty arises from the wide variations met with in different parts of the country. Some parts of England have much better cottages than other parts, while even in a single county great variations are met with. Again, we have to remember that under the term "rural" more is comprised than purely agricultural districts. The housing in such areas cannot be separated from that in districts which are largely agricultural, but which contain also small local industries and aggregations of population constituting small towns. In addition, in the neighbourhood of towns of considerable size the surrounding country is semi-urban in character. All these varieties of conditions are met with in areas which from the point of view of local sanitary government are spoken of as rural, and all of which may properly be considered as partaking of *rural* rather than *urban* housing conditions.

It will, however, be found that certain defects and

groups of defects are met with very frequently whatever part of the country is selected and whatever type of rural area is studied. The following gives a good general idea of the subject from my own experience and from a diligent perusal of the reports of Medical Officers of Health in different parts of England.

By laying emphasis on the defects found, it is easy to paint a picture which would represent the houses in rural England as mainly composed of insanitary, tumble-down cottages, lacking all the requirements of decent living. Such a picture would, however, be far from true, and it must be kept in mind that while a large proportion of the existing houses are far from satisfactory and a small number quite unfit, there is a large and growing quantity of cottages which are reasonably satisfactory and quite up to any fair standard. In the following account, attention has, of course, to be particularly directed to the defects.

1.—*Arrangement of the houses to one another.*—The idea of every country cottage standing in its own grounds with its well-filled kitchen garden kept in order by the labourer in his spare time is one which we could wish realised, but which is very far from being the reality. Every variation is met with from the cottage with an acre or more of land attached, to half-a-dozen or more houses crowded together on a little piece of land without back entrances or even



FIG. 4.—Back view of same row of cottages as Fig. 3.
Note the absence of through ventilation and of shuting.

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1875



FIG. 5.—A congested block of about twelve houses in the heart of the country.

The houses are of very poor construction and nearly all unfit for habitation. They are on sloping ground and so badly arranged that most have no through ventilation, and all insufficient air space round.



FIG. 6.—Portions of two occupied houses forming part of the group of cottages shown in Fig. 5.

The space between is about four feet wide. The ground floor of the house on the right is used as a store, the kitchen being on the first floor.

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space for the provision of proper sanitary conveniences.

The existence of cottages with insufficient air-space round is by no means uncommon in even purely rural areas. Nothing is more remarkable than the presence in villages, remote from towns

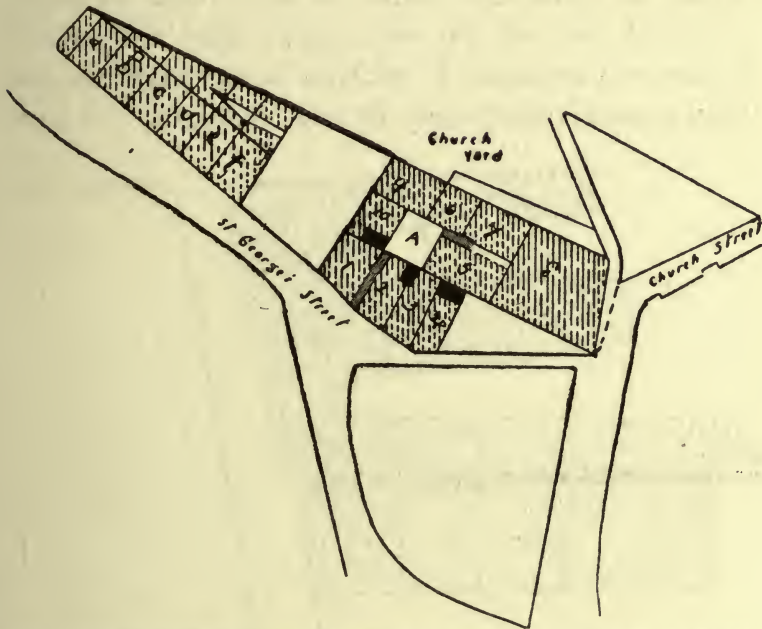


FIG. 1.—Plan showing congested area in a large rural village in the heart of the country.


Scale 80 feet to an inch.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.—Occupied cottages.

9.—Cottage used as a store.

10.—Wash-house.

a, b, c, d, e, f.—Cottages with back-yards practically covered.

The  areas are water-closets.

The lighter-shaded areas are covered ways with bedrooms over. They give access to the yard A, and contain entrance doors for cottages 1, 2, and 7 and 8.

The thicker black line is a high wall against the churchyard, level with cill of bedroom windows.

or other considerable areas of population and set in beautiful spacious country, of cottages massed together and forming a congested block, although all around is agricultural land. Here at least, with cheap land, we might have expected single cottages with roomy gardens. Instead, we find these cottages filling up some odd corner of land often so badly arranged and set at such angles that the middle houses are hemmed in without back entrances and with rooms inadequately lit and ventilated. I have

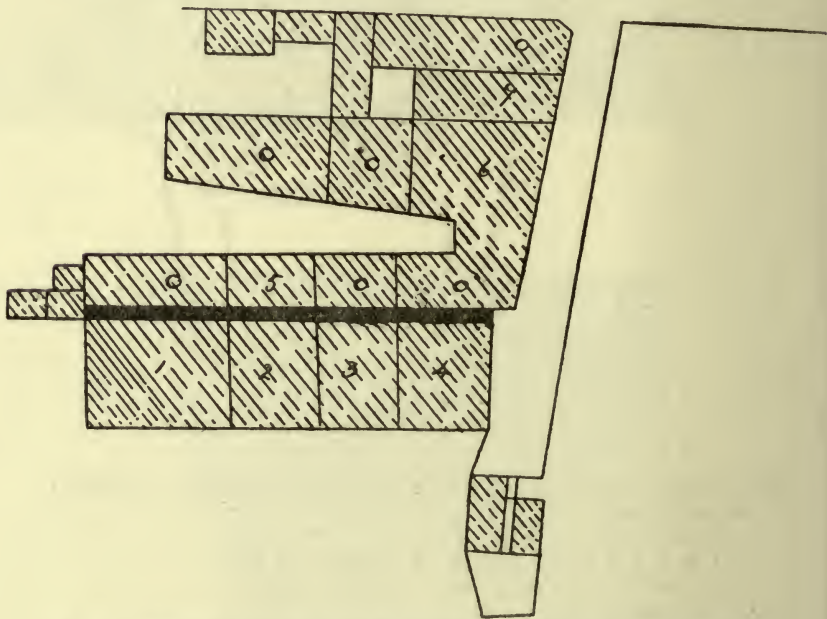


FIG. 2.—Plan showing congested area in a village not far from Exmoor.

Scale 40 feet to an inch.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, are occupied cottages.

O indicates unoccupied cottages.

The black area is a two-foot space between blocks of cottages with both ends closed.

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FIG. 7.—House built on odd piece of land with road front and back.
There is a tiny piece of garden at one end, but insufficient for refuse and excreta disposal. This constitutes a great difficulty with houses built without land round.
This particular house is very defective (there are no openings on the other side) and unfit, and was closed about a year before the photograph was taken.

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found blocks of houses of this character near spacious Exmoor (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Occasionally blocks of back-to-back houses are found. True, back-to-back houses are rare, but very frequently met with are houses forming a single row with no back entrances or windows of any description. Houses of this character are to be found in a large proportion of villages (see Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 7).

In the Chesterfield Rural District (Derbyshire) the Medical Officer of Health reported that there were 194 back-to-back houses known to the Sanitary Department, equal to 1.26 per cent. of the whole.

A study of Chapter I will throw light on the origin of these congested groups of houses. Many have no doubt been built on odd pieces of unclaimed land or land filched from the highways. Put up mostly by squatters or speculative builders their quality is often of the poorest and they are usually most unsatisfactory apart from their lack of air space.

In hilly districts houses are frequently built in hollows cut out of the hills. The back walls are only separated from the rock by a narrow space. Sometimes there are windows at the back, usually not.

Figs. 8 and 9 illustrate such conditions.

2. *Surroundings*.—As a rule in country cottages there is no impervious paving round the houses. Even in semi-urban districts this is usually absent. Paved yards are, of course, very rare, and are not, in

general, required. Cobble stones set in earth forming a kind of path are fairly common, but in wet weather the earth is mud and such a path is only a slight protective against dirt being brought into the house. Where impervious paving has at one time been put down round the back doors or along the front, it is rarely or never renewed, and is in consequence cracked and much broken up.

In a good many cases cottages are built on a slope, and all the rain which does not percolate, pours down on to the backs of the houses. In some cases no steps are taken to prevent this, and the back walls are very damp in consequence (Fig. 10). Usually, however, this defect is to some extent guarded against by the provision of impervious paving at the back with a gully and channel to drain off the water.

A very common defect in country cottages is the presence of soil directly against the walls of the house. All degrees are met with, from the slight accumulation against the front wall forming flower beds (Fig. 11) to the house built right against the earth with the features of a cave rather than a house.

I have not personally come across many of these extreme instances, but have found many houses in which the back wall has been in direct contact with the earth for anything from 3 to 6 feet (Fig. 13), while occasionally the end house of a row has been built up against the ground with the earth up as high as the eaves. Such houses are usually excessively damp.

THE
GARDEN



FIG. 8.—To illustrate houses built on lower ground and without air space at the rear.

At the back the level of the ground is very little below that of the eaves. A narrow space about a yard wide separates the back walls of the houses from the field. The wall has no openings of any sort, so there is no through ventilation.



FIG. 9.—To illustrate a similar but much less marked case. The high wall at the back is covered with vegetable growth, and so is not visible in the photograph.

The house itself is otherwise fairly satisfactory, and the absence of through ventilation is minimised by the provision of windows in the gable end.

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3. *Drainage and Sanitary Arrangements.*—Here, naturally, every variation is met with, since some villages are sewered while many are not. Small lengths of sewers for parts of the village are often met with, while a common arrangement is to connect many of the houses by drains to the brick or stone highway drains.

Where there are no drains the old-fashioned and utterly detestable privy-midden is still the commonest form of receptacle for excreta. These are steadily, but scarcely rapidly, being replaced either by water closets or by bucket closets.

Bucket closets are now fairly common; they are intended to be used as earth closets, but in my experience it is rare to find a receptacle provided for earth, and rarer still to find earth used. Bucket (pail) closets are far preferable to privy-middens, and are quite satisfactory if used with earth.

In country villages if water closets are provided, they are usually hand-flushed.

In the matter of drainage and sanitary conveniences, injustice is, I think, sometimes done to cottage owners, and villages are unduly aspersed, particularly by lay complainants. Many such persons, zealous and well-meaning, yet apply town standards to essentially rural conditions and make it a serious cause of complaint that the houses are grossly insanitary because they have no drainage system, but only pails or privy-middens.

It really all depends upon the arrangement of the houses to one another. If, as mentioned above may be the case, the houses are clustered together at all angles in a congested space so that the back windows of one overlook the tiny back-yard of another, and the privy of one house pollutes the air of its three or four neighbours, then there are strong grounds for banning any form of excreta storage. The ratepayers of such villages have their cottage builders of earlier generations to thank when they have a sewage scheme forced upon them, and since their predecessors have approximated to town arrangements they must endure expenses peculiar to towns.

It is far otherwise with the many villages in which there is plenty of air space and garden ground round the houses. For these, sewage schemes may be necessary on other grounds, but disposal of the excreta by earth closets is a sanitary and satisfactory method provided pure water supplies are available.

As a rule privies are placed some distance from the house, frequently at the bottom of the garden. This is an inconvenient distance, but the lesser of two evils. Often they are converted into earth closets, and sometimes into hand-flushed water-closets; then it would be better if they were nearer the house.

Most commonly each house has its own sanitary convenience, but in some cases only one for two, three or more houses.

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FIG. 10.—House built on sloping ground. The rain runs down the slopes and soaks up into the outside walls.
To face page 63.

Often they are very deplorable structures, while the pail closets usually have no provision for a supply of dry earth and are in fact not used as earth closets.

Occasionally they are absent altogether. For example, in the parish of Port Isaac (Cornwall) the Medical Officer of Health in his 1912 Annual Report stated that sixty-four out of ninety houses inspected were without closet accommodation of any kind.

A large proportion of country cottages have no drains of any description, either sinks or even outside gullies. The slops and other liquids have to be thrown on the garden or anywhere—occasionally the road is used. Where drains exist, but no proper sewerage system, they may be connected with the highway drains or be dealt with in cesspools. The latter are only very exceptionally made impervious, so that the liquids soak away into the subsoil. The solids gradually accumulate and the cesspit is occasionally emptied. Arrangements of this sort sound very unsatisfactory, but if there are no local water supplies (surface wells) to be contaminated and a little common-sense and sanitary knowledge is used in their construction and arrangement, they may be free from danger.

4. *Water Supply*.—Until comparatively recently the sole source of drinking water supply for the great majority of rural parishes was surface water obtained from surface wells. Many of these wells

are of considerable antiquity. When they were made little or nothing was known by their builders as to the dangers of polluted water or how water could be contaminated. One object alone seemed to be aimed at, to get a supply of water as near the house as possible and at as little expense as possible. Even for houses recently constructed and provided with well water, so little have builders and even sanitary authorities realised the importance of water protection that wells are still being constructed under precisely the same dangerous conditions as of old, when the expenditure of a little money would render them reasonably satisfactory.

In many districts it is becoming recognised that many of the existing surface wells supplies are contaminated, and in increasing numbers parishes are going to the expense of obtaining piped supplies from neighbouring springs or from water supplies of considerable magnitude distributed over a number of parishes.

In a comparatively small number of cases whole parishes are without a water supply, either piped or from surface wells, and the inhabitants have to drink rain-water or water obtained from ditches and streams. It is rare for a whole parish to be so ill-equipped as regards water, but not uncommon for individual houses or groups of houses to be so situated.

Apart, however, from these comparatively rare

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FIG. 11.—House with earth (forming flower-beds) banked against the front wall and contributing to its dampness.



FIG. 12.—Houses without rain gutters, an exceedingly common defect. The rain falls on the ground in front of the houses, and some of it soaks up into the walls. The effect of this damp is very clearly shown by the discolouration and dark fungus growth all along the lower foot or so of the front wall.
To face page 65.

cases, it may be said that the bulk of rural villages depend either upon a piped supply or solely upon surface wells. An arrangement very commonly adopted is to have the houses in the village proper supplied from a spring with or without a few lengths of pipe, while the outlying parts are solely dependent upon surface wells.

The average surface well as made is usually most unsatisfactory, since it is made in a situation liable to contamination, and no steps are taken to prevent such contamination by proper covering and by an impervious lining inside. My own experience is that not one well in a hundred in rural districts is properly protected. Many are open draw wells allowing contamination through their open mouths, not a few are shallow "dip" wells.

Accessibility has also to be considered as well as quality of the water. This important matter has never received the consideration it deserves. Even when piped supplies are available they are but rarely taken into the houses. A few stand-pipes are set up, and the villagers often have to go considerable distances to fetch their water. For example, in a village recently visited, only two stand-pipes were provided. The occupants of the houses fairly near had only comparatively short distances to convey their water, but others had to fetch it distances of anything from 80 to 400 yards or more.

Surface wells, as explained, are usually near the houses, but if the water level is 50 feet or more, and

has to be raised by hand windlass, its accessibility leaves much to be desired. The bearing of accessibility to cleanliness needs no emphasising.

Many village shallow wells run dry in dry summers, and then the inhabitants have to go short and are dependent upon the few wells in the parish, if such exist, which do not run out owing to special depth or to other reasons.

5. *Structural Material of the Houses.*—Naturally extreme variations are met with in different parts of the country, and according to accessibility of local building stone, character of the building by-laws, etc. Wood houses are not common in my experience in England. Houses of "cob" are common in many parts of Somerset. They consist of stones set in a kind of mud with wood framework to strengthen them. They usually have very thick walls and are dry. When in good repair they are satisfactory enough, but when they begin to fall into disrepair they go to pieces with great rapidity and very little can be done to keep them in a sound condition. They then degenerate into the most melancholy looking wrecks of houses. Many of the old houses have very thick walls and are roomy and comfortable.

6. *Arrangements to Prevent Dampness.*—In the West of England certainly, and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, in rural England generally, the defect

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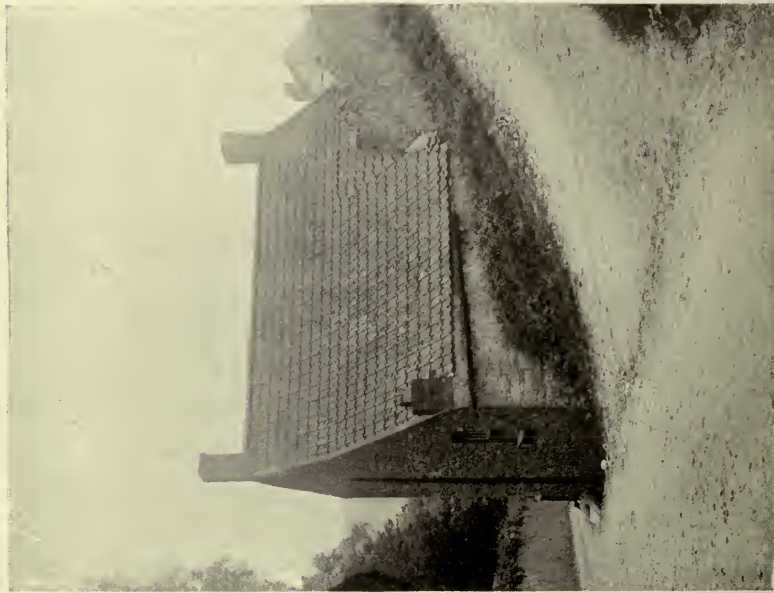


FIG. 13.—Soil in direct contact with the back wall of a house rising on one side to the level of the roof.



FIG. 14.—Two houses directly abutting against a ditch. At the time the photograph was taken the ditch was dry, but it is full of water for the greater part of the year. This soaks up the walls. The houses have no damp courses or any means of obviating this. The nearest house has neither rain gutters nor through ventilation.

To face page 67.

most commonly met with in country cottages is dampness.

A very considerable proportion of country cottages are damp, the cause not being always the same, and often due to a combination of causes.

∨ One prevalent cause is absence of proper foundations and damp-proof courses. All the old cottages are without damp courses, and many have been built without proper foundations. There is nothing to prevent the wet from the earth rising up the walls, and it does so rise (Fig. 14). That so many walls do not show it is due to their great thickness, and this may obviate definite trouble from this source.

∨ The absence of any protection against driving rain is another cause of dampness, and is difficult to remedy. It is one which is shown even more frequently in comparatively newly-built houses with thin walls.

∨ A further very common cause of dampness is the accumulations of earth against the house. This has already been mentioned. ∨ Perhaps the commonest cause of all is the absence of shuting and guttering. All over the country absence of shuting is complained of by the different Medical Officers of Health. For example, in Belvoir Rural District (Leicestershire) 58 cottages out of 129 had defective or absent spouting; in Bradford-on-Avon (Wilts), 32 per cent. of the houses examined were without; in Bredwardine Rural District (Herefordshire) the

inspector reports, "the commonest defect among the cottages is the want of eaves gutters." Many more illustrations might be quoted. In many villages which I have inspected, the majority of the houses have been defective in this way. There seems to be a fashion about it, and in some villages nearly every house will be properly provided, while in another most of the houses are without shuting. Of course, the rain drips down the walls, while, in particular, it falls into the ground in the immediate vicinity to the walls, and soaks upwards into them.

Dampness from this cause may not be always exhibited as a definite occult damp wall, since obviously much will depend upon the previous rainfall, but its existence is often shown by a slight green growth at the base of the wall (*see* Fig. 12), and the darker staining and sometimes moss-covered appearance a few inches below the eaves. One would have expected owners, for their own protection, to have provided shuting. I believe the origin of the "bad habit" of its non-provision by rural builders is to be traced to the fact that the earlier country cottages were thatched for the most part. With a thatched roof shuting is rarely provided, and if it projects far over the walls, may not be necessary. When roofs of slate or tile were provided, builders unaccustomed to provide it failed to realise its absolute necessity, and the houses were built without.

A further defect common enough, and leading



FIG. 16.—Rain-water pipe ending against a wall. The soaking of the wall is well shown. *To face page 69.*

to considerable localised dampness, is incomplete down-shuting. In the country the rain-water is valuable, and instead of discharging it over a gully, and away in the drains, it is usually collected into a butt or other form of storage cistern. The latter is often left for the tenant to provide, or, if provided by the owner, when it wears out it is not replaced. Whatever is the cause, it is common enough to find down rain-water pipes ending off 3 to 4 feet above the ground against the wall, and no receptacle beneath (*see* Fig. 16). The wall all round becomes very wet. Often the lower two inches or so are deflected outwards, with the object of directing the water away from the wall, in which purpose it usually completely fails, although the owner likes to assert it is quite satisfactory. When a butt is provided it very rarely has an overflow pipe, so that the overflow falls all round and soaks into the earth round the wall.

These defects are mentioned, as, although easily remedied, they are very common, and are important sources of dampness.

7. *Accommodation.*—The experience of other investigators may not be in accord with mine, but I have usually found that a separate parlour is absent in the average rural cottage. The down-stairs accommodation generally consists of a single room, which is kitchen and living-room combined, while behind it is a small scullery. Sometimes there

is a third nondescript room at the side, which is too small and narrow to be of much use. In some villages the prevailing type is a kitchen-living-room, with a lean-to room at the back without any ceiling, and usually with a very defective floor. Such a room, if it can be called a room, serves as a sort of scullery, but it has none of the conveniences associated with a scullery, and is often very damp, badly lit and inadequately ventilated.

It is very rare indeed in my experience to have any separate accommodation for the storage of perishable food. Its necessity never seems to have occurred to the builders, and the scullery and cupboards in the living-room have to serve as the larder.*

✓ A defect much complained of by the occupants is the absence of facilities for washing clothes. Sometimes a wash-house of a primitive character is erected to serve for a group of three or four cottages. It usually contains a copper, and sometimes the floor is of impervious material, while, in districts with a piped water supply, it is possible that a tap may be found inside. Inconvenient and defective as they often are, they are welcomed.

* It is of interest to note that in the statement of "*The essential requisites of a comfortable labourer's cottage,*" by Mr. J. C. London, contained in the 1842 Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, a larder or pantry is included. "The minimum of accommodation ought to be a kitchen or living-room, a back-kitchen or wash-house, and a pantry, on the ground floor, with three bedrooms over."

As a rule even this is lacking, and all the washing has to be done in the kitchen or scullery, if there is one.

It has frequently been pointed out that in rural villages a large proportion of the cottages have but two bedrooms. Report after report which I have studied from all parts of England emphasise this point. Actual figures on a large scale are not often quoted, so the following from Somerset may be of interest (Table VI).

TABLE VI.
HOUSES GROUPED ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF BEDROOMS.

Rural District.	Bedrooms.-					Total Number of Houses.
	1.	2.	3.	4.	More than 4.	
Bath - - -	16	180	83	8	3	290
Bridgwater - -	16	359	226	54	6	661
Chard - - -	20	237	101	46	21	425
Keynsham - -	18	206	111	16	1	352
Long Ashton -	12	194	192	43	6	447
Shepton Mallet -	12	155	189	61	12	429
Taunton - - -	27	685	751	258	283	2,004
Wells - - -	97	794	677	368	350	2,286
Williton - - -	36	427	378	116	59	1,016
Totals -	254	3,237	2,708	970	741	7,910

NOTE.—The figures deal with nine out of the fifteen rural districts of Somerset, and are representative of the whole. They are not all strictly comparable, since in several districts all the houses in the parishes are included, while in the others only the houses under £16 a year rental. This difference chiefly affects the number of houses with four or more bedrooms.

The majority of the four-bedroom houses, and practically all those with more than four bedrooms,

are above the class of labourers' cottages, and the agricultural labourer could not afford to live in them. Taking the cottages with one, two, three and four bedrooms (a liberal estimate) as available for working men in rural districts, we see that 3.5 per cent. had but one bedroom, 45.2 per cent. two bedrooms, 37.8 per cent. three bedrooms, and 13.5 per cent. four bedrooms.

Other counties seem to have an even greater percentage of two and one bedroom cottages. For example, in Cambridgeshire in one district, 77, and in another 76 per cent. of the houses had less than three bedrooms; in parts of Surrey 77 per cent. had less than two bedrooms; in Highworth Rural District (Wiltshire) out of 3,704 houses in the district 1,657 had three bedrooms, 1,357 two, and 113 one bedroom (*i.e.*, 39 per cent. of all the houses had less than three bedrooms).

It should be said in favour of these old two-bedroom houses that frequently the sleeping-rooms are of larger size than in many of the recently-erected cottages. This is not universally the case, and some are very small, while, on the other hand, some are surprisingly roomy. Most are, however, low in height.

8. *General Internal Arrangements.*—Standards of to-day are not the standards of a century ago, and the internal arrangements of many cottages show features which are now considered undesirable,

although they do not justify closure of the houses or even compulsory modification to comply with present-day standards. Some are matters of health, others primarily of comfort or convenience to the occupiers.

Points, for example, which affect the comfort rather than the health of the occupants are whether the front door opens direct into the living-room (as in most rural cottages), or into a hall or passage, and whether the stairs lead out directly from the living-room or from such a passage.

A thoroughly bad feature, all too common, is the intercommunication of the bedrooms. The stairs open direct into the outer bedroom, and the inner one is entered through the outer, and without other means of exit. The bad features of this arrangement are obvious. There seems to be a fashion in this also, as I have found this arrangement perpetuated in house after house in the same village, while perhaps quite uncommon in a neighbouring village.

Rarely, but still not very infrequently, the stair-head opening is considered sufficient ventilation, and the outer room has no window, or if one is fitted it is not made to open.

The inadequate size and arrangement of the windows is a very common feature in these old cottages. As a rule, in nearly all old cottages the window area is far too small (Fig. 15), and very rarely indeed is one-tenth of the floor space. More

often than not, the window is of the casement type, and it is rare indeed to find that *both* halves are made to open. The duty on window glass probably played a part in the restriction of their size, as well as the prevailing inadequate conceptions as to the need of ventilation and the value of light.

A faulty position for the windows in bedrooms is a very common defect. Often the door or stair-head opens into the bedroom, and quite near it is the window (*see* Fig. 17). The condition is often aggravated by the window being placed very near the floor; sometimes, indeed, it is level with the floor. The result is that there is no *through* ventilation. The bed, of necessity, is placed away from the window and in a part of the room in which the air is stagnant. If the room is an attic with the window in the attic end, the air stagnation is intensified.

This defect is a very common one, and although it is of very great importance, it is frequently overlooked. It must be remembered that usually there is no fireplace in these rooms, that they are often small and not infrequently overcrowded. Radical steps should be taken to improve the ventilation of these rooms, although this is often difficult.

I have inspected a good many houses in which the bedroom windows are fixed and have never been made to open, but compared with the total they are few in number. A good many more have windows which theoretically open, but owing to the broken and rotten state of the frame-work

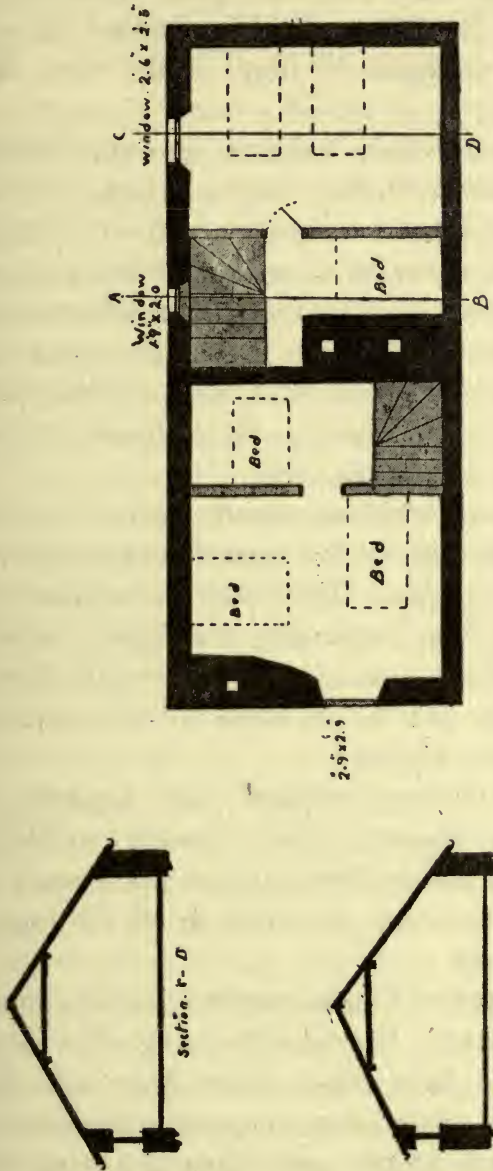


FIG. 17.—Plan and sections of first floor of two houses in a rural district in Somerset.

Scale 12 feet to an inch.

The windows are only about 2 feet from the floor, while all four bedrooms are most inadequately ventilated. The position of the beds is as actually in use. It will be noted that several of them are in unventilated recesses. Bedrooms of this type are very common.

and fastenings they will not open, and look as if they never had been opened. Indeed if once opened it is doubtful if they would ever shut again.

Not infrequently sash windows are only made to open at the *bottom*, while a curious feature which I found very prevalent in one group of adjacent villages and nowhere else, was to have windows of sash type, but without cords and pulleys. The bottom part opened, but having no cords or pulleys could only be kept open by a side piece of wood, clothes brush or whatever came handy. Economical in construction, but not satisfactory.

While bedroom windows usually open, it is very common to find those of the downstairs living-rooms are not made to open. The owners, sometimes the occupiers, but less frequently, are quite satisfied with this condition—and, as they point out, there is the door which can let in fresh air from outside, so what more is required?

This defect is very common and apparent in most parts of England. For example, in Belper Rural District (Derbyshire) out of 644 houses inspected, in 60 per cent. the windows on the ground floor did not open.

Defective lighting is less common in the country than in the towns, but is often met with in the back rooms. I have come across here and there rooms or holes which have to serve as sculleries or their equivalent which are quite dark and with

neither window nor ventilation, the only light being from the door leading into the kitchen.

9. *General Repair*.—Naturally nothing of general applicability can be said on this head, since every variation is met with. Defective floors in kitchen and scullery are in my experience very prevalent.

It is sometimes advanced that dilapidations do not affect the house as regards health, and houses should not be reported as unfit on this score. While dilapidations are not nearly so important as such fundamental matters as through ventilation and dampness, yet they have a distinct bearing on public health. A dirty, peeling wallpaper, for example, harbours numerous germs, some of which may be harmful and a cause of ill-health and disease. In the same way a defective, broken kitchen floor cannot, or cannot easily, be kept clean, and so is conducive to dirt.

It is most difficult to keep a house with numerous dilapidations clean, and where they are numerous they should carry considerable weight as part of the case for reporting a house as unfit or in need of repair.

While saying this, it is perhaps well to emphasise the other side of the matter. Persons who are not expert at housing inspection naturally lay great stress upon dilapidations, and in a good many cases I have had houses reported to me as unfit which were simply cases of somewhat dilapidated houses,

otherwise reasonably fit, but kept in a dirty condition by neglectful occupants. Of course steps should be taken to deal with such houses, but they are not technically unfit for habitation.

10. *Cleanliness of Houses.*—It is a commonplace of those whose business it is to inspect houses that the character of the occupants greatly affects the appearance of the houses. Two houses may be structurally identical and as regards large dilapidations in a similar condition, yet the one may be clean and tidy and so well kept that on a superficial examination it appears satisfactory, while the other may be dirty and so badly kept that it shows up most unfavourably and may even seem unfit for occupation. It is just here that the trained observer counts and discriminates between the essential and the unessential.

It is surprising how beautifully clean some structurally unfit houses are maintained by country tenants, and reflects the greatest credit upon them in view of the great difficulties they have to overcome.

**THE INSANITARY HOUSE AND ITS CON-
VERSION INTO A SANITARY DWELLING**

CHAPTER IV

THE INSANITARY HOUSE AND ITS CONVERSION INTO A SATISFACTORY DWELLING.

The Diagnosis and Treatment of Unfit and Defective Houses.

IN the preceding chapter it has been explained that a large proportion of existing cottages for the working classes show sanitary defects, although only a comparatively small percentage are so defective as to be unfit for human habitation. Table IX in Chapter V illustrates the extent to which such defects are recorded as existing in Somerset, and data from other counties furnish similar figures.

From the point of view of this chapter houses may be arranged into the following three groups:

(a) Unfit but repairable.

(b) Unfit and not worth repairing, or radically impossible to make fit.

(c) Defective but not to such an extent as to be unfit for habitation.

A primary consideration is to determine what is comprised in the legal description, "a house unfit for human habitation."

It must not be supposed because a house does not conform to modern standards that it either can or should be condemned, or even that steps should be taken to make it conform. The Local Authority and the Public Health official have to look at the matter broadly. There is no legal definition of what defects constitute a house "unfit for habitation." To draw up such a definition is a difficult task, and I do not think it is possible to frame one to meet all conditions and places. Some more guidance from the Local Government Board is desirable, but not a precise definition. Each case has to be judged on its merits.

Often, indeed usually, a house is unfit for human habitation not because of one defect but because of a combination of defects, the cumulative effect of which is to render the house unfit to live in.

The nearest approach that the legislature has given in regard to any one defect being in itself reasonable grounds for considering a house unfit is as regards back-to-back houses, and this only amounts to a decision that new back-to-back houses are unfit. While it is a reasonable corollary from this that all houses without through ventilation are unfit, it is scarcely a legal one settling the matter without regard to each individual case.

The interesting case of the twenty-six back-to-back houses in the Rural District of Chesterfield may be quoted in this connection. These houses were condemned by Dr. Peck, the Medical Officer of Health, in

their existing condition, and the owners were required to carry out certain works, *i.e.*, to convert the privy-middens, distant 15 feet from the houses on the east side, into water closets and dry ashpits, to repair various dilapidations and to convert each pair, back and front, into one house. The conversion would double the size of the houses. A number of the owners appealed to the Local Government Board after closing orders had been made.

After holding a local inquiry the Board confirmed the closing orders. In this case, as mentioned above, other defects were present, but as the owners offered to do all the required work with the exception of the conversion into through houses it is a reasonable deduction, as Dr. Peck points out, that this latter defect was the dominant factor in the decision.

The existing uncertain legal position as to what constitutes an unfit house, while probably justifiable yet sometimes makes it difficult for local authorities to act effectively. It certainly induces in different areas great differences of procedure and sometimes differences of opinion. I have, for example, seen houses which the sanitary inspector thinks unfit which the Medical Officer of Health does not, but which, when appealed to, I have considered unfit. On the other hand in a few cases I have felt unable to confirm the opinion of local officials that certain houses were unfit for habitation.

While such differences of opinion do occur they are really very few amongst properly trained officers, and

for the most part only are in evidence when one or other of the sanitary officers is incompetent.

In my experience differences of opinion are chiefly between experts and laymen. Not infrequently individual houses and groups of houses have been reported to me as in an utterly deplorable condition and quite unfit for habitation, when a most careful inspection on my part has failed to show that the houses were unfit or sometimes even considerably defective. Instances of this sort usually arise when the houses are somewhat dilapidated and are very badly kept by the tenants. Naturally, to the untrained eye, they appear horrible and unfit, and so they are as they are kept, but it is the tenants rather than the houses, which are at fault.

In the absence of definitions of unfitness it is important to consider which of the defects described in Chapter III are primary and fundamental housing defects and which are secondary and subsidiary.

Absence of or Insufficient Through Ventilation.—In my opinion this is the most serious defect which any house can exhibit. In rural districts such houses are sometimes back to back, but more commonly their back wall is the boundary of property belonging to another owner, so that there are no openings at all except in front. Houses of this character are, in my experience, not at all uncommon even in purely rural districts. I know one village in which at least half the houses are of this description. Most Medical

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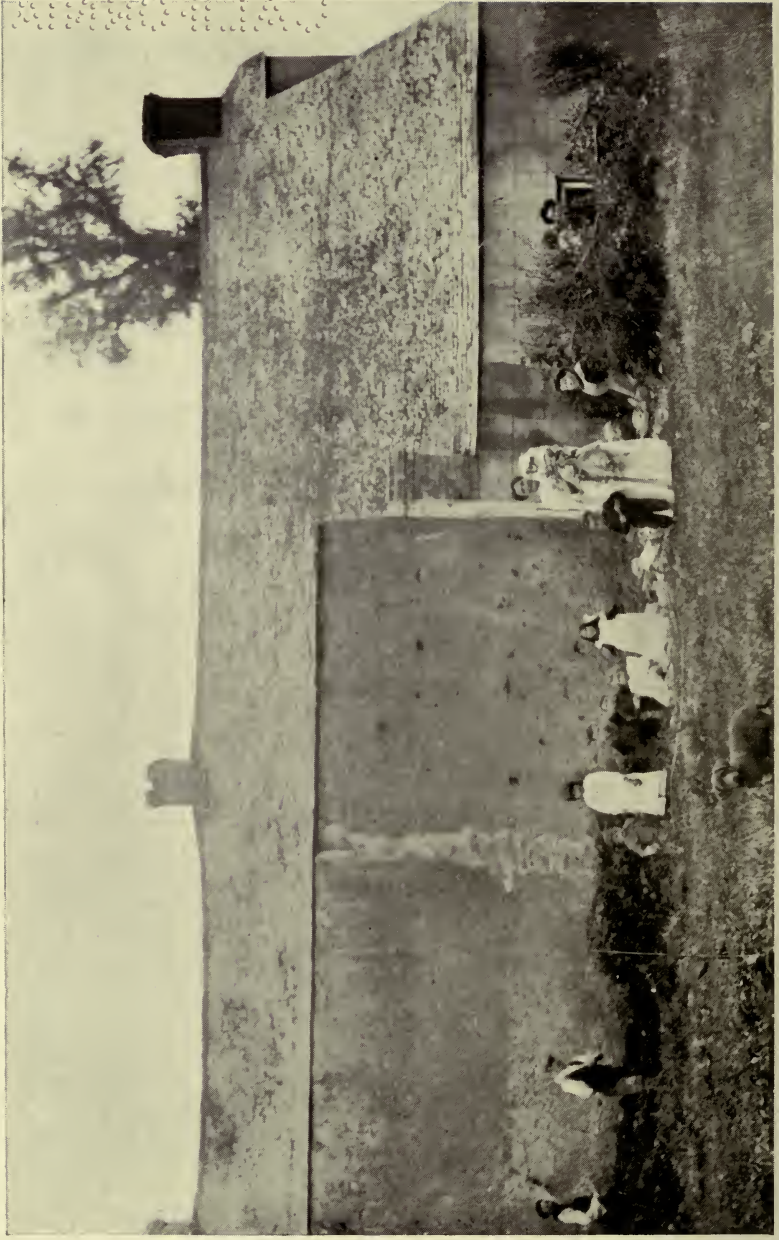


FIG. 18.—Insanitary cottages at Biscovey (Cornwall), undergoing alterations. The absence of through ventilation was the most marked of the defects. *To face page 85.*

Officers of Health, in view of the present shortage, are not prepared, for this reason alone, to represent all such houses as unfit unless other defects are also present.

When it is associated with other serious defects, such as dampness from earth being backed up against the back wall (a not uncommon combination) there should be no difficulty in arriving at a decision that the house is unfit.

When the absence of through ventilation is due to the houses being back to back, the only satisfactory remedy is either to pull down one row or to make each pair, back and front, into one house. When the houses belong to different owners this often means a good deal of delicate negotiation, and owners frequently assert that this requirement is impossible. In cases in which an impasse results, an impartial series of closing orders help greatly in stimulating a satisfactory issue.

Great difficulty is often experienced in rectifying the other class of houses without through ventilation mentioned above, *i.e.*, those without houses at the back, but in which the back is a blank wall. On the other side is frequently the garden of some other property, and the owner naturally strongly objects to have windows overlooking his house and garden where none existed before. If such an owner is properly approached he will often allow windows of frosted glass to be put in with the upper part of hopper type with side cheeks, which cannot be used

to see out of, but which give satisfactory ventilation. The owner of the houses often offers other forms of ventilation, such as air bricks or ventilators through the ceilings, but these are rarely satisfactory in practice, get blocked up and should not be accepted.

When no difficulty arises with the owner of the land behind the houses, it is sometimes possible to make extremely satisfactory dwelling places out of houses originally unfit to live in. Figures 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 illustrate the immense improvement which can sometimes be effected by work of this character.

When the houses are built up against the earth, as may occur, for example, when they are placed on land cut back from the hillside, it is often most difficult to do anything. They really constitute cave dwellings, and while no doubt suitable enough for our primitive ancestors for whom the hazards of life made the tenure of existence at the best a comparative short one, so that they would not be greatly affected by faulty environment, they are not to be recommended as satisfactory for those who would desire a long life.

Such houses are of course excessively damp and are not worth the spending of the large sums necessary to put them in a sanitary condition.

Inadequate and Insufficient Window Area.—It is not usually difficult to induce owners to make all the

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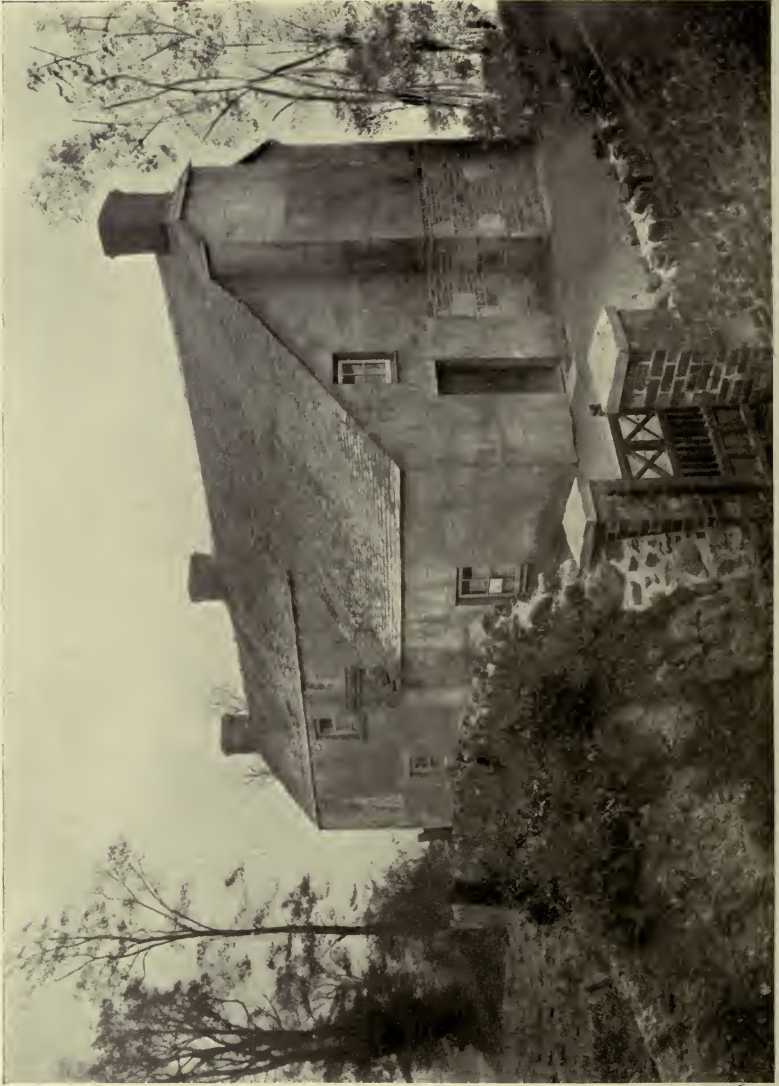


FIG. 19.—The same premises as Fig. 18 after alteration.

To face page 87.

windows to open, but difficulty does arise in a few cases in bedrooms in which the windows are very small and badly placed. This difficulty chiefly occurs in attic bedrooms, and may sometimes be remedied by the provision of a new dormer window.

Deficiency of light is not usually met with apart from deficient ventilation, and is not common in purely rural areas. For the most part it is not difficult to rectify in connection with the improvements to ventilation.

Marked Dampness.—The causes of this have been dealt with in Chapter III. When excessive and persistent it forms a reasonable ground for condemning the house apart from the presence of other defects. As a rule it is only present to a moderate extent, and then must be taken into consideration with other defects before the house is condemned. Very great differences of practice are found amongst Medical Officers of Health in their action towards this defect.

Dampness can usually be remedied if *sufficient money* is spent, but many old houses are not worth the expenditure. When due to defective or absent shuting, its provision will effect a cure. When due to earth against the house, it may or may not be easy to remove according as to whether the soil abutting does or does not belong to the same owner.

The provision of a damp course in a house built without one is an expensive and troublesome matter, but it can be done. It has to be inserted, bit by bit, all the way round. I have known it done in several cases to prevent houses from being condemned.

It is not justifiable in my opinion to ask owners to provide it for old cottages, but its provision with other work may mean the saving of a cottage from being condemned in special circumstances. A good deal may be done to prevent damp rising in an outside wall without a damp course by draining the adjacent soil, ensuring that no rain water falls on the soil round, and particularly by cementing the ground all round the wall.

For dampness due to driving rain, the usual plan recommended is to coat the outside wall or walls either with cement or with tar or one of the different kinds of petrifying liquids. The results obtained seem to be very variable. Petrifying liquids should always be applied during dry weather.

Absence of a Proper Water Supply.—I do not think this defect receives as much attention as it deserves. In my experience it very rarely figures as the main reason for condemning a house as unfit for habitation, yet an available supply of pure water is one of the first necessities of decent living. The extent to which this condition can be remedied must naturally vary with the local conditions, and its complete



W. SUTER, Photographer, OXFED.

FIG. 20.—This illustration, and Figs. 21 and 22, illustrate the possibility of extensively improving existing cottages in suitable cases. This block of ten cottages in Oxted, Surrey, were originally without through ventilation, constantly damp, and insanitary.



W. SUTER, Photographer, OXFED.

FIG. 22.—Work completed.

Each cottage now has through ventilation and a paved yard at the rear.



W. SUTER, Photographer, OXFED.

FIG. 21.—Work in progress.

[To face page 89.]

discussion would involve a consideration of the whole question of rural water supplies.

A great deal can be done by properly covering surface wells and rendering them impervious inside, for 10 to 12 feet. The latter is, however, an expensive business for old wells, and if the position of the well is fairly satisfactory cannot be insisted upon.

A useful compromise and one not expensive is to try and get the ground round the well for 10 feet or so sown with grass, and the well properly covered and provided with a pump. Usually in country villages the subsoil water is reasonably pure, and this will ensure that any polluting matter will have to filter at least through 10 to 15 feet of soil before it gains access to the well, a good margin of protection. Unfortunately many existing wells are quite near the house, so that this cannot be done. There are no legal powers to enforce it, but by proving contamination and then threatening to take legal steps to close the well unless this is done, sufficient pressure may be exercised where this plan is feasible.

In some districts and localities the provision of any water, even of bad quality, is a matter of the greatest difficulty, and rain-water has to be largely utilised.

The whole question of legal powers to enforce protection of wells is in an unsatisfactory condition, and it is very desirable that local authorities should be given power to make by-laws for this purpose.

Insufficient or Insanitary Sanitary Conveniences.— This is a matter of less importance in the country than in towns.

When the privy-midden is near the house, or in a confined space, it should be condemned out of hand as a statutory "nuisance," but when it is well away from the house each case must be taken on its merits. In most districts steps are being taken to steadily and continuously abolish this most insanitary arrangement.

If water carriage systems are not available, earth closets should be installed. An excellent type of simple and cheap construction is that described by Dr. Herbert Jones. Particulars are detailed in an appendix to this chapter.

In many existing houses there is no provision at all for dealing with slops and waste water, and these are thrown on the garden. When the drainage is conducted to a cesspit it is almost always a pervious one, so that the liquids soak away. Such an arrangement does no particular harm if a piped water supply is available, but if surface wells exist there is considerable danger of polluting the water, and this must be prevented.

It may be said in passing that it is vastly more important to have a pure water supply and allow laxity in drainage arrangements, than to worry over drainage schemes of urban type. To some degree it is true that if we take care of the water supply in country districts, the drainage

arrangements can often be left to take care of themselves.

Where there is a considerable amount of slop and other liquid sewage and no sewage system, a proper cesspit may be provided, or some form of subsoil drainage such as the following, which is that described by Dr. Pierce, Medical Officer to the Guildford Rural District Council, may be made use of. The drain is conveyed to a catchpit not less than 20 feet from the house, which has radiating from it a series of agricultural pipes laid within a foot or so of the surface. The more porous the subsoil the more applicable the method. With a good fall a catchpit may not be necessary.

General Improvements to Old Cottages.—Apart from steps taken to remedy specific defects such as dampness, defective sanitary conveniences, etc., a good deal can be done to generally improve many old cottages. New window frames are often required, new floors to be laid down and dilapidations repaired. If these are done and a little money spent on fresh papers, whitewash or distemper, it is surprising how greatly many cottages can be improved and made much more comfortable to live in. Often when there is a block of three or four poor quality houses, one of them can be given up as a dwelling-house, and part of it converted into a wash-house.

A great improvement is often made by the

provision of some impervious paving round the back doors, and this is a matter of considerable importance in relation to health.

APPENDIX.

ECONOMICAL CONSTRUCTION OF EARTH CLOSETS.

Almost any privy closet can be used as an earth closet. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that either an elaborate apparatus or any special means for drying the earth is necessary. When a new house or cottage is being erected it is actually less costly to provide an earth closet than to put up an old-fashioned pit privy.

Wherever there are a few perches of garden attached to a house it is possible to replace a foul smelling dangerous privy closet by a harmless inodorous earth closet. The cost to the owner is in most cases nothing at all, and the slight extra labour entailed upon the tenant in the riddling and storing of the earth is much more than compensated for by the absence of the extremely disagreeable duty of periodically emptying an offensive privy, to say nothing of the dangers which must attend the storing up of human excrement without any attempt at rendering it harmless.

A privy closet is often placed as far away from the house as possible, and is surrounded with trees or thick shrubs.

An earth closet may be situated quite close to a house, and the more air and sunshine that can get to it the better.

The actual structure of an earth closet need not be of a substantial character. The roof should be good, and it is of advantage to have a portion of it glazed. The entire floor should be paved with some hard impervious material.

The principle of the earth closet permits of the entire space beneath the seat being used as a fixed receptacle (Fig. 23 (*a*)). The inside surface of the walls of the receptacle should be cemented.

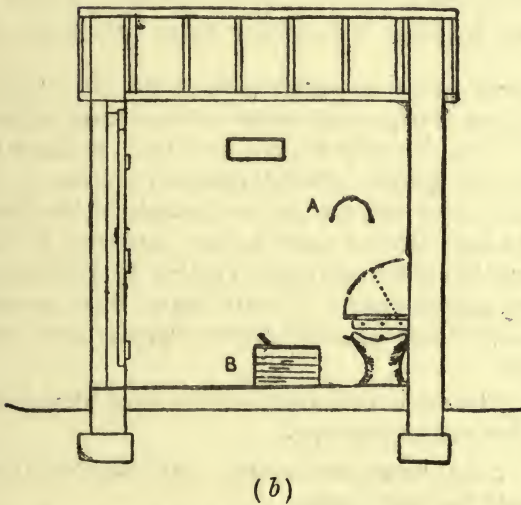
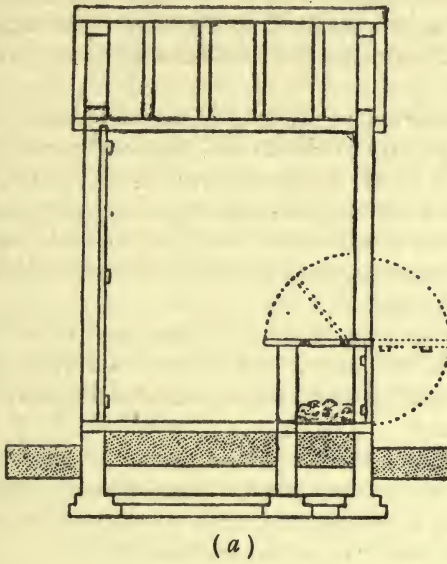


FIG. 23.—Plan of simple type of earth closet.

A = carrying handle for pail. (Hung up when not in use.)
 B = Box of earth.

The fixed receptacle can be emptied through an opening placed either at the back or at the side of the structure. For more effectual cleansing it is an advantage to make the closet seat to hinge.

A movable pail (Fig.23(b)) may be placed beneath the seat. The best form of pail is that of an ordinary coal scuttle. The small handle in front of the scuttle is conveniently placed to draw the pail from under the seat, and the larger carrying handle (A) can readily be made movable and hung on the wall when the pail is in use, thus ensuring that it will not become fouled as it might do if left on the pail.

A pail is preferably taken out from the inside of the closet. There should be no "riser," but the seat should be supported by the end walls and by two posts, so that the floor of the closet can be easily cleaned.

Inside the closet there must be placed an open box (B) containing earth, and a scoop or a flat piece of wood or stiff cardboard for the purpose of putting the earth into the pail or receptacle.

This notice should be put on an inside wall :

"EVERY PERSON USING THIS CLOSET MUST PUT IN ENOUGH EARTH TO KEEP THE SURFACE DRY."

The process known as nitrification of the soil is the result of the breaking up of manure by germs or microbes which are present in the soil. The more life there is in the soil, in other words the more germs, the quicker will this breaking up process be carried on, and the sooner will the manure become of the character of earth. The best kind of earth to use, therefore, is that which has the most life in it, and none is better than the upper layers of ordinary garden loam. If earth taken from a considerable depth is used it will be found to be comparatively sterile and without life.

(1) The earth used must not be dried artificially, or the germ life will be destroyed.

(2) Ashes must not be used. Having been burnt they are quite free from germs.

To get the best results the earth should be freed from stones by riddling, and kept free from excessive moisture by being placed

under cover. It has been found in actual practice that half an hour spent once a month in riddling and storing will provide enough earth for the use of a household of five persons.

Anyone who has had experience of the emptying of an ordinary privy closet or of a pail closet where no earth has been used, knows what an exceedingly offensive proceeding it is, and the crude night-soil is as agriculturists say so "hot" that it cannot be put on to land until it has been diluted with earth.

It is quite otherwise with the earth closet, for when the time comes for emptying it the breaking up processes are found to have been going on to such good effect that the fixed receptacle or the pail contains practically nothing but rich humus, which can at once be put around fruit trees or buried a few inches beneath the soil without the least offensiveness, and with the best results to the vegetation.

PROGRESS OF HOUSING SURVEY AND
RESULTS ACHIEVED

CHAPTER V

PROGRESS OF HOUSING SURVEY AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

It has been explained in Chapter II that the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909, and the regulations of the Local Government Board issued under this Act, makes it the duty of every local authority to make provision for a thorough inspection of the housing conditions in its district. A careful survey and inspection of the housing conditions of every district in England should therefore be in hand, with the compilation of a permanent accurate record of the existing conditions.

It is a matter of great importance to ascertain to what extent such a valuable housing survey is being undertaken.

The Local Government Board regulations were not issued until September, 1910, so that it is not to be anticipated that material progress would be made during that year, but certainly during 1911 and subsequent years, efficient arrangements should have been made and put into operation to carry out these regulations.

The considerations involved may be dealt with under the following headings.

(1) THE NATURE OF THE WORK AND THE TIME
REQUIRED TO EFFICIENTLY CARRY IT OUT.

The Local Government Board regulations contemplate and require a special and early investigation of known or suspected insanitary houses, and, in addition, a systematic inspection of the dwelling-houses which may possibly require it (*i.e.*, all the smaller houses) in the district. This latter requirement involves the compilation of an accurate housing register. The Medical Officer of Health of the district is responsible, but need not himself carry out the inspections, and the almost invariable practice has been to appoint the sanitary inspector to do the routine inspections under the superintendence of the Medical Officer of Health.

The work of inspection is not only responsible and important, but both extensive and onerous. Each house has to be visited and a long series of careful observations made, and the results recorded.*

* Article II.—The inspection under and for the purposes of sub-section (1) of Section 17 of the Act of 1909 shall be made by the Medical Officer of Health, or by an Officer designated by the local authority but acting under his direction and supervision, and the Officer making inspection of any dwelling-house shall examine the state of the dwelling-house in relation to the following matters, namely :—

- (1) The arrangements for preventing the contamination of the water supply.
- (2) Closet accommodation.
- (3) Drainage.
- (4) The condition of the dwelling-house in regard to light, the free circulation of air, dampness, and cleanliness.

This takes considerable time. Not infrequently in country districts a considerable percentage of the houses are locked up, the occupants being away at work. This means the inspector has to pay a second visit. It is practically impossible to make clean satisfactory entries direct into the recording book, so that invariably a note book with the same entries is carried for field work, and a copy has to be made into the permanent register when the inspector goes home.

I have discussed the time taken for house-to-house inspection with experienced sanitary inspectors, and find that on an average about five houses can be inspected and recorded per hour.

This estimate is apart from the time required to

(5) The paving, drainage, and sanitary condition of any yard or out-houses belonging to or occupied with the dwelling-house.

(6) The arrangements for the deposit of refuse and ashes.

(7) The existence of any room which would in pursuance of sub-section (7) of Section 17 of the Act of 1909 be a dwelling-house so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation.

(8) Any defects in other matters which may tend to render the dwelling-house dangerous or injurious to the health of an inhabitant.

Article III.—Records of the inspection of dwelling-houses made under and for the purposes of sub-section (1) of Section 17 of the Act of 1909 shall be prepared under the direction and supervision of the Medical Officer of Health, and shall be kept by the Officer of the local authority making the inspection or by some other Officer appointed or employed for the purpose by the local authority.

reach and return from the village. In addition to inspections and their recording, there then follows the heavy work of notice serving. It has been shown in Chapter III that defects are present in a large proportion of the houses inspected. A very large number of informal notices have to be served, and although some of these may be verbally given, most will have to be in writing. These are the notices to the landlords of the houses calling their attention to the defects and the work required to be done to remedy them.

For houses with more serious defects there will be the report to the Medical Officer of Health, and frequently a second visit with him. In addition, there are Reports to the Rural Council or the

The records may be kept in a book or books or on separate sheets or cards, and shall contain information, under appropriate headings, as to :

- (1) The situation of the dwelling-house, and its name or number.
- (2) The name of the Officer who made the inspection.
- (3) The date when the dwelling-house was inspected.
- (4) The date of the last previous inspection and a reference to the record thereof.
- (5) The state of the dwelling-house in regard to each of the matters referred to in Article II. of these Regulations.
- (6) Any action taken by the Medical Officer of Health, or other Officer of the local authority, either independently or on the directions of the local authority.
- (7) The result of any action so taken.
- (8) Any further action which should be taken in respect of the dwelling-house.

Housing Committee, the making out of formal notices, etc.

Extensive as all this is, it is much less than the amount of time which is of necessity taken up by re-visits to the houses in which defects have been found, either to meet the owners, etc., or to inspect the work done. Inspectors find after they have induced owners to realise the necessity for doing up the houses, that they get the best results if they can meet owners, agents, builders, etc., on the spot. Frequently the work is left to be carried out subject to the approval of the Inspector. All this work takes an enormous amount of time, and it is of the utmost importance that it should be carried out properly.

As an illustration of the extent of the visits required, it may be mentioned that during 1912 Dr. Stott, the Medical Officer of Health, records that, in the Rural districts of Battle, Cuckfield, and East Grinstead, and Uckfield (all East Sussex), although only 524 fresh houses were inspected, inspections and re-inspections of houses required 4,822 visits.

The County Medical Officer of Health for Leicestershire, in his 1912 report, mentions that the 4,319 houses inspected involved 7,594 visits ; 2,223 of the houses showed defects. These 7,594 visits are not even the total required, but only those so far required during that year.

In a few districts, systematic housing inspection

was made a definite part of the duty of the sanitary inspectors before the passing of the 1909 Act, and in these districts routine inspections would have been carried out. Theoretically, it has always been part of the work of these officers, but in most districts it has been practically a dead letter.

It may be taken as roughly and approximately true that when a district in the past has been large enough to occupy the time of a whole-time sanitary inspector (apart from the few districts previously carrying out housing inspections), there will be enough work under the new housing regulations to occupy the time of another full-time officer.

We have, therefore, the fact that the 1909 Housing Act and its requirements practically doubles the work of a rural sanitary inspector if those requirements are to be efficiently carried out.

I have made inquiries in many counties. In a few districts some slight assistance in the shape of a little clerical help, the use of a pupil, or partial help from an untrained man, has been given, but in the vast majority of the districts no extra assistance at all has been given. In extremely few, if any, districts, have additional trained inspectors been appointed to do the work, although I know of many instances in which it has been pointed out to the district councils that such help is required and necessary.

Presumably, sanitary inspectors were fully occupied before, and one wonders what work is being

sacrificed. Many rural districts have always been understaffed, and very great credit is due to the officers of those local authorities in whose districts effective steps have been taken to compile a proper housing survey and deal with the defects found.

One result of the shortage of staff is that in many districts the inspector does his ordinary work, and only puts in any spare time left over for housing inspections. It also means that frequently, instead of systematically inspecting village by village, houses are inspected here and there, as the inspector happens to be in the neighbourhood. This is a very unsatisfactory plan, and although at the end of a year the Medical Officer may be able to record that a fair number of houses have been inspected under the Act, it is in no sense making a proper housing survey.

This point has been dealt with in some detail, as it is of considerable importance in connection with the suggestion that a proper housing survey should be undertaken by a special staff appointed and controlled centrally. As explained in Chapter XI, this is in my opinion undesirable, but, if the work is to be efficiently done locally, it is obvious that the local staff must be strengthened.

(2) THE PROGRESS BEING MADE WITH THE SANITARY SURVEY.

The above considerations show that, while a systematic housing survey is being carried on in

TABLE VII
SOMERSET HOUSING—RURAL DISTRICTS

District.	Number of Houses in District.		Houses Inspected.			Percentage of Houses Inspected.			Houses Closed as Unfit, 1911 and 1912.	Houses Closed as Unfit, 1913.
	(Census 1911).		1911.	1912.	1913.	1911.	1912.	1913.		
Axbridge	5,934		400	238	258	7	4	4	6	11
Bath	3,470		159	375	240	5	11	7	2	8
Bridgwater	4,739		985	260	119	21	5	2	4	1
Chard	3,183		302	31	356	10	1	11	4	8
Clutton	3,800		416	619	164	11	16	4	0	2
Dulverton	1,191		256	262	143	21	22	12	0	0
Frome	2,675		220	260	498	8	10	18	0	1
Keynsham	2,322		337	123	74	14	5	3	0	0
Langport	3,314		277	96	264	8	3	7	2	1
Long Ashton	3,739		180	296	335	5	8	9	11	24
Shepton Mallet	2,427		395	355	489	16	15	20	7	8
Taunton	4,079		500	763	534	12	18	13	8	0
Wellington	1,591		173	226	292	11	14	18	0	0
Wells	2,367		449	538	630	19	23	27	3	2
Williton	3,112		270	284	295	9	9	9	0	1
Wincanton	4,014		92	604	825	2	15	20	0	5
Yeovil	4,007		506	550	497	12	14	12	5	5
Totals	56,964		5,917	5,880	6,003	10	10	10.5	54	77

TABLE VIII

County.	Number of Houses in the Rural Districts.	Number Inspected under Housing Act.			Percentage of Houses Inspected.						
		1911.		1912.		1911.		1912.		1913.	
Berkshire	30,870*	—	2,015	1,933	—	—	6.5	6.3			
Derbyshire	59,491	—	5,097	5,655	—	—	8.5	9.5			
Devon	51,596*	2,120	4,553	2,796	4.1	—	8.8	5.4			
Durham	79,481	—	4,964	4,842	—	—	6.2	6.1			
Essex	60,270*	5,329	8,895	5,430	8.8	—	14.7	9.0			
Gloucestershire	53,054	2,365	2,912	3,484	4.4	—	5.4	6.5			
Herefordshire	17,165	546	2,228	2,228	3.2	—	12.9	12.9			
Kent	62,675	2,933	5,742	6,896	4.7	—	9.1	10.0			
Leicestershire	34,292*	—	3,111	2,792	—	—	9.1	8.1			
Northumberland	22,348	2,680	2,258	1,211	11.9	—	8.6	5.4			
Somerset	56,904	5,917	5,880	6,003	10.4	—	10.3	10.5			
Surrey	44,899	3,174	2,451	2,964	7.06	—	5.4	6.6			
Warwickshire	36,854	891	5,088	2,764	2.4	—	13.8	7.5			
Wiltshire	32,900†	3,521	5,385	3,189	10.6‡	—	16.35‡	9.7‡			
Worcestershire	43,450*	4,197	4,767	2,123	9.6	—	10.9	4.9			

* Approximately accurate numbers from the Census returns.

† This figure is not the number of houses, but the number of houses with rental less than £16 per annum (1912 Report).

‡ These percentages are the percentages of houses under £16 per year only, not for all the houses.

many districts, it is not likely to be carried out very rapidly, and actual figures demonstrate this very decidedly. Table VII shows what has been done in the county of Somerset as regards rural districts since the Act came into force. Practically no systematic inspection was undertaken in 1910.

This Table shows that, taking all the rural districts, only 10 per cent. of the houses are being inspected each year, while in some districts the percentage inspected is very much less than this.

This county is by no means behind the average for other districts, as shown by the figures in Table VIII, which has been compiled from the Annual Reports of the Medical Officers of Health of the counties mentioned.

No legal limit has been set to the classes of houses to be inspected, but many, if not most, rural district councils have adopted a rental of £16, the figure for rural districts mentioned under Section 14. The proportion of these houses to the whole will naturally vary with the character of the district, but in most rural districts, houses below this rental constitute about 75 per cent. of the whole.

It must not be assumed that the rate of progress is likely to increase; the probability is all the other way, owing to the immense amount of re-inspections required.

It is obvious that at the present rate of progress something like ten years will be required to finish

the housing survey, and in individual districts anything up to one hundred years.

In some of the districts, owing to the inadequate assistance given them, the Medical Officers of Health have given up trying to make a systematic inspection and attention has been concentrated upon the houses or groups of houses suspected to be in the worst condition. Of course, the proper procedure was for the local authority to give additional assistance.

(3) THE VALUE OF THE SYSTEMATIC RECORDS.

In addition to being the means whereby defects are remedied, the housing survey should furnish a valuable permanent record of the fundamental sanitary condition of the houses in the district. Dilapidations and other matters liable to variation are of much less importance than such fundamental matters as air space, number of rooms, water supply, etc., which do not vary to any great extent.

The value of any records depends upon the ability, care and thoroughness of the persons making them. In my opinion, housing records should be so kept and compiled that any other officer, whether the district Medical Officer of Health, the county Medical Officer of Health, or a Local Government Board Inspector, should be in a position to judge from the records whether the particular house recorded

is, or is not, in a reasonable sanitary condition. This is a simple test as to their efficiency and completeness.

Housing records vary enormously, and while many are admirable, others are largely useless. This is my own experience and that of other county officers. The chief fault is insufficiency of particulars, words with indefinite meaning being used, such as ventilation "good," "fair," and the like. When defects are present they are frequently not located; for example, a house is described as "damp," but the locality and cause of the dampness is omitted. In some cases the entries are quite incorrect.

The importance of this extends beyond the mere record, since it means that many defects go not only unrecorded, but unremedied.

(4) THE EXTENT TO WHICH DEFECTS ARE BEING REMEDIED

Undoubtedly an enormous amount of good work is being carried out throughout the country in improving the condition of existing cottages. The majority of country cottages are neither unfit for habitation nor are they satisfactory. They are for the most part not in accord with modern sanitary ideas in certain particulars, but cannot on these grounds be considered unfit, while in some respects, for example, in the size of the rooms, they are often an improvement on houses now being built. Apart

PROGRESS OF HOUSING SURVEY III

from these inherent defects, examples of which are absence of damp course, small and ill-arranged windows, bedrooms intercommunicating, these houses often show in addition defects readily remedied and which when rectified will greatly improve them. Such defects are numerous (for example, absence of shutting, windows not made to open, defective arrangements for excreta disposal), and while often insufficient in themselves to make the houses unfit for habitation

TABLE IX

Rural District.	Number of Houses Inspected, 1911, 1912, 1913.				Percentages of Houses Inspected.		
	Without Recorded Defects. A.	Defective but not Unfit. B.	Unfit for Habita- tion. C.	Total.	A.	B.	C.
Axbridge - (1912 & 1913 only).	345	126	25	496	69.6	25.4	5.0
Bath -	465	251	58	774	60.0	32.5	7.5
Bridgwater -	694	654	16	1,364	50.9	47.9	1.2
Chard -	232	433	24	689	33.7	62.8	3.5
Clutton -	563	586	50	1,199	46.9	48.9	4.2
Dulverton -	589	72	0	661	89.0	11.0	—
Frome -	691	287	2	980	70.5	29.3	0.2
Keynsham -	8	514	12	534	1.5	96.2	2.3
Langport -	359	275	3	637	36.3	43.3	0.4
Long Ashton Shepton	317	455	39	811	39.1	56.1	4.8
Mallet	372	852	21	1,245	29.1	68.4	2.5
Taunton -	251	1,375	171	1,797	14.0	76.5	9.5
Wellington -	289	395	7	691	41.8	57.2	1.0
Wells -	959	625	33	1,617	59.3	38.7	2.0
Williton -	183	603	62	848	21.6	71.1	7.3
Wincanton -	237	1,249	35	1,521	15.6	82.1	2.3
Yeovil -	337	1,168	38	1,543	21.9	75.6	2.5
Total -	6,891	9,920	496	17,307	39.8	57.3	2.9

they are decidedly prejudicial to the occupants and must be remedied if the houses are to be accepted as reasonably satisfactory.

It is *the* great merit and value of the 1909 Housing Act that the more or less systematic housing survey which is being made is causing many of these defects to be remedied.

Accurate records of the work of this kind which has been done are not available to any extent, but in the county of Somerset I have kept careful records. The results are shown in Table IX.

This Table shows that while under 3 per cent. of the houses were reported as unfit for habitation, as many as 57 per cent. of them showed more or less considerable defects.

Action by local authorities to remedy defects has been taken under several Acts and sections, while much of it has been done by informal notices.

A good deal has been done under Section 15 of the 1909 Housing Act (*see* Cap. II.) The Local Government Board in a White Paper issued in 1913 gives the figures which are set out in Table X.

This report adds :

“ In addition to the repairs and improvements effected to dwelling houses by means of formal action under this Section, local authorities have secured the execution of a large amount of work for the improvement of houses by means of

TABLE X
ACTION TAKEN BY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS UNDER SECTION 15 OF 1909 HOUSING ACT

Period.	Number of Authorities putting this Section into operation.	Number of Houses in Respect to which				Local Authorities Executed or were Executing the Work.	Notices Undisposed of at End of Period.
		Notices were Given.	Landlords elected to close instead of Complying with Notices.	Notices were Satisfactorily Complied with.	Notices were Satisfactorily Complied with.		
December 3rd, 1909, to March 31st, 1911 - - - - -	500	18,927	679	11,649	40	6,081	
Year ending 31st March, 1912 - - - - -	778	43,781	1,269	31,289	176	15,799	
Year ending 31st March, 1913 - - - - -	865	51,915	1,686	42,083	107	19,522	

representations to, or negotiations with, owners without resorting to formal notices under the Act, and, moreover, the number of notices under the Public Health Acts for the removal of nuisances is very large. On a comprehensive view of the action of local authorities and of their sanitary officers, it must be admitted that very distinct progress has been made during the past year in the direction of securing that houses shall be fit for habitation."

These remarks apply to urban as well as rural areas.

The different figures and other data available show that a great work in improving existing cottages is in progress. The actual figures themselves have to be accepted with some caution and with allowances. It cannot be accepted that all houses recorded as houses in which the defects have been remedied have been put into a satisfactory sanitary condition. The value of the records has already been discussed and obviously much will depend upon the thoroughness of inspection and the standards as to requirements of the officials responsible.

Under the conditions under which much of the work is now being carried out, undoubtedly a considerable part of it is badly done, and standards of requirements are very low. It is my experience, for example, that defects recorded and dealt with as defects in one district are neglected in another and possibly not

even recorded. A good illustration of this is in regard to defective shuting to houses.

A few inspectors are incapable of making proper housing inspectors, and seem to think that if a house is kept clean and is not dilapidated it is a quite satisfactory dwelling house, or if not satisfactory, is good enough and reasonably fit. As an illustration, I may mention a row of houses recently inspected by me, which were without through ventilation, the doors and windows all being in front. At the rear of the houses was a cultivated garden belonging to another property draining into a ditch which abutted against and ran alongside the back walls of the cottages. Of course all the back walls of these cottages were quite damp and showed evidence of continuous dampness. In addition these five houses had one privy for the five, some 80 yards away from the nearest house and up a considerable slope. The houses had considerable gardens in front and were clean and not dilapidated. On this account the inspector considered them reasonably satisfactory and had not even thought it necessary to report them to his Medical Officer of Health for his opinion as to their sanitary condition.

While errors such as this are probably not very common, undoubtedly many defects are overlooked and do not get remedied. The weakness of their legal powers is urged by some inspectors as a reason why they cannot take more effective steps to deal with minor defects.

In view of the difficulties in the way it is, I think, highly creditable that local officers have, in general, such high but not unfair standards and get so much work done.

(5) QUALIFICATIONS AND TENURE OF OFFICE OF THE OFFICIALS APPOINTED TO CARRY OUT THE HOUSING INSPECTIONS.

It has been explained that this work is in the hands of the Medical Officer of Health while the Sanitary Inspectors are usually appointed to carry out the inspections under his directions. The majority of Medical Officers of Health in rural districts are engaged in private practice, and only a small minority possess a special public health diploma. The report for 1911-12 of the Medical Officer of the Local Government Board states that on March 31st, 1912, there were 198 Medical Officers of Health not in private medical practice. These officers acted for 175 out of 666 rural districts. This shows that 49.1 or 73.7 per cent. of the rural districts were served by men engaged in general practice.

Dr. Reese, in his report on Poliomyelitis, pointed out that in the two counties of Devon and Cornwall, there were, in 1911, outside the County Boroughs, but two local Medical Officers of Health not engaged in private practice, and that out of 77 Medical Officers of Health, only 22 held a diploma in public health or state medicine.

Public health work is as much a speciality as, for example, eye work, or the study of mental diseases, and it is very desirable that those who hold public health appointments should have had special training in this speciality.

Referring to the combination of this work with general practice, the report of the Medical Officer of the Board referred to above goes on to state :

“ It must be admitted that the increasing number and complexity of the subjects with which Medical Officers of Health are required to be acquainted make it more and more difficult for them to meet the large demands which are made on their time, if satisfactory advice is to be given and judicious action taken.”

These remarks are particularly applicable to rural housing work.

When a Medical Officer of Health is in general practice his official duties often require him to run counter to the wishes of his most influential patients, and many Medical Officers lose, in this way, more than they gain financially from their small official salaries.

The remuneration paid for these appointments held by medical men in practice is usually extremely low, and only becomes adequate to the work when the officer who receives it neglects most of the obligations of the post and confines himself to the barest legal minimum. Officers who take up this

attitude and who from this point of view may be said to be adequately remunerated, are often very popular with their authorities. Unfortunately there are a certain number of Medical Officers of Health who accept this attitude and excuse themselves by declaring that they do as much work as they are paid to do.

In many districts the valuable work undertaken by Medical Officers of Health is very disproportionate to the meagre salary given. This really means that these local authorities are exploiting the public spirit and devotion to ideals of their officers, and it is nothing to the point that such local authorities would frequently prefer their officers to have less public spirit and lower ideals.

The qualifications, experience and efficiency of Sanitary Inspectors in rural districts are, I believe, undergoing steady improvement, and now the majority of these officers are trained capable men with high ideals as to their work. There are, however, still a good many of the old inefficient type appointed at a time when anyone who was prepared to accept the scanty pay, and who was unlikely to be too zealous, was thought good enough for the requirements of rural hygiene. Many are men without any training in public health, with as their chief qualification what they call tact, which on analysis resolves itself in the conviction that it is better to let sleeping dogs lie. They deal with insanitary conditions when they are brought to their notice to the best of their

ability and in the light of their low standards, but as one unwittingly defined his attitude to me "he did not look for trouble."

Where they exist they are a great hindrance to efficient housing action. The difference to the sanitary condition of a district after a few years when a man of this type has been replaced by a trained efficient Sanitary Inspector is often remarkable. It should be obligatory on all rural authorities to only appoint men who possess satisfactory evidence of having been trained in the work which comprises the duties of the appointment.

A great hindrance to the efficient administration of the Housing Acts is the insecurity of tenure of the Medical Officer of Health and the Sanitary Inspector. These officers have to condemn cottages or cause money to be spent upon cottages which in many cases either belong to members of the Council of which they are the paid servants, or belong to persons who are in a position to powerfully influence the members of the Council. The effect is to make the officer have to balance his duties to the community against his means of livelihood, a most unfair position in which to place any person. When each appointment was an annual one, and came up every year for revision, the position was much more unsatisfactory than is now the case, since under the present orders of the Local Government Board the appointment continues without annual reappointment, and a Local Authority has to actively terminate an

appointment instead of merely electing someone else when the appointment lapsed. Slight as the change may appear, in actual practice it makes an enormous difference, for reasons which a little consideration will make obvious.

The importance of the considerations set out above has been urged in most if not in all the Reports of Housing Commissioners, and still administrative inefficiency is allowed to be fostered and encouraged for want of proper remedies. Two extracts may be quoted from such reports.

The Royal Commission on Labour (1894) stated in their Report :

“ We also approve of the suggestion . . . that the Medical Officer of Health in each district should not be allowed to be in private practice ; that he should give up his whole time to the duties of his office ; and that he should not be removable without the consent of the Local Government Board. . . . We are of opinion that in order to increase the independence of the Medical Officer, he should be appointed by the County Council subject to the approval of the Local Government Board.”

The Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill in their Report (1906) state :

“ The Medical Officer of Health should have no private practice ; not only because it is

necessary that he should devote his whole attention to such important matters as housing, over-crowding, and sanitary inspection, but also because no one should be put in the position of having to choose between neglecting a due enforcement of the law and running the risk of injuring his own prospects by making suggestions or taking action disagreeable to those who might otherwise consult him as their physician. By placing sanitary matters under the inspection of capable and disinterested officials, influenced by no local prejudice or interests, greater uniformity and efficiency in administration will be secured."

(6) DIFFICULTIES IN CONNECTION WITH PROPERTY-OWNERS IN HAVING HOUSES PUT INTO HABITABLE REPAIR.

In addition to, on the one hand, legal difficulties such as insufficiency of powers and absence of definitions as to what constitutes unfitness and exactly what defects constitute an insanitary house, and, on the other, administrative difficulties due to officials not properly trained for their work and without security of tenure, there are difficulties in relationship to the owners which have to be faced. For example, poverty on the part of the owners of the defective cottages has to be dealt with. It is quite a mistake to imagine that all rural houses

belong to large and wealthy landowners. Indeed, to properly appreciate these sources of difficulty it will be necessary to consider the different groups of owners separately in this connection.

(a) *The Large Landowners.*—In my experience the large landowners are the most willing of any group of owners to remedy defects and put their houses in sanitary repair. In many such cases the inspector finding the defects has simply to send his notices to the agent for them to be complied with. There may be some delay owing to the estate employing its own carpenters, masons, etc., and the houses have to wait their turn to be dealt with.

Owners of this character do not look upon these cottages as an investment, but as an integral part of their estate, and as such to be kept in order without regard to the fact as to whether the rent received will on economic grounds justify the spending of money upon the cottages.

All landowners are not, however, well off, and some are not in a financial position to deal with their defective houses. Not infrequently the visits of the inspector disclose defects present apart from defective houses, and the landowner is called upon to carry out extensive and costly work. For example, in one village which I had occasion to inspect the water supply was quite impure and liable to dangerous contamination, the village urgently required a proper drainage system, while a large

number of the houses were in a bad sanitary condition, although few could be classed as actually unfit for habitation.

All the village belonged to one impoverished landowner, who in this case was reluctant to do much to improve the village. Pressure brought to bear induced him to promise to deal with the different matters, but he was not in a financial position to do them all at once. A fresh water supply was first installed, then steps were taken to deal with the worst of the houses, followed by part of the drainage system being provided. Subsequently the rest of the drains were put in, and then the remaining houses were dealt with. It took three to four years to render this village reasonably satisfactory, and still work remained to be done.

Obviously in this and similar cases some compromise is essential, and patience and tact must be exercised. This does not mean that houses unfit for habitation should continue to be tolerated, but all the defective houses cannot be put right at once.

(b) *Cottage Property-owners as such.*—Under this heading are grouped owners of cottage property who regard their cottages essentially as a source of income. The cottages are financial assets, and the rents received are part of their income, sometimes an essential part. The houses may have been bought as a speculation or acquired as a legacy. The owners feel under no moral obligation to their tenants as

tenants, such as is admitted by the better class of landowners.

In practice they divide themselves into two groups, the fairly well-to-do owners who, while calculating their cottage rents as part of their income, are not solely or even mainly dependent upon them for their living, and the small poor owners, whose sole or main means of livelihood is the rent received from the few cottages they possess.

The first group are the easier to deal with, but it is often difficult to get repairs carried out. Not infrequently the owners are tradesmen in the village or in neighbouring towns. Their point of view is that they are receiving so little rent that it does not *pay* them to carry out the necessary repairs—as they put it, the rent received does not justify it. It often takes a great deal of persuasion and pressure to make them realise that while this may be their point of view, it is one which does not concern the local authority. Cottages cannot be treated like ordinary merchandise; they house living units of the nation. Public authorities are not concerned to see that cottage owners earn a reasonable percentage on their money; their business in this connection is to satisfy themselves that cottages are maintained in a sanitary condition.

Many of these owners are reasonable men (when they find it useless to be unreasonable) and do not kick against the pricks, but the residuum who do often receive far more consideration than they

deserve. Sometimes it is because they have "friends at court," but a far commoner reason is one which is not so apparent. These recalcitrant owners possess, and often use for all it is worth, a means of delaying compulsory powers against them. They say that rather than carry out the works prescribed to put their cottages in a good condition, they will close them. "It is not worth their while to do the work for the rents they receive." Many rural authorities seem to have firmly made up their minds that they will not build cottages. They know there is a shortage in such villages (if there were not a shortage these houses would be left unoccupied), and they appreciate the point that the closure of the houses would precipitate a housing crisis and force them to build new cottages. The fear of this contingency undoubtedly is, in my opinion, a frequent cause of relaxed requirements as to making owners put their houses into a sanitary condition.

Sometimes this card which the owners suggest they possess will actually be played, but in a good many cases it is mostly bluff, and often when a local authority insists on all its requirements, the owner does not close, but complies and puts his house in order. I have seen many instances of this.

The small cottage owners are a far greater cause of difficulty. Many are widows solely dependent upon the rents to enable them to eke out a penurious existence. Either through sheer want of money or through short-sightedness they have taken all the

rents and put back nothing in repairs, or but the barest minimum capable of satisfying tenants who, owing to the scarcity of houses, are not in a position to rate their requirements high. Naturally, when inspected, their houses are frequently in a most insanitary condition.

The owner will not, often cannot, do the work to make up for the deficiency of regular annual repairs. What is to be done? The Medical Officer of Health represents the house as unfit, and the rural sanitary authority has to consider closure.

Often enough the owner goes, if a man, with indignation, if a woman, with tears, to his or her local representative, and he with zeal voices the "hard case" at the Rural District Council meeting. The Rural Council do not wish to "devour widows' houses," and sometimes in their sympathy with the impoverished owner forget their duty to the unfortunate tenant.

Here, again, the fact that *closure*, the only legal course available, will probably mean shortage and possibly the provision of rate-aided houses may influence their judgment; while, being human, the fact that if they close the house and so abolish an only source of revenue, they may drive the owner to seek parish relief, is a subconscious influence at work, since Rural District Councils are practically identical with the corresponding Boards of Guardians.

A compromise is often arrived at and the owner is allowed to do a very little and to promise to do

a good deal more when he or she can afford to do so. This is usually a very unsatisfactory arrangement, and means the perpetuation of houses which on their merits are quite unfit for habitation.

It would be a useful course in some cases for the Local Authority to buy such houses for what they are *worth* and put them into thorough repair and let them themselves. If this cannot be done, the houses should be closed and the owner must suffer, as we all have to suffer if we neglect ordinary business principles.

Cases such as these are very common in my experience in the country, and the difficulties of dealing with them are far too little appreciated.

(c) *The Owner-occupier*.—Much of what has just been written applies also to the owner-occupier. A large number are owned by most careful and industrious people, who keep their homes in good condition and who, when defects are pointed out, are willing to put them right if time is granted them to do so.

On the other hand, speaking generally, the worst houses I have seen in *rural* districts have been owned by the occupiers. With an entire absence of thrift, they have never reasoned that they should put by some proportion of rent for repairs, and with an appalling indifference to sanitation have allowed their houses to get into a deplorable condition. They have no money to repair, while to close is, in some cases, to

drive them into the workhouse. Local Authorities are often most reluctant to properly deal with these houses and to close them, the same factors described above operating to influence them. The only difference from the above is that the occupants do not want better houses. The remedy in my opinion is the same.

→ The above considerations bring out strongly two facts in regard to the progress which is being made towards a rural housing survey, and placing in sanitary order the existing cottages. The first fact is that even in well-officered districts there is great delay in many cases in having defects remedied. Although an enormous amount of time is taken up, defects often exist for very long periods after they have been officially ascertained. Part of this delay is due to causes not easily to be avoided, part is due to the inefficient methods of inspectors, but a large part is caused by the very inadequate support accorded by the local authorities themselves.

The other fact is that the question of placing the existing houses in a sanitary condition is intimately bound up with the question of the sufficiency of cottages. It is common to find in the reports of district Medical Officers of Health this attitude. A few examples may be quoted. In a Wiltshire rural district the Medical Officer of Health says :

“ Many of the cottages in the district are old and dilapidated, and some would be

recommended to be closed, only there is at present nowhere to re-house the dispossessed tenants. A certain amount of overcrowding exists, and cannot be abated for the same reason."

A Glamorgan district Medical Officer of Health states :

" In the absence of suitable accommodation for the persons displaced, it is often better to choose the lesser of two evils, and to allow such persons to continue to occupy houses known to be unfit for human habitation, rather than close such houses, and thus compel the occupants to seek accommodation in houses already filled by other families, thereby creating great overcrowding."

An Essex rural district Medical Officer of Health writes :

" The inspection under the Housing Acts has been begun, and if I represented every house that might be considered unfit for habitation and got closing orders, we should soon be without sufficient houses for the people to live in."

A Surrey rural district Medical Officer of Health states :

" No closing orders were issued, the Rural District Council having decided not to make

closing orders excepting when other means failed, in view of the scarcity of cottages."

A Cornwall rural district Medical Officer of Health reports :

" In some instances, families in the district are tacitly permitted to remain in overcrowded and insanitary dwellings, in consequence of the knowledge that to evict them would mean consigning them to the workhouse or driving them out of the district. The only remedy for this is for the District Council to undertake the erection of suitable cottages."

Given a sufficiency of houses, comparatively little difficulty would be experienced in seeing that the existing houses were put and maintained in repair.

HOUSING SHORTAGE

CHAPTER VI

HOUSING SHORTAGE

WHILE the acuteness of the shortage of cottages in rural districts has only been realised and brought prominently forward during the last few years, there is ample evidence that such shortage has existed for a good many years.

The Report of the Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill published in 1906 states :

“ The Committee have had abundant evidence before them as to the insufficiency of cottages in rural districts. Cases have been brought to their notice in which people have had to leave a village because of the lack of house accommodation, while others have been prevented from coming to live in a district because no house or cottage was to be found fit to live in and there was no one financially interested in meeting the demand by building. The house famine in town and country which often exists in regard to the working classes is incontestable. The many investigations, Royal Commissions on Housing and Labour, etc.,

Select Committees of the House of Commons, and official departmental reports, have placed the fact beyond controversy."

The Reports of the Royal Commission on Labour give a good deal of information in regard to this question. For example, the General Report, by Mr. William C. Little, presented to Parliament in 1893, states :

" The general effect of all the Reports is that cottages are sufficient in number for the present population, but that they are unevenly distributed and consequently redundant in some places and scarce in others."

He quotes one Assistant Commissioner as finding that the chief deficiency is said to be in respect of cottages on the farms, the consequence being that labourers have frequently long distances to walk to their work.

Read carefully, however, these reports show that in a good many individual parishes, there was very evident shortage of houses. The report of Mr. Richards, one of the Assistant Commissioners, states :

" In every district there is a mixture of conditions in regard to the supply of cottages. Of all it is probably correct to say that in those villages which are ' close,' *i.e.*, the property of one owner, the supply is deficient, while in

'open' villages it is abundant. . . . I do not remember in any district having found a good cottage vacant, while in many villages it has been said that on the event of a marriage, the newly-married couple would have to lodge with the parents of one until a cottage should become vacant. As compared with the past there are everywhere fewer cottages, but in proportion to the population, more."

The Housing Commission of 1885 found some evidence of shortage, but not to the extent of it being considered a crying evil.

The short historical sketch of the subject given in Chapter I makes it evident that the question of rural housing sufficiency has gone through several phases. At one time, for reasons there explained, there was probably an excess of cottages. Owing to the natural decay of many country cottages and the systematic destruction of others, this excess was reduced, although for a long time there was no evidence of shortage apart from local shortage due to local conditions and local inconvenience of distribution.

Within the last thirty years or so there has been evidence of a general insufficiency of cottages. While the rural population has been diminishing three factors have been operating to reduce the number of available labourers' cottages still more rapidly. One is the fact that while very few cottages are being

erected, many of the existing cottages are falling to pieces from age and decay, and are not worth repairing. Such derelict cottages are a common feature of the country-side (Fig 24). The second factor is the steady, although slow, development of higher housing standards and a diminution of the ineffectiveness of rural sanitary administration in regard to these matters, resulting in the direct or indirect closure of many cottages that otherwise would have been allowed to continue to be occupied.

The third factor is the rediscovery of the country by some of those who live in towns. Undoubtedly there is a demand for houses in rural areas by a number of persons who have no immediate concern with the land. Some work in small towns, but prefer to live in the country; policemen, postmen, and others are now more required in country villages or retire into them; work is found in the village owing to the greater use of the roads by motors, etc. In addition many old-age pensioners are spared removal to the workhouses and occupy cottages in their native villages. The continued expansion of trade has also in some cases caused local developments in the villages, although my experience of the country generally is not sufficiently wide to enable me to state that there is any very active expansion and extension of local industries.

All these factors have combined to cause at the present time a widespread housing shortage in the country districts generally.



FIG. 24.—A derelict house ; a common object in the country-side.

This particular house was only closed by order of the Local Authority (after pressure by the County Council) about two years before the photograph was taken. It was allowed to be occupied with the roof falling in, total absence of closet accommodation, extreme dampness, and other sanitary defects.



FIG. 25.—An unfit house still occupied, although represented to the Local Authority by their Medical Officer of Health, over *two* years earlier, as unfit for habitation. The whole house is grossly insanitary.

More houses are urgently required in this parish, and, if provided, this and other unfit houses could be dealt with.

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This general shortage is so amply proved by the numerous reports of medical officers of health, county and district, by the evidence given before Housing Committees and by the reports of independent investigations, and is so generally accepted that it is not necessary to occupy time and space in proving an accepted proposition.

While the existence of a general shortage is admitted, a great deal more information is required as to its precise extent and distribution, and in particular as to the classes of persons for whom there is a shortage of houses. The factors which maintain and which are still operating to accentuate it, need to be rediscussed and carefully considered.

In Chapter I some particulars are given showing the decline in the populaion of the purely agricultural villages in Somerset. As a further contribution to this difficult question the following details may be of interest in regard to parishes in Somerset in which, from personal investigations on the spot, I concluded that there was need for more houses.

A few of the facts may be conveniently tabulated (*see* Table XI).

I.—This is a parish of 2,546 acres. The population has not shown much alteration during the past twenty years, being 592 in 1891, 609 in 1901 and 553 in 1911. In March, 1911, a complaint was received by the County Council from upwards of four inhabitant householders of the rural district

TABLE XI

Parish.	Date of Origin of Complaint or First Investigation.	Origin of Action.	Main Causes of Housing Shortage.	Result of Complaints or Reports (to end of 1914).
I.	March, 1911	Complaint by four householders to C.C.	Insufficient houses and some unfit.	No new houses provided; old repaired.
II.	May, 1912	Complaint by C.M.O.H.	Numerous unfit houses.	Loan granted for seven houses.
III.	March, 1912	Complaint by C.M.O.H.	Numerous unfit houses.	Action postponed.
IV.	Jan., 1913	Petition to C.C. by four householders.	Insufficient houses.	Co-partnership scheme erecting houses.
V.	Jan., 1911	Petition to R.D.C. by Parish Council.	Insufficient houses and some unfit.	R.D.C. to erect four houses.
VI.	July, 1913	Complaint by C.M.O.H.	Numerous unfit houses.	R.D.C. making a thorough inspection.
VII.	Sept., 1913	Complaint by C.M.O.H.	Some insufficiency.	R.D.C. to build four houses.
VIII.	Oct., 1913	Complaint by Parish Council.	Insufficient houses and some unfit.	R.D.C. to build four houses.
IX.	1912	Inspection of District by M.O.H.	A number of unfit houses.	Unfit houses to be made fit.
X.	1912	Inspection of District by M.O.H.	A number of unfit houses.	Unfit houses to be made fit.
XI.	1912	Inspection of District by M.O.H., etc.	Insufficient houses and some unfit.	R.D.C. intend to provide more houses.
XII.	March, 1913	Complaint of Ratepayers to R.D.C.	Insufficient houses; some unfit.	Under consideration by R.D.C.
XIII.	Jan., 1914	Complaint by C.M.O.H.	Insufficient houses and some unfit.	R.D.C. to build additional houses.

NOTE.—C.M.O.H. = County Medical Officer of Health.

R.D.C. = Rural District Council.

C.C. = County Council.

of the scarcity of houses in this parish. The complaint was referred to the Rural District Council, who appointed a committee to investigate. The committee reported against the need for houses, but the petitioners disputed the report and referred to the County Council. In July, 1911, four Commissioners appointed by the County Council held an inquiry as to housing sufficiency on the complaint of four inhabitant householders. After hearing evidence the commissioners concluded that there was no evidence that the Rural District Council had failed to exercise their powers in regard to providing houses. The case was rather badly presented by the petitioners. I made a careful inspection, March, 1912, and concluded that the conditions had changed and that there was then an insufficiency of houses in the parish. There were no empty available cottages, three families shortly would have to turn out of their cottages and there were no houses for them to go into, while at least eight houses were, in their then condition, unfit for habitation and there was nowhere in the parish for the occupiers to go if closing orders were made. My report to the Public Health and Housing Committee was sent on to the District Council, but no steps were taken by them to provide more houses, although steps were taken to improve the unfit houses.

A third special visit was paid September 18th, 1912. The houses previously unfit were all improved and although still unsatisfactory in a number

of ways, only one house could be said to be definitely unfit and for this (although still occupied) the Rural District Council had made a closing order. As at the previous visit there were *no* empty available houses. On this occasion, apart from the man and wife in the unfit house, there were no definite persons wanting houses and unable to get them, although there were several persons who wanted better houses and were willing to pay for them. On this occasion there was what I described as a state of unstable equilibrium between families and houses. There was about one house and one house only available for each of the families who wanted one and if the house they occupied was unsuitable as regards size or rent there was no choice. At any moment this equilibrium might break down.

A further inspection in May, 1913, showed that the conditions were very much as in September, 1912, except that there was rather more evidence as to persons wanting houses and being unable to obtain them. The condemned house was still occupied although totally unfit for habitation and the Rural Council had presumably not enforced their order because there was no house in the village for the occupant to move into. As before, there were no available empty houses in the village.

The unfit house was subsequently demolished and a new one erected in its place.

This is a purely agricultural village six miles from a town of any considerable size. While there were

originally a number of unfit houses, all but two could, and in the end were, made more or less fit for habitation.

At no time was there evidence of marked shortage, and since any excess of population must drift away ultimately there was no likelihood of there ever being any considerable demonstrable need for houses at any one time. This being the case it was most difficult to *prove* that more houses should be provided in this village. Obviously, however, the conditions shown were unsatisfactory, and a rural village was prevented from developing. In my opinion four to six houses if erected would have readily let at about 3s. 6d. to 4s. rents.

The facts in this case are given in some detail, as the whole furnishes an excellent illustration of the way villages are prevented from developing and of conditions which are unfortunately prevalent in many country parishes.

II.—This is a large scattered parish of 5,063 acres, with a population of 969 in 1911, which has diminished by about 100 persons during the last twenty years. It is a purely agricultural village, not near any town, while the occupants are largely engaged in peat cutting or agricultural work.

There has never been any demand for additional houses from the parish and no evidence has been advanced that there is any serious housing shortage. The proof of the need for additional houses rests

entirely upon the bad condition of the existing cottages. Many of these are extremely bad and unfit for habitation. A large proportion of these unfit houses cannot be made fit for occupation by any reasonable expenditure. These houses cannot be closed since if this is done there are no available houses for the occupants to remove into. Some of the worst houses are owned by the occupiers.

My report on the subject in May, 1912, was referred to the Rural District Council, who at once took it up, investigated the question for themselves and decided to build. There were considerable difficulties in the way, but the application of the Rural Council to raise a loan of £1,500 for the erection of seven houses was the subject of a Local Government Board Inquiry in March, 1914. Approval was subsequently given.

It is of interest to note that there was great local opposition, the inhabitants as a body being opposed to the scheme. Most of this was due to the fear that there would be a heavy charge on the rates levied on the parish. The uncertainty as to whether any deficiency would be a charge on the parish or the whole rural district is a great difficulty in the way of housing construction.

III.—A rural parish with a population in 1911 of 359. The population has only declined 31 in the last twenty years, but in 1841 there were 707

inhabitants, the great decline being due to the cessation of lead-mining.

The conditions here were similar to those in Parish No. II. There was no evidence of a natural increase of population with a demand for more houses. Additional houses were required owing to a considerable number of the existing houses being unfit for habitation. There were no empty houses to move into and the Rural District Council refrained from making closing orders in consequence until pressure was exerted by the County Council. There was a good deal of overcrowding. In this case also some of the worst houses were owned by the occupiers.

No action was being taken in the matter until I investigated the question for myself and reported to the Public Health Committee of the County Council.

No effective action was taken by the Rural District Council, but a formal complaint was made to the County Council by four householders, and on this a County Council Inquiry was held. The County Council Commissioners found that the Rural District Council ought to have exercised their powers under Part III. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, and had failed to do so.

The Rural District Council gave an undertaking to deal with the matter within a fixed time limit. In pursuance of this they subsequently applied to the Local Government Board for sanction to borrow the sum of £220 for land, and asked the same to be

charged on the parish as special expenses. This application was considered at a Local Government Board Inquiry. Owing to the belief that the charge would be upon the parish, it was opposed by the Parish Council and local inhabitants. The land was considered unsuitable by the Local Government Board and the sanction to the loan was not given.

The County Council allowed the matter to stand over for a year to see whether the erection of the additional houses in a neighbouring parish (No. IV. below) would remedy the insufficiency.

The Rural Council were throughout opposed to action and took no steps to facilitate the scheme beyond their undertaking. While technically applying for land at the Local Government Board Inquiry, they advanced evidence against the need for houses and their own application.

IV.—A large parish of 4,158 acres, in which the population has risen from 1,259 in 1881 to 1,542 in 1911. The recent growth of the population is due to this parish having developed rapidly as a well-to-do residential neighbourhood. The growth of cottage property was practically *nil* while some five or six cottages for the working class had been converted into week-end cottages.

For the most part the builders or the occupants of the villas and residential houses had not provided cottages for the gardeners and coachmen, etc.,

working for them. This had caused both a scarcity of houses and a rise in the rents of existing cottages.

When investigated, there were very few houses unfit for human habitation, but there were no empty houses suitable for the working classes.

A local inquiry was held by Commissioners appointed by the County Council and at this inquiry a considerable number of persons applied for houses, most of the applications being, on investigation, genuine. Although the Rural District Council must have known of the shortage for years, no report by their officers had been made to them and they had not made the slightest attempt to deal with the housing deficiency.

The deficiency of houses was one which could be readily dealt with by a co-operative scheme, as for the most part remunerative rents could be paid. A co-operative housing society was formed, and a number of houses have been erected. Pending the erection of these houses further action is in abeyance.

V.—This parish had a population of 945 in 1911. The population dropped from 1,228 in 1861 to 1,069 in 1891 and again to 989 in 1901. In this case the question of housing insufficiency was first raised by the Parish Council. The shortage was primarily due to an insufficiency of existing houses, there being a number of would-be occupants without houses, while the need was increased by the insanitary and

defective condition of a number of the existing houses. Some of them should have been condemned as unfit.

The inhabitants were in part agricultural labourers, but a considerable number of the men worked at a local toothbrush factory, while many of the women were employed at this work as outworkers in their own homes.

The committee of the Rural District council appointed to investigate (July, 1911) came to the conclusion that sufficient cause for involving the parish or the district in the provision of cottages had not been shown. In May and November, 1912, I inquired into housing questions on the spot, without knowing of this report, and came to the conclusion that more houses were required. Subsequently four inhabitant householders complained to the County Council, and Commissioners appointed by them held a local inquiry, and concluded that the Rural District Council ought to have exercised their powers under Part III. of the 1890 Housing Act, and had failed to do so.

The Rural District Council subsequently agreed to erect four houses, but none have been erected by the end of 1914.

VI.—A fairly large mining village forming part of a parish with a population in 1911 of 2,204. No formal complaint had been made to the District Council by any of the occupiers or persons in the District Council as to the need for additional houses,

nor had any report been made to them by their officers. No action at all was taken until I investigated the housing conditions in July, 1913 (acting on my knowledge of local conditions), and reported the facts to the Public Health Committee of the County Council.

There were no empty houses, while there was evidence that more houses were required, apart from the question of unfit houses. There was a considerable number of houses quite unfit for human habitation, none of which had been represented by the local Medical Officer of Health as unfit. If these houses had been closed there was nowhere for the occupants to go to.

The Rural District Council subsequently agreed to make a careful investigation and deal with the matter. This was still in hand at the end of 1914. The population is almost entirely engaged in coal-mining, and economic rents could be paid in most cases.

This is a good illustration of the absurdity of contending that because no definite complaints are made by the inhabitants, therefore local conditions cannot be very unsatisfactory.

VII.—This village forms part of a large parish, so its population is not available. There was a marked demand for more houses, due, in the main, to the opening two years earlier of a large condensed milk factory and, to a lesser extent, to railway workers renting some of the houses, the village being near a small railway junction and terminus. There were

some unfit houses, but, as they could readily be made fit, they did not really affect the problem.

In this case until after my report to the County Council and its transmission to the District Council, no complaints at all were made as far as I could ascertain to either the District Council, the County Council, or the Local Government Board, although evidence showing that more houses were required was easily obtainable, and was common talk in the village.

The Rural District Council subsequently agreed to purchase land and erect four cottages and the Local Government Board inquiry for the loan was held October, 1914.

VIII.—A purely rural parish, with a population of 186 in 1911. The complaint as to housing shortage originated with the Parish Council. The evidence that more houses were required, apart from existing defective cottages, was not very strong. Several of the houses were unfit for habitation, while a number showed extensive defects. While there were several empty houses, none of them could be considered as really available for the needs of the village. The Rural District Council, after considering the complaint of the County Council agreed to proceed with a scheme for the erection of four houses. A Local Government Board inquiry for a loan for this purpose was held August, 1914.

IX.—A purely rural village, with a population of only 314 in 1911. The population had decreased

by 68 in the last twenty years. There were no empty houses, and in several instances persons had had to leave the district because there were no houses, but the main cause of the insufficiency was because some seven to eight of the existing houses were unfit for habitation, and if closed there were no houses for the displaced occupants.

These houses were reported as unfit by the district Medical Officer of Health, and the need for more houses arose on his action. The Rural District Council is endeavouring to have the defective houses made fit for habitation.

X.—A fairly large parish with a population of 790 in 1911. The population has decreased by 165 in twenty years. This parish is in the same rural district as No. IX., and the complaint arose in the same way. No evidence of any demand for more houses was forthcoming, but more than a dozen of the existing houses were unfit when inspected, and if closed, there were no houses for the occupants to move into.

This is being dealt with in the same way as No. IX.

XI.—An important and growing parish, with a population in 1911 of 1,269. When investigated, there was a marked insufficiency of houses, while there was a small number of unfit houses. A good many cases of overcrowding existed. There were no vacant houses. The village is an important centre, while in summer many visitors stay in this and neighbouring villages. In this instance the Rural

District Council has been alive to the need for more houses for several years, but has experienced great difficulty in obtaining suitable land. It is at least four years since the need for houses was proved, but none have been provided up to the end of 1914.

XII.—A large hamlet, forming part of a large parish of 10,484 acres, with a population of 3,338 (1911). The complaint as to more houses originated with rate-payers in the parish, who complained to the District Council in March, 1913. The latter appointed a special committee, who recommended that the District Council should take no action in the matter at present. A further petition from inhabitants was referred to the Parish Council, who reported "That the Parish Council is of opinion that the need for cottages, if such exist, is not sufficient to warrant the erection of cottages by your Council." This decided the Rural Council to take no further action.

The matter came before the Local Government Board, who asked for the observations of the County Council. My own investigations were that there was only one empty house in the district, and this was unsatisfactory, while there were several persons requiring houses who were unable to obtain them. There were also a good many houses unfit for habitation, only some of which with reasonable expenditure could be made fit to live in.

Still under consideration by the District Council at the end of 1914.

XIII.—This is a small town, with a population of 1,755, although situated in a rural district. No complaints were made under the Housing Acts, but I investigated the question from my knowledge of local conditions. There was an actual insufficiency of houses, while, in addition, a number of unfit houses were not being dealt with owing to there being no houses for the occupants to move into if their houses were closed. These unfit houses were not being represented as unfit by the Medical Officer of Health, so the District Council were not kept informed of the urgent need for additional houses. A housing scheme was subsequently formulated and the Local Government Board Inquiry to borrow £2,500 for a housing scheme was held November, 1914.

These brief notes illustrate the ineffectiveness of the existing local machinery to bring to light housing deficiency. They also show how difficult it is to get even really glaring cases of housing insufficiency dealt with. Even with a County Council in favour of effective action the disinclination of district councils to run any risk of burdening the local rates is such a powerful dead weight, that the net result of an immense amount of inspection and special inquiry has only been to put in motion machinery to build a very few houses, most of which two years, or more, after the shortage of sufficient good houses was proved, remain unbuilt, and exist only in paper schemes.

From these and many additional inquiries in

Somerset and in other counties certain conclusions which are probably of wide applicability may be drawn. There are two main causes of a real shortage of houses fit for habitation. One cause is an actual deficiency of houses, good, bad and indifferent, to meet the needs of those who would wish to live, or have business inducing them to reside, in the parish concerned. The other cause is a deficiency of houses fit to live in. As set out in Chapter III, many of the existing cottages are unfit for habitation, and are only allowed to exist because there are no others for the occupants to go into, and to close them is to render the existing tenants homeless (Fig. 25). Not infrequently both causes are in operation in the same parish.

In purely agricultural parishes, it is often the defectiveness of the existing houses which is the cause of the shortage. There can be no doubt that in a very large number of such parishes a more or less unstable equilibrium exists between houses and would-be occupants. For reasons which have been discussed above, although the population has declined, the diminution of houses has kept pace with it. It is characteristic of such villages that there are no available empty houses in them. There is no expansion, and no possibility of expansion is encouraged by the building of cottages. The excess population has to migrate elsewhere. In spite of temporary shortage, they have managed to carry on, and enough cottages have been left to just serve

to provide labourers and others for the land and its direct or indirect needs. This balance has only been maintained in the past by the perpetuation of most deplorable cottages, since very few new ones are being built.

The three factors instanced above are changing all this, and a real, though largely inarticulate, need for cottages in these agricultural parishes is manifesting itself. Whether the need is slight or marked will depend mainly upon the condition of the existing cottages.

The parishes of this class are those in which, while the need for more cottages is real it is not marked, and it is most difficult to bring home the necessity for their provision. The occupiers rarely complain, and those who cannot obtain any sort of cottage migrate so that there is at any one time little evidence of persons wanting cottages.

In one of the parishes (No. XII.) of this character at the time of my visit the blank walls of the village were placarded with an account of an illustrated lecture to be given that night in the village upon the advantages of Canada as a place for agriculturalists. No doubt the glowing pictures and the marked contrast between "here" and "there" would soon remove the shortage complained of, and the housing insufficiency in the parish would be *cured*.

The parishes in which shortage is a clamorous evil are very rarely if ever purely agricultural in

character. In these some new local industry has developed or extended, and there are no houses to supply the increased population. No. VII. of the above is an excellent illustration of this, while Nos. IV. and XI. are really of the same character.

The housing schemes which have been passed in different parts of England usually refer to parishes which come under this category.

Nos. II. and III. are very good examples of parishes in which the need for houses is entirely due to the defective condition of the existing ones, and in which the demand for more houses has not arisen from within, but to supply proper houses to take the place of those condemned.

The above considerations show that shortage of rural houses is a condition due to varied causes which it is important to recognise if suitable steps are to be taken to provide more houses.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH HOUSES ARE BEING PROVIDED

The persons or bodies to be looked to for the supply of houses may be grouped as follows :

A.—Private enterprise.

B.—Landowners and landlords.

C.—Local employers of labour for their work-people.

D.—Local authorities.

E.—The State.

A.—*Private Enterprise*

The general law of supply and demand is largely adequate to maintain a sufficient supply of houses in large towns, but is inoperative in purely agricultural districts and in most districts mainly agricultural. The essential cause of this is that an economic rent is not paid in these districts. The majority of the cottages have been erected by the large landowners in connection with their property, and are let either at a nominal rent or the rent is included as part of the wages paid to the occupier. As explained in Chapter I the policy of very low wages necessitated some such arrangement, as with these low wages any considerable rent was impossible.

The great bulk of the existing cottages were erected at a time when the cost of construction was considerably lower and when the requirements demanded and supplied as regards accommodation and sanitary conditions were much less than at present. It was often possible for a landowner to erect rather more cottages than were actually required for his own men, and to let the others without loss.

A number of the houses were erected by "squatters" on waste land, for which they paid nothing, and being of extremely poor construction cost very little to build.

At the present time certain factors have largely stopped the building of rural cottages by private

enterprise. The most important of these factors is the inability of the rural worker to pay a remunerative rent. The wages of the agricultural labourer are too low to, in general, enable him to pay a rent which will give the builder a reasonable profit.

A number of inquiries have been made and published upon the wages of the agricultural labourer, of which the official inquiry in 1907* is the most important.

In this report the Board of Trade took the weekly cash wages, and added all extra wages and money paid, estimated for all allowances (such as free house, fuel, food, any allotments, etc.) and made deductions (if any) from the weekly cash wages on account of lost time, sickness, etc. The resulting figures gave the total earnings and when divided by fifty-two the weekly earnings. In England, Wales and Scotland the value of a cottage was taken at £4 per annum. On this basis the average weekly earnings in 1907 in England of able-bodied labourers in regular employment was as follows :

				s.	d.
Ordinary labourers	-	-	-	=	17 6
Horsemen	-	-	-	=	18 9
Cattlemen	-	-	-	=	19 1
Shepherds	-	-	-	=	19 7
All Classes	-	-	-	=	18 4

* Report of an Inquiry by the Board of Trade into the Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople of the United Kingdom. Vol. V., *Agriculture in 1907*.

The English counties, with the lowest average weekly earnings, *i.e.*, under 18s. for all classes, were as follows :

County.	All Classes.		Ordinary Agricultural Labourers.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Oxfordshire - - -	16	4	14	11
Norfolk - - -	16	6	15	4
Dorset - - -	16	6	16	1
Suffolk - - -	16	7	15	9
Wiltshire - - -	16	9	16	0
Gloucester - - -	17	1	16	3
Worcestershire - - -	17	2	16	3
Huntingdonshire - - -	17	2	16	2
Cambridgeshire - - -	17	2	16	3
Bedfordshire - - -	17	5	16	3
Essex - - -	17	7	16	4
Somerset - - -	17	8	17	3
Buckinghamshire - - -	17	9	16	11
Berkshire - - -	17	9	16	8
Rutlandshire - - -	17	10	17	0
Northamptonshire - - -	17	10	16	9
Herefordshire - - -	17	11	17	1

These figures are for 1907, but the Labour Statistics of the United Kingdom and other investigations show that only a very slight rise has taken place since that date. The rise is less than the proportional rise in the cost of living.

As regards the cost of construction, labourers' cottages cost much more now than ever before, in part due to the increased cost of building materials and builders' wages, but mainly due to the increased standards of requirement.

Neither the labourer himself nor the Local Authority which is responsible for the public health conditions of the district would tolerate to-day conditions which were considered suitable or at least good enough many years ago. Better material, better general construction, more accommodation, proper sanitary arrangements are demanded, and all cost money and increase the cost of the houses. Often odd pieces of waste land, acquired at little or no cost, were utilised to build upon, such matters as through ventilation, proper means of excreta disposal, air space round the house, etc., not being taken into consideration at all. Houses were constructed of "cob" or other cheap material, drains there were none, and any water supply was good enough. All these factors made for cheap construction.

It is frequently asserted that much of the increased cost of building houses in rural districts, and consequently operating as an important factor in the housing shortage, is the existence of restrictive building bye-laws. It is alleged that by their unnecessary stringency they prevent the erection of buildings quite suitable in themselves and not costly in construction, the provision of which would to a considerable extent solve the problem of housing

THE
CITY OF
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FIG. 26.—This lane forms part of a small town of about 1,900 people situated in a rural district and forming part of a large parish, the rest of which is purely rural in type. The congestion of the houses and the conditions prevailing resemble those met with in large cities. The building by-laws in force in this district are identical with those in force throughout the other rural parishes. *To face page 159.*

shortage. This frequently reiterated claim needs careful consideration.

To clearly understand the matter it is necessary to remember that the bye-laws in force in different rural districts are not uniform, but of varying degrees of stringency. Each district may put into force any building bye-laws approved by the Local Government Board and a Rural District Council may even adopt bye-laws of urban type if they are invested by the Board with the necessary powers. In theory the local authority elaborates its own bye-laws and submits them to the Local Government Board for their approval, but inasmuch as the Board have issued a series of model bye-laws, for rural and urban districts respectively, and any extensive deviations from them do not usually meet with the approval of the Board, it works out in practice that, as a rule and certainly for all purely rural areas, the bye-laws in force very closely approximate to one or other of the model types of the Board.

The urban model is unsuitable for purely rural districts, although unfortunately in the past it has been adopted in a number of districts which are in large part rural in type.

Difficulty also arises in districts which are legally and technically "rural districts," but which owing to later development have or are becoming urban in character (Fig. 26). In a circular letter to District Councils issued August, 1912, by the Local Government Board, this difficulty is

recognised and the letter states in reference to bye-laws :

“ The Board have also tentatively framed for working purposes a series intermediate in character between the urban and rural model codes suitable for rural areas which are beginning to assume urban characteristics.”

It is a fact that in certain areas more or less purely rural bye-laws of urban type and of unnecessary restrictive character have been and are, to a considerable extent in force. It is a legitimate grievance that *these* bye-laws are a hindrance to efficient, yet inexpensive, building construction in purely rural districts. This is recognised by the Local Government Board in the letter of August, 1912, quoted above. This states :

“ New methods of construction and design will almost inevitably demand periodical revision of bye-laws. . . . Rural District Councils should be careful to see that the requirements of their bye-laws, whilst prescribing conditions essential to health, are not such as to offer any impediment to the erection of suitable dwellings. There are some Rural Districts in which a code of bye-laws, based on the Board's original model series, which was drawn up with special reference to Urban Areas, is still in force. These codes are not only more stringent than the Board

would at the present day consider necessary in a Rural Area, but are not relieved by the relaxations and modifications which have been embodied in the latest model code for Urban Districts with a view not only of meeting special difficulties but of securing greater flexibility in the administration of the bye-laws. The Councils of these districts should take the matter into early consideration and see whether a less exacting series of bye-laws would not meet the reasonable requirements of their area."

The extent to which adoption of the bye-laws has taken place up to 1912 is shown in the following table* :

TABLE XII

Year.	Number of Rural Districts.	Districts with no Bye-laws.	Urban Model Substantially Followed.		Rural Model Substantially Followed.		Neither Model Followed.	
			Whole District.	Part of District.	Whole District.	Part of District.	Whole District.	Part of District.
1905	668	246	169	114	106	32	11	6
1912	655	180	139	99	206	50	10	1

It is now easy for Rural Districts to amend unsuitable bye-laws, and the essential question in any discussion upon bye-laws should be only as to how

* Report of Departmental Committee on the Equipment of Small Holdings, 1913.

far the present model rural bye-laws issued in 1903 are unnecessarily restrictive in character.

The following remarks apply to the model bye-laws :

It cannot be said that they are unduly restrictive in their requirements as to building material, thickness of walls, etc. The only bye-laws dealing with these matters are Nos. 4 and 5, and they only deal with the provision of a damp course, double walls below the surface level of the ground, etc. Apart from this, the builder is entirely unfettered as regards material, size, thickness, and strength.

The next bye-laws (6 and 7) deal with the provision of open space about building. These are necessary requirements, and their only restriction is that they will prevent crowding together of cottages on a small area, such as has taken place in the past with very unsatisfactory results.

The next group of bye-laws deal with the sufficiency of the ventilation of the houses, and cannot be said to be restrictive.

Bye-laws 13 to 20 deal with the drainage of buildings. In effect they provide that if buildings require proper drains, such drains shall be of suitable material, and carried out in accordance with modern conceptions. A few of these requirements are perhaps rather onerous and would add to the expense, and for small houses it may be contended that they are not all required.

Bye-laws 21 to 25 deal with water closets. They only apply where such appliances are constructed, and it cannot be said that they will tend to the provision of water closets, since for example hand-flushed water closets are prohibited, the flush having to be provided whether the water closet is within or without the house.

Bye-laws 26 to 33 deal with earth closets and privies, and are all reasonable requirements where such methods of disposal are provided.

Bye-laws 34 to 39 deal with the provision of ash-pits where such are constructed. As a rule in country districts there will be no need to provide fixed ash-pits.

Bye-laws 40 to 43 deal with construction and provision of cesspools. These are not unreasonable although they must add somewhat to the cost, since the distance from the house required by these bye-laws is likely to be greater than a builder unfettered by them would probably consider necessary. They require cesspools to be impervious ; a very necessary requirement. Where no bye-laws exist, they are frequently simply lined with brick, and as such, of course, are pervious, and heavily contaminate the ground.

The remaining bye-laws chiefly deal with notices, plans, etc. They require that proper plans should be sent in and due notice served.

Dealing with the whole question it must be admitted that the provision of bye-laws means

that houses cannot be built quite so cheaply as where there are no bye-laws. The difference, however, in price between the two is largely a question as to whether certain provisions which sanitary science has shown to be necessary are carried out or not. For houses properly constructed with due regard to sanitary requirements it cannot be said that the existence of bye-laws would make any substantial addition to their cost. What they will largely prevent is the construction of insanitary houses, and these surely should be prevented from being erected. A good deal of discussion goes on at the present time in regard to the use of cheap material in building houses. It will be noticed that the presence or absence of the model bye-laws makes no difference in this respect, as all such materials would be permitted whether these bye-laws were in force or not.

The importance of having bye-laws for new buildings is insufficiently recognised in many rural districts. It is optional for rural districts to obtain them, and the table quoted above shows that for 1912 as many as 180 districts, *i.e.*, 27·5 per cent. of the whole were without bye-laws. It is not the practice of the Local Government Board to put any pressure on Local Authorities to adopt bye-laws, except in special cases where representation is made to them that some regulation of building is urgently needed.

In recent years a considerable number have

obtained bye-laws, but the number without is still most unsatisfactory. Pressure is sometimes exerted by the County Councils.

A great deal of the present difficulties with existing houses is due to the erection in the past of houses which were unsatisfactory *when built*. It must be remembered that without building bye-laws no plans need be submitted: it is no one's business to inspect them during or after construction, and houses may be and often have been erected full of defects.

The Local Authority has to be satisfied that there is a proper water supply, but this is all, and this is usually done *after* the house has been built.

It may be said that builders will see to the erection of sanitary houses in their own interest. Many will, particularly as regards those sanitary requirements, such as damp courses, which cost very little extra. On the other hand there are a good many who through greed or ignorance do not, unless compelled, build in accordance with recognised sanitary requirements.

I have seen during the past few years in rural districts without bye-laws, houses erected without any kind of damp course, and with other important sanitary defects, many of which were most difficult to remedy after completion.

It is absurd to set up machinery for making systematic inspections of houses already constructed, in order to discover defects and insanitary conditions, when in the same district there are no regulations

in force to prevent the erection of houses perpetuating and duplicating the same faulty conditions which the inspection is designed to eliminate.

It is a matter of great importance that definite minimum requirements should be framed and made universal throughout all rural districts. Nothing more clearly shows the backwardness of the housing question in rural districts than the fact that in over one quarter of these districts as late as 1912, it was possible to put up any kind of dwelling house without supervision or control, the only check being the fact that when built the house could be dealt with like other existing houses, and, if insanitary, condemned.

It is evident, from a study of the facts given above, that the cost of construction has risen greatly, in part due to increased requirement, in part to actual increase in the cost of construction. It is not now possible for private enterprise to provide houses for agricultural labourers and make a working profit. The wages the agricultural labourers and workers on the land receive will not permit of an economic rent being paid.

There are three considerations in this connection which merit some discussion. The first is that while it is not possible to build profitably for the average agricultural labourer it does not follow that houses cannot be erected without loss even in purely rural districts.

The village residents are not all farm labourers, and

it often happens that persons who can afford an economic rent, and are prepared to pay one if suitable houses are available, are living in cottages they would be glad to vacate, leaving them to be occupied by families only capable of paying a low rent. The occupants of the unfit and unsatisfactory houses would move into those left vacant, and a general upward movement would result.

I believe this aspect of the question is not sufficiently kept in mind, and a little less timidity in building, even under present day conditions of wages and cost of construction, would be found to be justified.

Some evidence in this connection is furnished by the following figures which were kindly furnished to me at my request by the surveyor of the District Council in which the houses were erected. The Montacute houses are let at 3s. 9d., and the Martock houses at 4s. 6d., including rates in both cases. The particulars given refer to about the end of 1913 (see Table XIII).

This interesting Table shows that eighteen of the twenty-four houses were occupied by persons definitely from the same parish, while in four they were newly-married couples, presumably from the same parish. In only two cases were the houses occupied by tenants who came in from outside parishes, and one of these resided for some time in the parish in lodgings.

In all but one case the new rents were higher than the old, and in every instance but one the old houses

TABLE XIII

Present House and Rent.	Occupation of Tenant.	Home Industry (if any).	House from which Present Occupants came.				Remarks.
			Parish.	Rent Paid.	If now Occupied.	General Condition.	
Montacute, 3s. 9d.	Mason's Labourer.	Gloving.	Montacute.	3s.	Yes.	Satisfactory.	For some time in lodgings in Montacute.
" "	Glover.	" None.	From a dis- tance.	3s. —	" —	" —	
" "	Groom.	"	"	"	"	"	
" "	Platelay.	Gloving.	Montacute.	2s. 2d.	Yes.	Satisfactory.	
" "	Mason's Labourer.	"	"	2s. 2d.	"	"	
" "	Roadman.	"	"	3s.	"	"	
" "	Mason.	"	"	3s. 2d.	"	"	
" "	Labourer.	"	"	3s.	"	"	
" "	Old Age Pensioner and Wife.	" None.	"	3s.	No.	Demolished.	
" "	Platelay.	Gloving.	"	"	Yes.	Repaired.	
" "	Mason.	"	Parish some miles away.	3s. 2s.	"	Satisfactory.	
" "	Farm Labourer.	Washing.	Montacute.	3s. 6d.	"	"	Newly married.
Martock, 4s. 6d.	Platelay.	" None.	None.	—	"	"	"
" "	Clerk.	"	Martock.	4s.	Yes.	Good.	
" "	Labourer.	"	"	4s.	"	"	
" "	Gas Stoker.	"	"	4s.	"	"	
" "	Sawyer.	"	"	3s. 6d.	"	"	
" "	Foreman.	"	"	3s.	"	"	
" "	Timber Haulier.	"	"	2s. 2d.	"	"	
" "	Farm Hand.	" None.	"	4s. 6d	"	"	
" "	Hay Cutter.	Gloving.	" None.	—	"	"	Newly married.
" "	Poultry Appliance Hand.	"	Martock.	2s. 2d.	Yes.	Very Fair.	
" "	Farm Assistant.	"	"	"	"	"	
" "	Mason.	"	Martock.	3s.	Yes.	Very Fair.	Newly married.

were either satisfactory or were made so, and were therefore available for occupation. There is here, therefore, a definite shifting upward of tenants, with release of those at lower rentals for fresh occupants. Amongst other points of interest will be noted the fact that in most of the houses the wages of the occupiers were supplemented by home work, in this case gloving. This no doubt was an important factor, enabling the comparatively high rents to be paid.

The second consideration is that in a number of villages home industries are still carried out to a certain extent. These affect wages, and the rent payable in two ways. The men may work at these local industries and earn higher wages than as agricultural labourers, while many of the women may be so employed in the homes as outworkers. If the men are also employed at the factory, the total income may be considerably above that of those working upon the land. In districts such as these it is usually possible to put up and let houses without any loss. Sometimes the fear lest the local industry should diminish deters private enterprise from building.

The third consideration is that, when it is possible to obtain land at a reasonable price and to provide each cottage with a large garden (*e.g.*, $\frac{1}{5}$ -acre), the cultivation of the garden will enable the tenant to pay a higher rate than would otherwise be the case. This in exceptional cases will enable rents to be

charged and paid large enough to meet the loan charges and interest on the cost of construction, and so prevent any loss on the provision of the houses.

B.—*Landowners and Landlords.*

Great differences of opinion exist as to the responsibility of landlords to provide cottages for their workpeople and for the agricultural labourers of their tenants. Legal obligation there is none, but many hold that there is a moral obligation. In this connection I cannot do better than quote the opinion of Earl Fortescue, in his inaugural address to the Royal Sanitary Institute at Exeter, 1913.*

“It is, of course, as much a landowner’s business to provide cottages for the men required to cultivate his farm as it is to provide shippens and stables for the live stock of the farms, and sheds for the carts and implements; and the majority of owners do so. The trouble is that it is nobody’s business to provide dwellings for the village tradesmen, road men, and artisans who work for the community at large; or for the jobbing labourers on whom the smaller farmers and small-holders rely for assistance from time to time, and as in ordinary circumstances you make a considerable annual loss

* *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 1913, XXXIV., p. 305.

on every cottage you erect, nobody is anxious to build for people who, though necessary for the public, have no special claim on any particular member of it."

"Landowners, except the smallest, recognise, I believe, that cottages in fair proportion to the acreage are part of the equipment of their farms, and they no more expect to get that portion of the equipment provided by other people than the stables or barns; and when parishes are owned entirely, or very largely, by a single proprietor, the housing of the general servants of the community naturally falls also on him; but when a parish is in the hands of many proprietors, that doctrine cannot be applied."

While I believe that, as a general rule, landowners do accept this responsibility to provide sufficient cottages, there are exceptions, and some do not admit any such responsibility and will not build. While the landlord may provide sufficient cottages, he frequently does not keep them in repair, and the labourers have to take them or leave them. If their work is on the farm, leaving them means giving up their work, as there are no others available.

Some landowners are considerably straitened for money, and are unable not only to build, but even to keep existing cottages in habitable repair.

Sometimes old farm labourers past their work

are allowed for humanitarian reasons by the landlord to continue to occupy their cottages. If they were turned out they would have to go to the workhouse. This reduces the cottage accommodation available for the active farm workers, and is not always compensated by the erection of additional houses.

While undoubtedly many landowners make a practice of providing a sufficiency of cottages for their own workpeople, they do not provide any excess, and are not always willing to build cottages in place of condemned cottages. Also this is only a portion of the problem, and makes no provision for the rest of the people who make up the village community, such as policemen, postmen, village artisans, old-age pensioners, widows of agricultural labourers, agricultural labourers not regularly employed (hay cutters, etc.). Undoubtedly, also, many labourers object very strongly to living in cottages which belong to the landlord and go with the farm. These so-called "tied houses" have been much discussed, and there are obviously serious objections to an arrangement which makes loss of employment mean also loss of home. Frequently, also, no rent is paid, but is taken out of wages, a wholly objectionable arrangement. If the landowner provides the houses he will naturally object to them being occupied by anyone who is not working for him or his tenant, since to do so may mean that the other labourers required may be without a house or have to live a long distance away from their work.

From my own observation I regard the tied house system as undesirable and a cause of labourers leaving the countryside. The Housing Departmental Committee of 1906 found

“It would be to the ultimate benefit of all concerned if the tied cottage system were done away with as soon as practicable, and the change is, in fact, being made on many estates, with mutual satisfaction, without any of the objections that have been advanced being realised.”

It is obvious that the provision of houses by the landowner is only a small part of the housing shortage problem.

C.—Manufacturers and other Local Employers of Labour for their Workpeople.

Any analysis of causes of marked housing shortage reveals that in a good many cases the deficiency of houses is due to the starting or the extension of local industries in rural areas. More persons are employed, and there are no houses to accommodate them. If the Rural District Council are approached, they usually demur to provide additional houses on the ground that they cannot be expected to provide accommodation out of rates for what is essentially a trade requirement. An objection raised

is that there is always a possibility that the local industry may decline and the cottages be no longer required.

In the county of Somerset, examples of this cause of housing shortage have been in connection with coal mining, tooth-brush making, railway works, and opening of a condensed milk factory.

The opening of coal mines has in the past been the cause of a great deal of overcrowding, and the provision of very bad houses. They are usually situated in rural districts, which may or may not possess building bye-laws, and in which local administration has been weak and badly officered. The need has been sudden and urgent, and blocks of houses which are frequently most unsatisfactory or even unfit in fundamental features have been erected. In some places they have been built by speculative builders, in others by the colliery owners. In-sanitary from the start, and often grossly overcrowded, they are a disgrace to the country. With an extensive experience of housing of all kinds of districts, urban and rural, I have found the worst individual houses in purely rural districts, but the worst *groups* of houses have been in colliery districts in England and Wales, where the wages have been high enough to allow a rent to be paid sufficient to secure a sanitary and satisfactory house, if such had been available.

The Forty-Second Annual Report of the Local

Government Board discusses this difficulty. In this connection the Board remarks (p. xlii.) :

“Where no provision, or only inadequate provision, is made for the housing of the workmen, the onus remains on the local authority, who naturally feel some reluctance to act, whilst they often have no adequate means of gauging the probability of the continued existence of the new concern. Private enterprise is in somewhat the same position and not inclined to run risks, and the demand for housing by the local authority becomes clamant.”

The Board adds that it is a matter for serious consideration how far the manufacturer is entitled to expect the ratepayers of the district in which he finds it convenient to place his factory to share in his risks to the extent of providing houses for his work-people.

As a rule, the persons working at such local industries receive higher wages than persons engaged in agriculture, and are in a position to pay a remunerative rate. Unless, therefore, the industry is likely to decline within the life of the houses, any houses built by the local authority are not likely to be a cause of serious loss to the ratepayers.

D.—Local Authorities.

The legal obligations of Local Authorities as regards the provisions of houses are set out in Chapter II. It has been explained in Chapter V. and elsewhere that while Local Authorities have shown considerable activity in dealing with unfit and unsound cottages, they have for the most part neglected their constructional powers.

It is true that Rural Local Authorities have within the last few years obtained loans for housing provision in increased amounts, *but the total is trifling compared to the need.* The official figures * are as follows :

TABLE XIV

Year ending 31st March.	Number of Rural Authorities to which Loans were sanctioned.		Amount Sanctioned.
	In the Year.	For the First Time in the Year.	
1910 - - -	2	1	£ 12,230*
1911 - - -	1	-	250
1912 - - -	16	15	27,585
1913 - - -	22	14	59,557

* Including £11,960 sanctioned to County Council on default of Rural District Council.

From the passing of the Act of 1909 to March 31st, 1913, the number of houses provided, or to be pro-

* Forty-Second Annual Report, Local Government Board, 1912-13. Part II., *Housing and Town Planning.*

vided, by Rural Local Authorities in England and Wales only amounted to 470 houses. This number is really quite insignificant, and is very much less than the number of houses closed by the Local Rural Authorities during the same period.

For the single year ending March 31st, 1912, closing orders for as many as 1,950 dwelling houses were made during the year in rural districts.

The question has recently come very much to the fore as to whether County Councils should provide houses for their own servants, road men, policemen, and the like. Up to the present, no houses seem to have been provided by County Councils in this way, while at the best their provision could play but a small part in the solution of the housing shortage.

E.—*The State.*

While the proposition that the State should actively enter the lists as a builder of rural cottages is now under discussion as a political and social question, except in so far as the State is in the position of an ordinary landowner, no State building has taken place in England. This question is discussed in Chapter X.

INADEQUACY OF EXISTING LAWS AND
REQUIREMENTS TO REMOVE THE
HOUSING SHORTAGE

CHAPTER VII

INADEQUACY OF EXISTING LAWS AND REQUIREMENTS TO REMOVE THE HOUSING SHORTAGE

IN Chapter II it was shown that the general intention of the various Housing Acts was to ensure on the one hand a thorough inspection of all the houses of the working classes, followed either by closure of those unfit for habitation or their being put into a fit condition, and on the constructional side to secure the erection of sufficient new houses to meet any deficiency found to exist.

In Chapter V and earlier chapters it has been shown that this desirable result has not been attained, and, as regards a sufficiency of houses, is not likely to be achieved.

The causes of the very trifling use made by Rural authorities of their powers to provide houses and the great neglect of their obligations in this direction merit careful consideration.

While the one essential objection is the question of cost—Local Authorities hesitating to provide because they fear a burden upon the rates—there are a number of subsidiary factors which conduce to their inactivity.

(a) *Real Absence of Knowledge on the part of the Local Authority.*—Many Local Authorities are badly served by their officers for reasons discussed in Chapter V. The latter do not properly find out unfit houses, and in particular, when they know of them, do not report them to their Authority. They also take no steps to ascertain if an insufficiency of houses exists. Sometimes undoubtedly the knowledge that such reports will be unwelcome influences their action. Local Authorities genuinely anxious to carry out their obligations may occasionally be really unaware of the need for constructive housing action.

(b) *Absence of Official Knowledge on the part of the Local Authority.*—My own experience shows me that many Local Authorities will not move unless they have *officially* (that is, by means of the channels prescribed by the Housing Acts) brought before them a complaint as to the insufficiency of cottages in any particular locality. They do not desire to know, and this action serves them as an excuse for non-intervention.

Their officers not infrequently take the same line and do not know or do not report, waiting for the parish in question to complain of the need for more houses.

This is a far more potent instrument for *laissez-faire* than may at first sight appear, owing to the great reluctance of those affected to complain.

A very interesting illustration of this attitude was recently furnished. I had reason to believe that marked housing shortage existed in a certain hamlet, a suspicion turned into a definitely ascertained fact by careful inspection and inquiry on the spot. The local inhabitants were clamorous that more houses were urgently needed, and half a dozen names of persons requiring houses were readily given to me. In addition, a number of the existing houses, although repairable, were unfit for habitation. The district sanitary inspector who accompanied me readily admitted the great need for more houses (although he had never reported the fact to his Authority), and, indeed, it was a matter of common knowledge to him. The Rural District Council had taken no action, and as an experimental procedure and knowingly risking a snub I wrote direct to the Clerk of the District Council, mentioning that from my information it would appear that there was a considerable shortage of houses, and asking if his Council had taken any steps to inquire into the question of housing sufficiency in this parish. I was promptly asked by what authority I drew their attention to the matter, and the Clerk added, "I have to point out that my Council have received no formal representation from any of the inhabitants as to lack of housing accommodation in this district."

As far as I could ascertain, no formal representation was made to them, and the case was not even

considered until my report to the Health and Housing Committee of the County Council was sent on to them some months later.

(c) *Reluctance on the part of those requiring houses to state their case.*—This is an important part of the problem, and is best considered as part of the whole question of difficulty of proof.

The difficulty which confronts the housing reformer at the outset is the difficulty of *proving* that an insufficiency of houses exists. The inexperienced in these matters may be inclined to suggest that if it is so difficult to prove that more houses are required there cannot be any serious need for them. This is very far from being the case, and in numerous villages, while the need is urgent, there has never been any public demand for more cottages. There are several reasons for this. In some cases there is no demand because the villagers are not acquainted with their powers of appeal and with the powers of Local Authorities to provide.

In other and more numerous cases, while they know something about their powers, they are afraid to exercise them. Many of those who live in insanitary houses live in the only houses available to them, and they are afraid that if they do appeal for fresh, better houses they will be given notice to quit, and so will be driven out of their village and away from their work. In the same way they fear to complain as to the insanitary condition of their

houses lest they are given notice to quit or their rents raised. We know that in many cases this is not the case, and many owners of property, particularly the large owners, are most humane and more than fair to their tenants, losing money in consequence, but undoubtedly this feeling is widely prevalent.* In not a few cases, and especially as regards rent-raising, there is justification for this dread, the rents being increased because of the repairs executed by the owner, owing to the notices of the Local Authority. In some instances

* As far as I have been able to ascertain, this reluctance of the inhabitants of the village to complain is very widespread, and is met with all over England. They are afraid to complain. For example, in the Belvoir Rural District (Leicestershire) the Council took the line that they had not received any representation either from four householders or a Parish Council or Meeting of the want of such cottages. The Medical Officer of Health, in his Annual Report for 1912, answers this as follows :

“ In my opinion, your District requires at least thirty (if not more) new cottages. That there is an *urgent* demand and necessity for more houses I am convinced. It is highly improbable, in my opinion, that any four householders will make any representation on the subject, for the following reasons :—First, because the cottagers fear any such application would probably mean notice to quit from the landlord, leaving the applicant without a cottage at all. Second, because some of the cottages are held or hired by the farmers who sub-let them to their labourers. The labourer feels that, if he offends the master or the master’s friend, he may not only lose his work, but his cottage as well. Third, the prevalent belief that any complaint of a tenant, who, as a rule in this district is not independent, means trouble for him from some Authority.”

owners, rather than carry out the necessary repairs, have given the tenants notice to quit. These facts are not advanced here to suggest that the owner is either right or wrong to adopt this course, the point being that the not unfounded fear of it resulting is a strong deterrent to prevent the tenants complaining.

It is perhaps worth drawing attention to the obvious fact that the greater the need for cottages the stronger does this factor operate, since if there are no spare houses the tenant's home and livelihood are entirely dependent upon his being able to continue to occupy his particular cottage. This is accentuated if the house is a tied house.

I have investigated the question of insufficient houses in many rural parishes, and it has always been a difficulty to get those who require cottages to come forward and say so, and even if they say so verbally they often will not put down anything in writing. It may be mentioned that a valuable indication as to whether more houses are required is shown by the absence of unoccupied houses. If there are no vacant available houses it is almost certain that there is a tightness of houses, and probably an actual shortage. Careful inquiry in such a village will almost always elicit the fact that houses are often occupied not because they are fit and suitable, but because there are no others available. When a suitable cottage does become to let there are usually numerous applicants for it.

There is a very large number of villages in which there are no vacant available houses. Two examples from widely different parts of England may be mentioned.

The Medical Officer of Helston Rural District (Cornwall) records that of forty-two villages inspected in 1912, no less than thirty-five were without an unoccupied house. One village had three and another two empty houses, and four villages had one vacant house in each. All of these nine vacant houses were unfit for habitation.

Dr. Porter, the Medical Officer of Health for Reigate Rural District (Surrey) stated (1910 Report) that, except in two villages, it was exceedingly rare to come across an unoccupied cottage, the demand exceeding the supply, while the tenants of dilapidated houses had great difficulty in finding other accommodation when the question of closure was raised.

The Progress of Applications by Parishioners for Houses.—Even if the parishioners consider houses are required, it by no means follows that proceedings are materially advanced and will fructify into additional houses.

A parish meeting is probably called and an enthusiastic resolution may be passed in favour of more houses and calling upon the Rural District Council to provide houses. The following resolution (one actually passed) is typical of many:

“ That the Clerk do write to the — Rural District Council, calling their attention to the urgent need of additional dwellings for the working classes of the parish, and requesting that the said District Council do forthwith institute inquiries into the matter, with a view to the erection of cottages under the Acts of Parliament provided for that purpose.”

If the Rural District Council is sympathetic to housing provision, such action should and may result in the provision of the additional houses. Unfortunately this is not the attitude of the majority of Rural District Councils. Some of them are opposed to all municipal ownership and have a strong objection to interfere with anything that may appear to prejudicially influence private enterprise or initiative. Apart from these extremists, the attitude of the majority is that they are quite prepared to erect houses provided they are *convinced* there is a *bona-fide* need for them, that they will not be provided by private enterprise or by philanthropy and, most important of all, that their provision can be shown not to involve any burden upon the rates.

Given a Rural Authority of this type, it is of interest and value to follow the probable result of the appeal of a parish council. The Rural Council consents to hold a local inquiry and appoints a Committee to hold it and receive evidence. At such an

inquiry all persons wanting houses are invited to come forward and say so. At the same time they are asked what rent they are prepared to pay. As a rule but few names are given, as those in the village who want better houses are for the reasons given above not anxious to come forward. As regards those wanting houses and not living in the village, it is not to be expected that there will be many of them, since the absence of cottages has caused them to migrate to the towns or emigrate to the colonies, and naturally they are not there to explain that if only there had been sufficient houses they would have been happy to have lived in their native village.

Probably in all not more than some half-dozen or so names are forthcoming or given to the Chairman.

The question of empty cottages and houses in the parish is then discussed. The Clerk reports that there were so many empty houses at the last Census, and the local opponents of additional houses come forward to point out that there are now a number of empty houses in the parish which are not let, and which, they proceed to demonstrate, could take the few remaining applicants left as requiring houses. They quite omit to state that the empty houses are unoccupied because for one reason or another—such as inaccessibility, insanitary condition, refusal of owners to let, heavy rent, tied cottages required for the hands of a special farm—they are unoccupiable. The question of the

suitability of the houses for the occupants is but lightly touched upon.* After these points have been gone into it is by no means difficult for the Committee to very plausibly, and indeed truthfully

* An interesting illustration of the futility and unreliability of returns as to the number of empty houses as evidence of the absence of shortage of houses, unless inquiry is also directed to their availability, is furnished by Dr. Pierce in regard to Guildford (Surrey) Rural District. (Annual Report, 1912, p. 26).

In response to information asked for in regard to empty houses and other housing particulars, returns were obtained from the Assistant Overseers of the various parishes. These returns appeared to show that no less than twenty-five cottages for the working classes were at that time (October) empty and fit for habitation. Dr. Pierce, finding these results quite inconsistent with his own earlier experience, investigated the figures within a month, with the following results :

Five were attached to farms and two to a large mansion. Of these two were since let and one was unfit for habitation. Two were villas and not suitable for the working classes.

Four were empty by order of the landlords with a view to thorough renovation, three of the four being since let and one being uninhabitable.

Five or six in a street continuous with the Borough of Godalming were not within the means of rural workers, the rents being 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. per week. Of the remainder, two were uninhabitable and two were already let when the returns were made, though not tenanted.

A pair of new cottages letting at 5s. 6d. were not quite ready for occupation, as the water had not been laid on, and one of these had since been let, while there were plenty of applicants for the other as soon as it was ready.

Dr. Pierce remarks that these figures show that the only cottages really available at the time the returns were made (apart from farm cottages) were this pair of new cottages not quite finished.

find that there is no proved need for further cottages.

The Committee then turns its attention to the economics of the subject. The rents the applicants can pay are inquired into, and since the applicants are often agricultural labourers or others in receipt of low wages, they find they are only prepared to pay 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per week at the most. Statistics and figures as to the cost of cottage building are then brought forward and calculations at once demonstrate that the rents offered are not economic rents and will mean a charge on the rates. At one time it was then possible to explain that the Local Government Board would not sanction any scheme which was not self-supporting, and that, therefore, unless applicants were willing to pay rents of 3s. 9d. to 4s. or more to enable a self-supporting scheme to be adopted, it would not be possible to go on. Under existing rural conditions such support was rarely forthcoming.

It is now recognised that the Local Government Board (*see* p. 276) has recently altered this proviso, and is prepared to permit some estimated deficiency upon the rates.

Should further damping measures be necessary, the Rural District Council plays its trump card. It adopts a resolution that in every case in which they find it necessary to provide houses they will apply to the Local Government Board to issue an order making the expense a charge on the *parish*, to the

exclusion of the other parts of the District. This they explain to the Parish Council, at the same time bringing forward figures showing the likelihood of a considerable deficiency. The Parish Council and the parish generally have no means of knowing whether the charge will be put upon the parish, and frequently any further expression of opinion as to the need for cottages is checked. Indeed, sometimes Parish Councils have been known to pass a resolution that cottages are no longer required or even, as in the case of the Parish whose strongly-worded appeal for houses is quoted above, to get up a petition to the County Council *against* more houses, after an inquiry held by Commissioners appointed by that body had found that more houses were required.

Sometimes the paraphernalia of a local inquiry is not required; housing insufficiency complaints are referred to the Parish Council, and the latter body, influenced by the above considerations, passes a definite resolution that more houses are not required. The Rural District Council, bowing to the wishes and decision of the Parish Council, who possess local knowledge and should therefore know what they require, decides to do nothing.

Two other variations need to be considered, one when a really strong case is made out, and the other when there are shown to be many insanitary and unfit houses, with no available houses for the occupants if they are turned out.

Even when a strong case is made out much delay

may be caused. A common practice is to suggest that no steps be taken until the local landowners and other private persons have been approached to know if they will build cottages. Such a view is frequently encouraged by one or more landowners stating that they have in contemplation the building of some cottages should occasion arise, and this possibility is magnified to a probability and sometimes exploited as a certainty. In most villages there is always a hazy prospect of some private person building. By the time these inquiries have been concluded the housing insufficiency may be less definite or temporarily removed, owing to the applicants having had to migrate elsewhere.

In the second variation, when there are numerous insanitary cottages, a Rural Authority averse to building can do much to prevent it by giving the owners a very long time to repair and by not insisting on stringent requirements. Also, as explained elsewhere, not a few officials adopt the policy (a very bad one in my opinion) of not reporting houses as unfit when there are no other houses for the occupants to go to if the houses are closed.*

* The well-known Potterne (Wiltshire) housing case illustrates a number of ways in which unwilling unconvinced Local Authorities can defer the erection of houses. The whole of the facts need not be gone into, the object being to illustrate this special point.

The question of an insufficiency of houses in this parish was first raised in October, 1910, at the Parish Council. At least as early as this date there was evidence of a definite scarcity of houses. Nothing definite was done until 1912, and even as

The above considerations are not dealt with in any spirit of antagonism to Rural District Councils, but to make clear the effect of the existing housing powers as regards supply, when put into the hands of bodies which rightly or wrongly hold (as for the most part they do) definite views that the supply of additional houses is not desirable, if, as must be the case to some extent, their provision has to be financed out of the district rates.

late as April, 1912, the proposals of the Rural District Council were to build cottages at a rent which those requiring them were not in a position to pay.

The Local Government Board held an inquiry on May 23rd, 1912, on complaint by four inhabitant householders as to the failure of the Rural District Council to exercise their powers under Part III of the Act of 1890, and came to the conclusion that a need existed for further working-class dwellings in the parish, and proposed to the District Council that they should erect twelve cottages. Correspondence ensued, in the course of which it was stated that the County Asylum Committee had under their consideration the question of erecting a number of cottages for asylum employees then resident in the parish. It was also stated that a dairy company, employing a large staff of workmen and clerks, had decided to remove from a neighbouring town (Devizes), and the District Council alleged that this, by rendering vacant a number of houses in that town, would help to relieve the pressure at Potterne, where several persons working at Devizes lived. Finally, the County Asylum Committee decided not to proceed further with their proposal to build cottages, and the Local Government Board thereupon requested the District Council to proceed. A lengthy communication was subsequently received from the Chairman of the Parish Council, requesting the Board to reconsider their decision in the matter and advancing various contentions, such as changes of conditions and circumstances since the date of the inquiry, in support of the request.

The decision of the Rural District Council that the provision of houses is not necessary frequently ends the matter, but sometimes the applicants make use of their powers and appeal to the Local Government Board or to their County Council. It may be said here that if they do *not* so appeal, these bodies frequently know nothing about the suggested need for houses. Their only source of information is the Press. It is not the duty of the Rural District

The Local Government Board again sent down an Inspector, and a second inquiry was held in September, 1913. As a result, the Council were required by the Board to build at least twelve houses within a year of the date of the order, which was July, 1912.

Further delay ensued, but at last plans were prepared for *six* houses in the first place, in three blocks of two each, and a site was obtained. A third inquiry was held by an Inspector of the Board in April, 1914, on this occasion in connection with the application of the Rural District Council to raise a loan of £1,329 for the houses and land. The Devizes District Council suggested that a rent of 5s. 3d. should be charged, this being estimated to cover the expenses incurred and prevent any loss to the rates. They strongly urged that if any loss was incurred it should fall as a special charge on the parish of Potterne.

The Medical Officer of Health for the county (Dr. Tubb-Thomas) in his evidence pointed out that the scheme was too costly, while it was evident from the statements made that the Potterne labourers could not pay a rent of 5s. 3d., or anything near it.

The position at the end of 1914 is that approval has been given by the Board to raise a loan of £1,313, that tenders have been accepted and that one pair of cottages is about half erected. The charge has been made a contributory one upon the parish, and there is estimated to be a slight deficiency to be made up out of rates.

Over four years of agitation and repeated investigation has resulted in tenders being accepted for six cottages, two of which are in course of erection.

Council to notify the Local Government Board or the County Council that they have received any application for more houses, or even that they have held an inquiry. They are not bound to produce copies of the Report of their Committee of Inquiry or other reports dealing with the matter.

INTERVENTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL.

A study of Chapter II. will show that the powers of the County Council are limited. Their Medical Officer of Health may know that an alleged insufficiency of houses exists in a given parish, or he may even have personally inquired into it and report that great insufficiency exists, but this will not enable the County Council to hold an inquiry. They can only hold an inquiry if they receive a specific complaint in a definite way from the Parish Council, the parish meeting, or four inhabitant householders of the district. It is an absurd anomaly in the Acts that the complaint of four householders is of greater weight than a report, made after careful personal inquiry, of the County Medical Officer of Health. The reluctance of individuals to apply for houses, which has been dealt with above, and the fear that any deficiency may be a parish charge, frequently very effectively prevents formal complaints under Section 12 being made to the County Council.

Even when Section 12 is put into operation, and the County Council holds an inquiry, many difficulties arise. As explained above, it may be fairly evident that more houses are required, but *proof* is difficult. They have to satisfy themselves "that the Rural District Council have failed to exercise their powers under Part III. of the principal Act in cases where those powers ought to have been exercised."

In this connection we have to remember that the question of housing insufficiency is one that tends to cure itself—by migration and emigration—to the great detriment of the country generally. The considerable delay which must of necessity occur between complaint and inquiry favours this "cure." Many who wanted homes are there no longer to advance their needs.

This is the way the housing shortage problem has been solved in very many rural parishes—"we make a solitude and call it peace."

Section 12 is permissive, and County Councils are naturally reluctant to put into force permissive powers against their own constituents. There is usually considerable pressure brought to bear upon them not to take extreme steps. Section 10, which enables County Councils to complain to the Local Government Board, is not a satisfactory section from the point of view of the County Councils, shown by the fact that up to November, 1913, the Board had only received formal complaints from two County

Councils, one relating to a district in the County of Durham, and the other to a district in the County of Monmouth.*

The experience of the County of Durham in this connection, one in which the Local Government Board and the County Council have not seen eye to eye, does not encourage the latter bodies to make more use of this section.

The whole matter is entirely in the hands of the Board, who may hold an inquiry or express themselves as satisfied with the explanations of the Local Authority.

The Board have, amongst other things, to take into consideration "whether, having regard to the liability which will be incurred by the rates, it is prudent for the Local Authority to undertake the provision of such accommodation." Most Local Authorities will be able to urge that the provision of the accommodation is not *prudent*, and if the Board acquiesces, it will appear to be a rebuff to the County Council. Most County officials will hesitate to advise, and most County Councils will be anxious to avoid, an apparent rebuff of this kind, so injurious to their prestige.

* Memorandum (No. 3) of the Local Government Board, relative to the operation of the Housing Acts. 1913.

INTERVENTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOARD.

The influence exerted by the Local Government Board is largely indirect, but in this way it does exert great pressure upon Local Authorities.

As a Central Housing Authority its powers are limited and unsatisfactory. Stated briefly, they are limited and unsatisfactory because, on the one hand, the administrative machinery enabling them to know of the existence of housing defects and deficiencies is incomplete, while, if they do know, their powers of obtaining satisfactory redress are inadequate and trammelled.

The Board has not a staff of experts which in any way makes it possible to obtain direct first-hand evidence throughout the country of existing housing conditions (as I explain elsewhere, I think such a staff undesirable), and it is therefore compelled to rely upon the reports of local officials. Given local officials who adequately report in their Annual Reports as to housing conditions, the Board can and does to a considerable extent follow them up. Where such reports are not made and only the bare official figures demanded are given, the Board is not in a position to know the true condition of affairs unless special direct complaint is made to the Central Authority, which, as shown above, is very rarely done.

Every County Medical Officer of Health knows the differences met with as regards the extent to which matters of really primary health importance are dealt with in their reports by district Medical Officers of Health. One Medical Officer of Health will carefully ascertain and honestly set out the housing conditions in his district, while another will know but little about them, and, in reporting, merely give the minimal statistical data required by the Local Government Board. The Sanitary Authority of the former will be the recipient of numerous questions and inquiries from the Board, not at all perhaps to their liking, while the Sanitary Authority of the latter is left alone to their complete satisfaction. The irony of the matter is that it is, as a rule, just the latter bodies with supine officials which most require the stimulus of the Central Authority.

Section 10 of the 1909 Housing and Town Planning, etc., Act gives considerable powers to the Local Government Board, but, as explained in Chapter II, it can only be set in operation by outside bodies.

Even given the requisite information, it is well known that the powers of the Board to take satisfactory action are most inadequate. The numerous and glaring instances of cases in which the Board's own Inspectors have pointed out the existence of grossly insanitary conditions, including defective housing, which remain subsequently unremedied for years and years, makes it evident that the

Board finds it extremely difficult to make an inactive and unwilling authority take active measures to remedy housing and other sanitary defects.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF NEW COTTAGES
IN RURAL AREAS

CHAPTER VIII

THE REQUIREMENTS OF NEW COTTAGES IN RURAL AREAS

THE requirements of new houses and the alterations necessary to old houses to bring them up to modern standards involve such essentially different considerations that it would only lead to confusion to consider them together. In Chapter IV the alterations of old houses to make them at least fairly fit for habitation is considered, while in the present chapter the essential requirements of houses to be built are dealt with.

The present chapter is more particularly concerned with sanitary and hygienic requirements, but it is not possible to altogether separate the points which require attention on hygienic grounds from those which are more particularly of utilitarian importance. The Local Government Board * has recently issued a valuable memorandum on this subject, but this is not specially for rural houses, and does not go fully into a number of important points

* Memorandum with respect to the Provision and Arrangement of Houses for the Working Classes. 1913.

which require separate consideration. Most useful information is also contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Small Holdings.*

In discussing the hygienic requirements of cottages it is essential to have clear ideas as to the nature of the problem. What is needed is not the designing of a cottage fulfilling in all respects every sanitary requirement. To do so is not at all a difficult task, but something much harder is required. The sanitarian has to make up his mind as to the *minimum* requirements which must be met in all new houses for a house to be in a reasonably sanitary condition. These minimum requirements must be fulfilled in all new houses *whatever the cost of construction* and quite regardless of it.

Beyond that the sanitarian has to emphasise the features which are desirable and which should be secured if possible. The attainment of these is largely a question of cost, and the rent to be charged. By strict economy and the elimination of unessentials many of these desirable hygienic requirements can also be secured.

For essential sanitary requirements there should be no paltering with economic considerations, but for the desirable sanitary requirements the "coat must be cut according to the cloth," and a really cheap cottage must lack much that is desirable.

* Departmental Committee Report, 1913.

SITE AND LAND

As regard the site, the nature of the subsoil is always of importance. For rural houses, from the point of view of health, a dry soil is important, while considerations as to the suitability of the land for gardening purposes must be kept in mind. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining land at reasonable prices for building purposes, Local Authorities have sometimes been driven to select sites with very poor soil.

The amount of land to each cottage is a much-discussed subject. In rural districts $\frac{1}{5}$ acre per cottage is probably about as much as the average labourer can manage. Ten houses to the acre is often suggested as satisfactory, but where possible more land than this should be given. Compared to the cost of the building, the difference between $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{10}$ acre of land is small. Unless excessive, the price of land is a relatively small factor in the total annual cost of providing houses. As the Local Government Board Memorandum points out "on the basis of ten houses to the acre, and land at £100 per acre, the loan charges per house for land-purchase would be less than 2d. per week."

Most of the rural labourers with whom I have discussed this matter, have been very keen on having a fair piece of garden, and have expressed themselves as prepared to pay more for a cottage containing a large garden. I have come across in housing

inquiries a considerable number of houses which structurally were very defective, and which, in particular, were isolated from the rest of the village cottages, but which were readily let and which the occupiers were averse to leave, largely because they had large gardens. These large gardens, sometimes up to one acre or more, were greatly valued and helped to pay the rent.

It is obviously much more convenient to the labourer—both saving his time and enabling his family to assist—to have his vegetable garden round his house rather than as a separate allotment. A few labourers could do with more than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre, and in a big scheme it is well to have different-sized gardens. It must be remembered that in building under the Housing Acts, houses must not have more than one acre of land.

Houses in rural districts are not necessarily for agricultural labourers, and in such cases large gardens may not be required. This is an important factor which must be taken into consideration in determining the amount of land required since the most urgent cases of housing shortage are not in purely agricultural parishes, and the schemes first put in hand have not been and will not be primarily for the agricultural labourer.

The amount of land required also bears some relationship to the methods of excreta disposal which are proposed to be employed. If earth closets are used and all the slops are treated upon the land, as

much as $\frac{1}{8}$ acre will be required for this purpose. There is, in my opinion, too great a tendency to provide drains of sorts for slop water in old houses and to run the contents into old highway drains or whatever comes handiest, with the result of causing subsequent trouble. Later on a sewage scheme is necessary to remedy the nuisance. In the same way for new houses built as part of a housing scheme, there is sometimes too great a stress laid upon a satisfactory, complete, up-to-date drainage system. The houses and other accessories are designed by surveyors, who from their work tend to lay great stress upon drainage systems. In many cases it is better in purely rural areas to have more land for each house with a proper dry conservancy system than crowd the houses on a smaller area, and spend the money on a sewerage system.

If each house is to be on $\frac{1}{5}$ acre of land, or even to have $\frac{1}{5}$ acre attached to it, the cost of a modern sewerage system is materially increased.

The arrangement of houses on the site is to a considerable extent a matter of local and financial considerations. Blocks of houses are somewhat cheaper to construct than single houses. It is undesirable that there should be more than six in a block. There is very little saving per house above this number, while small blocks are more pleasant to the eye and give more air space round the houses. They also allow some modification of size and style for the end houses. Even when the end houses are

no larger than the between houses, I have found that they are nearly always eagerly sought after, and in several cases I have known would-be tenants offer a higher price for them (6d. a week more), although the only difference was an additional side window. Blocks of four would appear to be the most satisfactory arrangement, harmonising hygienic and financial considerations.

WATER SUPPLY

The duty of insisting upon a proper water supply for new houses is contained in Section 6 of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878, which requires that no new house may be occupied unless and until the owner

“has obtained from the Sanitary Authority of the district a certificate that there is provided, within a reasonable distance of the house, such an available supply of wholesome water as may appear to such authority, on the report of their Inspector of Nuisances or of their Medical Officer of Health, to be sufficient for the consumption and use for domestic purposes of the inmates of the house.”

The Local Authority has two duties. It has to be satisfied that there is available both a sufficiency of water and a wholesome supply of water. Under present-day rural conditions these duties are often very laxly interpreted.

Under this section any surface well, made in the prevailing unscientific manner, and dug a moderate distance away from the house and sanitary conveniences, which shows at the time it is sunk a fair quantity of water, is usually accepted as "an available supply of wholesome water." Even if a chemical or other analysis is insisted upon, it simply affords evidence as to the condition of the water at the time of sampling and gives no information as to subsequent possibilities of contamination. Shallow wells are not of necessity unsatisfactory sources of drinking supply, but if they are used it should be possible to insist that they be properly constructed.

A good deal of misconception seems to be prevalent as to the value of surface or shallow wells as sources of drinking water. A surface well receives its water from the superficial pervious strata, so that its supply is greatly influenced by rainfall, while it is also liable to contamination from the soakage from organic matters on the ground in the neighbourhood. Any harmful bacteria contained in such organic matter may be washed through the soil into the water of the well. Whether they gain access will depend upon: (a) The nearness of the source of pollution. If this is quite close to the well, obviously it will be more likely to gain access. (b) The amount of rainfall. If heavy, the bacteria will be quickly washed through. (c) The nature of the soil. It is not the loose and pervious soils which favour the rapid passage of bacteria into surface wells, but the

stiff soils which crack and form fissures which allow the direct passage of unpurified organic matter with but little filtration into the well.

Ordinary porous soils are good filtering material for bacteria, and if the surface well is so constructed that any organic matter deposited on the soil anywhere on its gathering area has to filter through a sufficient depth of soil, all the harmful bacteria will be filtered out and destroyed before they can gain access to the water in the well.

If all surface wells were properly rendered and made impervious to water for a depth of at least twelve feet, and were properly covered to prevent pollution through the mouth or by the side of the well, it would mean that all harmful bacteria deposited in the neighbourhood must pass through more than twelve feet of soil before they could reach the well water, a protection sufficient for most country villages with sparse populations, unless the soil is very unsuitable for filtration purposes, or unless the subsoil water is itself contaminated.

It follows from these remarks that in villages very many shallow wells which are now grossly polluted could have been made, and could now be made, suitable sources of water supply if only they were properly constructed, the two essential provisions being: Proper protection at the mouth by being covered in and provided with a pump, and being provided with an impervious lining to a depth of about twelve feet. The impervious lining needs

to be properly done to be effective. If the well is too deep for a pump, it is imperative that surface washings should be kept out by an impervious wall at least one foot high round the mouth of the well.

At the present time there are no bye-laws or other powers which deal with the construction of wells, and it is not uncommon for new wells to be constructed not only without protection from surface water, but also in unsuitable situations. The result is a contaminated supply, when with very little extra cost a pure supply could have been obtained, the water itself not being really at fault.

I do not know of any powers in regard to framing bye-laws for the construction of wells, but they are really needed. Local Authorities in the absence of such bye-laws might, with advantage, issue suggestions to all builders submitting plans for new houses in country districts without a water supply.

Owing to the liability to contamination of surface wells either from being placed in unsuitable positions, from general contamination of the subsoil water or from being dug in soil liable to cracking, the water supply for new houses should be whenever practicable from springs, but when, as is frequently the case, this is not possible, it should be a universal practice to only accept a water supply from wells which have been properly constructed. Properly constructed includes a suitable position, an impervious covering with a pump, and the interior of the well

made impervious to a depth of not less than twelve feet.

An "open" well should be a "nuisance" under the Public Health Act, 1875, without any further question as to the composition of the water as shown by analysis, unless the well water is too deep to be reached by an ordinary pump.

A water supply must be accessible. The expression "within a reasonable distance of the house" is sometimes interpreted in a very lax way, and I have found distances as far away as several hundred feet passed as "reasonable."

Obviously, the use of sufficient water for the purposes of cleanliness and health is not likely to be promoted if it has to be fetched long distances. It is useless to rail at the dirty habits of occupants of country cottages if every drop of water has to be fetched perhaps fifty yards and sometimes only by permission of a neighbour.

Assistance in providing abundance of water is given by the utilisation of the rain-water. All new houses should arrange for the catching and storing of rain-water. A properly covered rain-water butt is not expensive, but care must be taken to see that a butt is fixed and not merely that the downpipes are so arranged that one can be fixed. As explained in Chapter III, it is quite common in houses, some fairly new, to see the downpipes end abruptly some four or five feet from the ground and empty into nothing. The rain-water then flows down the side of

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FIG. 27.—Pair of cottages at Winscombe constructed of concrete blocks. Built under the Co-operative Housing Scheme, described on page 241.



FIG. 28.—Pair of cottages similar to those in Fig. 27, in course of erection.



FIG. 29.—Concrete blocks used in construction of the houses shown in Fig. 27 and Fig. 28.

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the wall and is a fruitful source of dampness. No doubt it is often left for the tenant to provide the butt or other receptacle for the water, and between the liabilities of owner and tenant nothing is fixed.

If expense is not objected to, a fixed tank is far preferable to a butt, if it is fixed, as it should be, so that it can be got at easily for cleaning purposes. In all cases a proper overflow pipe should be provided.

MATERIAL

The precise material used will largely depend upon local conditions and the relative cost of different materials. From the hygienic point of view the two chief requirements are warmth and dryness. The concrete which is now being experimented with for house construction, for example, requires very careful use to prevent internal condensation. Illustrations of a concrete house are shown in Figs. 27, 28 and 29.

The material must be reasonably durable if long loans are to be obtained to pay the cost of erection, and this rules out timber for houses constructed under such conditions. Some valuable information is contained in the Small Holdings Departmental Committee report. They sum up their experience by stating that "In ordinary circumstances little economy is to be expected from the substitution of timber or unusual materials and methods of construction for those commonly employed in the erection of houses in rural areas; but interesting

experiments with concrete are in progress, which indicate that its use may be attended with satisfactory results provided the work is carried out carefully and intelligently."

The Local Government Board Memorandum mentioned above states :

" The materials of which the houses should be constructed will vary according to the locality. Brickwork, covered externally with rough cast or cement, is an economical form of construction, though of not such lasting quality as plain faced brickwork. Half brick internal walls which carry the floor joists should be built in cement."

ACCOMMODATION

As the Local Government Board Memorandum states, the type of dwelling suitable for the ordinary working-class family should comprise a living-room, scullery, food-store, three bedrooms and the necessary conveniences and out-offices.

In addition to the above, much discussion has taken place in regard to the provision of a front sitting-room, or " parlour." From the strictly practical point of view it seems to be of but little use and to be unnecessary. It evidently is seldom used and the housing investigator, when he finds a house with marked overcrowding of the two or three bedrooms available with a room mostly unoccupied below, filled with possessions for which he sees no special

use, is naturally inclined to cavil at its reservation and to point with unanswerable logic to the fact that the remedy for the overcrowding upstairs is to turn the parlour downstairs into a bedroom. In cases of the kind I have often so urged, and at first was much surprised at the pertinacity with which the retention of the parlour was clung to and at the—at times—intense hostility with which the idea was received. I have known a case where the tenant preferred to arrange and pay for some of the occupiers to sleep in other houses rather than disturb the sanctity of the parlour.

The cult of the parlour is widespread, for it is extensively present in England. Part of the reason for it is I believe fashion and social. Those with a parlour are of the aristocracy of working-class houses, and it serves as a sign of superiority. Certainly the degree of its prevalence varies greatly in different areas. Some part of the reason for its retention is no doubt the tyranny of property from which we all suffer. The tenants have acquired property to them valuable, some of it sometimes almost sacred. Storage accommodation in the ordinary rooms there is none. The parlour both stores and displays it.

Also on some occasions, rare but important—special visits, marriages, funerals, and the like—it is of great use as a human resort.

Undoubtedly in the cases where a little more rent can be paid there is a demand for parlours,

but this is naturally stronger in the towns than in purely rural districts. In Radstock, for example, (a quite small urban area occupied mainly by coal miners) the Urban District Council erected twenty houses without parlours and twenty with parlours, the houses otherwise being very similar. The difference of rent was 1s. per week (*i.e.*, 4s. 6d. and 5s. 6d. inclusive of rates and water), but in spite of this there was a very much greater demand for the houses with parlours.

From the purely health point of view there is no special reason for their retention, and if it is a question of cheap construction, or, perhaps, better put—the provision of a sanitary and serviceable house for a sum of money which will enable a rent to be charged not beyond the means of the class for which erected—then I think the parlour should be eliminated and attention concentrated upon a comfortable roomy kitchen-living-room and a scullery, which will enable the dirty work to be, for the most part, kept out of the living-room.

The Small Holding Report states :

“ There is no question as to the desirability of the small parlour, if it can be included ; the important point is that it should be an extra, and not encroach on the proper allowance of space for the living-room or take the place of the scullery or wash-house.”

In extensive housing schemes it should be possible

to construct parlours for some of the houses, *e.g.*, the end house of blocks, which would meet the cases of those who are prepared to pay more for the increased accommodation.

An essential requirement is the provision of a *larder*. It is astonishing how only comparatively recently has it dawned upon builders* and architects of small houses that the provisions of a proper place for food storage is an absolute necessity and not a luxury. Anything was considered good enough, and the usual storage was either a cupboard under the stairs, dark and unventilated, or a cupboard by the side of the kitchen fire, in which any germs which gained access to the food were kept at a warm temperature favourable to their rapid multiplication, and where flies could seek in pleasant warmth that necessary repose between their passages from the privy outside to the food in the cupboard.

* I well remember a good many years ago inspecting a block of cottages in course of erection. In each house there was quite a small room opening from the scullery, with a window opening into the outer air. The houses were incomplete, and I thought at last that I had found a builder enlightened enough to erect proper food-storage without being compelled by the bye-laws. Further inquiry disillusioned me. They were for coal. I interviewed the builder and pointed out that they were admirably adapted for larders, that the alternative provision was the cupboard under the stairs which he had provided, and that it was easy and inexpensive to construct a wood lean-to coal store against each house. He was quite unconvinced as to their necessity, pointed out that the bye-laws did not make him provide larders, and coal stores they became. There are even now people who affirm that building bye-laws are unnecessary.

The larder should face north if possible, but naturally this cannot always be done, while it should not open directly out of the kitchen. The essential requirement, however, is some place with a separate window opening direct into the outer air. In purely rural districts as large a larder as possible should be provided, since the need for storage is greater.

A further point of public health importance is the provision of a bath. A separate bath-room is out of the question, but in many houses for the working classes erected by Local Authorities, a bath is put in the scullery. The Local Government Board memorandum states :

“ A bath, fitted with hinged top to form a table when not in use, can advantageously be fixed in the scullery, hot water being supplied to the bath and sink from a copper in the scullery, from a tank connected to a small boiler in the kitchen range, or from a copper heated by the kitchen range.”

In most of the houses erected by Local Authorities which I have seen, baths have been installed in the sculleries. It is urged that the provision of such baths is useless, as they are seldom used for their legitimate purpose. Of course, the cost of fuel militates considerably against their use, since the cult of the cold tub is not widely adopted in this section of society. It is difficult to give definite evidence as to how frequently they are used when

provided, but I always make a point of inspecting them, and my experience is that they are generally empty and not, as other observers have told me, used as a storage receptacle.

In this connection education must be given time to make itself felt. It is an argument of the same kind to say that since windows are rarely opened in many houses, it is useless to insist that they should be made to open. To provide that windows can open and to provide baths is often in both cases to ensure—with steady education—that both will ultimately be properly used.

Bedrooms.—In general, it is three-bedroom houses which are urgently required in rural areas. It is true that in a number of cases two-bedroom houses will suffice, but there are already amongst the old houses more than enough two-bedroom houses (*see* Chapter III) to supply any need. None of the bedrooms should be allowed to open into one another. In the houses now being erected motives of economy require that two at least of the bedrooms should be small. In the Local Government Board memorandum the two ordinary types recommended (Types B and C) have the following cubic content.

Type B.

(a)	Floor space	140 sq. ft.		1,120 cubic ft. capacity.		
(b)	„	„	100	„	800	„
(c)	„	„	58	„	464	„

Type C.

(a)	Floor space	140 sq. ft.	1,120 cubic ft. capacity.
(b)	„ „	110 „	880 „ „
(c)	„ „	63 „	504 „ „

The Small Holdings Departmental Committee gives the minimum area of the best bedroom as 144 square feet, and that of the smallest bedroom as 65 square feet.

While the largest of the three bedrooms is of fair size, the other two are both small, one extremely so. A floor space of 58 square feet, which, with a height of 8 feet, gives a cubic content of 464 cubic feet, makes a bedroom of totally inadequate size, and one which it is very difficult to ventilate properly. I do not think any bedroom with a floor space of less than 75 square feet should be passed. With a height of 8 feet, which is quite sufficient, this gives a content of 600 cubic feet.

With these rooms of inadequate floor space there is no proper space for bed or even a minimum of furniture. In this respect the newly-constructed houses are often inferior to many of the old cottages, many of which are fairly roomy.

It must be remembered that the three-bedroom type is designed to accommodate a family, the parents with, perhaps, one or two of the youngest in the big bedroom, and the boys and girls respectively in the other two rooms. It is of course important that the two smaller bedrooms should not be of

equal size, so that the occupiers can use the larger for whichever sex predominates. These bedrooms may have to accommodate two or three children, and, if so, should not be less than 600 cubic feet as a minimum. These houses are intended to last, and the views of a later generation of sanitarians, imbued, as they will be, with the fresh air idea, are not likely to be very favourable to these tiny bedrooms. It is not difficult to imagine them condemning them out of hand as unfit.

The problem is an extremely difficult one, since the question of cost looms up at every point, and to materially increase the size of the bedrooms is to considerably increase the cost. There must obviously be a minimum area permissible, and a very tiny bedroom infringes it.

The difficulty of the architect is of course a very real one, since if he enlarges the bedrooms it means that the ground floor rooms must of necessity be also enlarged, and the whole plan becomes more expensive. In a number of model plans which I have seen the third bedroom has been put on the ground floor, either intended to be used throughout as a bedroom or to be either a bedroom or a parlour, according to circumstances. If this is done there is no difficulty in making adequate-sized bedrooms, and there is very much to recommend in this plan. The newly-married or those with few children use it as a parlour, while, if there are a number of children, it becomes a bedroom.

The ventilation of the bedroom is of very great importance. It must be mainly by windows, and great care in planning is necessary with such small rooms to so arrange them that they can be opened without a draught of air blowing directly upon the bed. We may exert ourselves to preach that such draughts are not harmful, but, whatever we say, it is fairly certain that the occupant of such a bed will keep the window shut if strong air currents are felt to be blowing directly upon him or her. We must in very truth "temper the wind to the shorn lamb," and arrange our ventilation so that direct air currents are not felt.

To get the best results the type of window is important. The present fashion is to put in casement windows. While delightful in hot weather, that is, for rather less than one-tenth of the year, they are decidedly unsuitable for this country under our ordinary climatic conditions. This type of window is very unsatisfactory for ventilation purposes. The fresh air is admitted through a narrow vertical slit when the window is only a little open, and the entering air current is sure to be felt in cold weather. If we cannot ventilate without draught, the occupant will certainly keep the windows closed.

This type of window is presumably put in because it is a cheap kind, but it is far inferior to the ordinary sash window. The latter can be opened top or bottom, and if it is of sufficient size the fact

that it only opens for half its area is of little practical moment. The sash window is more liable to get out of order and must be well made.

For sash windows there should be a deep ledge at the bottom, so that the window can be opened a little without a definite air space being visible, the air entering between the frames. This arrangement does not give very great ventilation, but it gives some, and is a plan likely to be used if provided.

If casement windows are selected, steps should be taken to have a transom with a hopper window above for ventilation under ordinary conditions. Side cheeks should be provided.

It is usually made a condition that two bedrooms should have a fireplace and the third either a fireplace or special means of ventilation. Unless a fire is burning, fire-places are practically useless for ventilation purposes; the grating is nearly always shut. It is better to insist that in all bedrooms below a certain size (*e.g.*, 800 cubic feet) means of ventilation other than doors and windows should be provided. Air gratings and hopper windows over the doors are useful.

SANITARY CONVENIENCES

The exact arrangements adopted must obviously vary with the district in which the houses are built, and the local conditions. Many new houses are

erected in the near proximity to towns, although in rural districts. Building in these situations is particularly common, since the tenants, while in a position to enjoy to a considerable extent the advantages and amenities of the town, yet only pay rural rates. It is obviously of importance that the probability of the urban sewage system being extended to these houses should be kept in mind, and, whatever arrangement is adopted, should be capable of alteration and adaptation as part of a drainage system.

In my experience the arrangements adopted are often most unsatisfactory for a semi-urban population, and are a cause of considerable nuisance. When the case for extension of urban boundaries arises, their inadequacy forms a very convenient argument for showing how much better the district in question would be if they were taken into the urban district. Such cases almost always refer to houses the majority of which are comparatively new.

The Local Government Board memorandum referred to above states :

“Separate accommodation should be provided for each house, and the entrance to it should be placed outside the house. A water-closet may be placed close to or built as part of the house, and access to the entrance should be under cover if possible. If an earth-closet is provided it should be placed at some distance from the house.”

It is not necessary to add much to these remarks. The earth-closet should be quite simple in construction, and a card with printed directions how to use it should be nailed up inside. It is not necessary to place it very far from the house. Of course privies and privy-middens should not be allowed for new houses.

In purely rural districts undue stress should not be laid upon a water-carriage system.

PAVING ROUND BACK DOORS

The provision of some form of impervious paving round the back doors and at the back of the house is of considerable public health importance, although it is frequently not insisted upon. By diminishing the dirt brought into the house it materially aids in keeping the house clean, and is a great convenience. The extra cost is not great, and its provision is a great improvement to a house. It will assist in keeping the walls dry, especially if it is taken up the walls for a height of two feet or so.

PLANS OF HOUSES CONSTRUCTED BY RURAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The majority of the houses erected by Rural Authorities are arranged on very much the same plan. The precise details will differ somewhat according to local requirements, while some architects

will contrive to plan more conveniently and economically than others. While this is a most important matter, it is one for special consideration in each case. No useful purpose will be served by the reproduction of a large series of plans, especially as the memorandum of the Local Government Board referred to earlier in this chapter can be obtained for 3d., and gives plans of five types of cottages, while many of the plans of the houses erected by different Local Authorities have been published and are available.

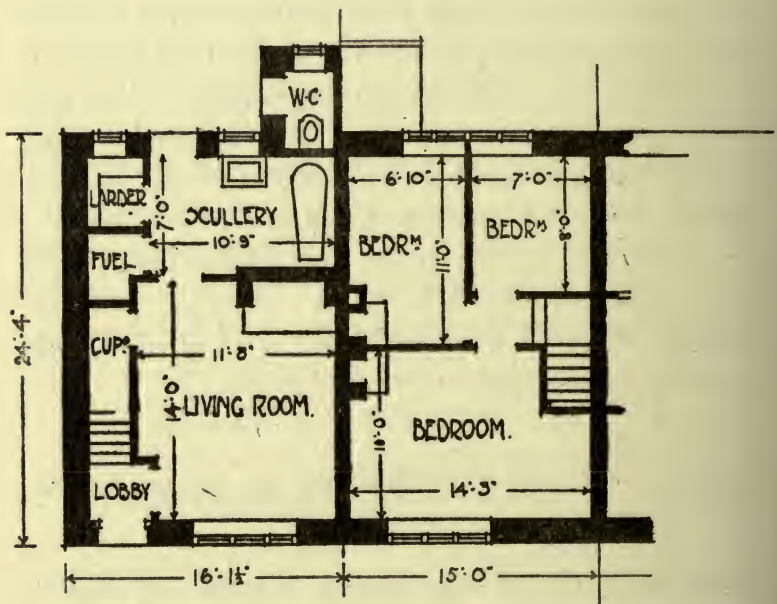


FIG. 30.—Plan of Martock houses.

Scale 1/4 feet to an inch.

Martock Housing Scheme. Ground-floor plan and First-floor plan.

1917



FIG. 31.—Martock houses. Front view. Only just completed and roads and gardens not made up.



FIG. 32.—Martock houses. Back view of one of the end houses.

Only just completed.

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It will be sufficient to give plans and illustrations (Figs. 30, 31, 32) of one housing scheme as a fairly representative example. Fig. 31 and 32 gives the appearance of the houses soon after completion (with only one house occupied) and before the roads and gardens had been completed.

The following are the essential particulars of this scheme :

Houses erected at Martock in Somerset by the Yeovil Rural District Council. The land acquired is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, costing almost exactly £100 per acre. Twelve houses in two blocks of six each, erected in the first place, further houses built subsequently. The houses are built of Ham stone obtained locally. Drains with inspection chambers are provided and water and gas taken into each house. The actual cost of erection of the twelve houses, including buildings, paths, fencing and drainage, was £1,821 7s. With architect's fees, loan charges, etc., the total cost was £1,880 6s. 2d. The houses were built in 1913. A rent of 4s. 6d. per week is charged, including rates and water charges. For this rent they are calculated to be self-supporting.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN REGARD TO HOUSING SCHEMES

It has been shown in earlier chapters that questions of cost loom large in all propositions to provide houses through Local Authorities. A brief

consideration of the chief financial considerations involved may therefore be useful.

Local Authorities never contemplate building houses out of current rates, and the only practicable way to raise the money required is by loan. To do this they have to obtain the leave and the consent of the Local Government Board. When the need for the provision of houses by the Local Authority has been accepted, the next step is to frame a housing scheme. The Local Authority has to decide as to the number of houses required, and go very carefully into the question of their cost. A provisional balance sheet is framed showing on the one side the estimated annual expenditure, and on the other the income from the rents charged.

Application has then to be made to the Local Government Board for a loan of definite amount for housing purposes. Application is granted or withheld after a local inquiry by officials of the Board.

It is frequently the practice of Local Authorities to obtain provisional tenders for the erection of the houses before the application is made, thus avoiding a second application should the tenders for the erection of the houses considerably exceed the estimate made.

In preparing such estimates and balance sheet, it is important that all the charges and expenses likely to be incurred should be included. To make this clear, actual figures in regard to a few housing schemes

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TABLE XV.

	Montacute.	Radstock.	Broadway.†	Offenham.†	Littleton.†
Number of Houses in Scheme	12	40	60	26	24
Area of Land	4,000 sq. yds.	4 acres.	5½ acres.	17 acres.	7 acres.
Cost of Scheme:	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
A. Land	110 0 0	*32 0 0 (Ground rent)	510 0 0	2,050 0 0	520 0 0
B. Construction:					
Contract for Houses	1,525 16 0	6,944 0 0	†9,675 0 0	4,064 0 0	4,080 0 0
Walls, Paths, etc.	100 0 0	210 5 11	500 0 0 (Roads)	—	—
C. Carrying out of Scheme:					
Architect's Fees	27 0 0	245 0 0	Nil.	Nil.	Nil.
Legal, Conveyances, etc.	23 6 8	63 4 11	26 16 4	49 12 8	24 13 6
Advertising L.C.B. Inquiry, etc.	2 15 0	7 19 7	2 10 0	3 0 0	2 10 0
Redemption of Land Tax	1 7 6	—	8 2 6	—	—
Public Works Loan Board					
Charges	20 10 0	48 2 6	60 17 6	41 12 6	34 13 6
Other Charges	5 10 6	229 8 7	—	—	—
Total Cost	1,816 5 8	7,748 1 6 (exclusive of Land).	10,783 6 4	6,208 5 2	4,661 17 0

* Land not bought. Let for 99 years with £32 ground rent. † Includes £150 for Sewers, Water Mains, etc.
 † For the information in regard to these parishes I am indebted to Mr. E. Holloway, Surveyor to the Evesham Rural District Council.

promoted by Local Authorities are given in Table XV.

The items which make up the capital cost of a scheme may be divided into three groups:—cost of the land, construction of the houses and their surroundings, and the legal and other expenses incidental to the scheme. The last group comprises a number of small items, which in the Montacute houses equalled 4·4 per cent., Broadway rather under 1 per cent., Offenham 1·5 per cent. and Littleton about 1·3 per cent. of the total expense of the scheme.

The cost of the land is also a comparative small part of the total expense, except in cases such as the Offenham scheme, where a very considerable amount of land is attached to the houses (ten houses on two acres, and the remaining sixteen on fifteen acres). In the Montacute scheme the price of land per house was £9 3s. 6d., and in the Broadway scheme £8 10s. In the latter scheme the price of the land was about £89 per acre. The loan for the land was for eighty years at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., equal to an annual charge for the land of 6s. $4\frac{1}{4}$ d. per house, or rather less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week. In the same way for the Montacute houses the cost of the land was equal to 8s. $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per year, or about $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. per week, and in this case the loan for land and houses was only for sixty years, and had to be repaid at 4 per cent.

If, therefore, the price of land had been doubled, it would have added less than 2d. per week to the rent in either scheme.

Stated in more general terms, it may be said that land will not usually cost more than £100 per acre, and if we build eight houses per acre, the cost per house will be £12 10s. With the loan charges spread over eighty years, this will involve a charge of 2·3d. per week per house at $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., and 2·4d. at 4 per cent.

Table XV shows that the cost of the houses and their accessories — paths, sewers, fencing, boundary walls, etc.—forms the predominant part of any housing scheme. It is not easy to effect saving on the actual buildings if houses of satisfactory size and of suitable material are to be provided, but considerable economy can sometimes be effected in regard to boundary walls, fencing, and in road-making.

Annual Expenses.—When the capital expenses have been ascertained, and the length of the loans and the rates of interest settled, it is possible to frame a balance sheet for the housing scheme. The balance sheets on pages 234–5 are for some of the schemes mentioned in the above table.

The way the items of the estimated expenditure are arrived at is of some importance.

Repayment of Loans.—The capital expenses incurred are usually repaid on the annuity system, the same sum being repaid each year, to include both interest and repayment of the principal. This is by far the most convenient arrangement.

MONTACUTE

<i>Estimated Receipts.</i>			<i>Estimated Expenditure.</i>		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
From rents of 12 houses at 3s. 9d. per week -	117	0 0	Repayment of Loan (land and buildings) at 4 per cent. -	71	0 9½
Less Allowance for voids, arrears, etc. (at 2 weeks' rent per house per year) -	4	10 0	Rates (at 5s. 4d. in the £ less rebate of 30 per cent.) -	13	8 9½
			Water Rate (2d. per house per week) -	5	4 0
			Income Property Tax -	2	15 0
			Fire Insurance -	0	15 0
			Collection and Management (2 per cent. on gross rental) -	2	6 9½
			Repairs (10 per cent. on gross rental) -	11	14 0
			Other items -	1	0 0
				108	4 4½
			Estimated annual surplus -	4	5 7½
				£112	10 0
				£112	10 0

BROADWAY

<i>Estimated Receipts.</i>			<i>Estimated Expenditure.</i>		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
From 9 houses at 3s. 6d. Per week.	81	18 0	Repayment of Loans :		
" 7 " 3s. 9d.	68	5 0	On Land (80 years at 3½ per cent.) -	19	0 9
" 23 " 4s. 0d.	239	4 0	On Buildings (60 years at 3½ per cent.) -	381	17 0
" 21 " 4s. 6d.	245	14 0	On Streets (20 years at 3½ per cent.) -	35	3 6
	635	1 0	Rates (including Water) at 6s. 1d. -	86	8 9
Less voids and losses (2½ per cent. of rental) -	16	2 0	Income Tax -	1	4 3
			Fire Insurance -	7	10 0
			Collection and supervision -	15	0 0
			Repairs (£1 per house) -	60	0 0
				606	4 3
			Estimated annual surplus	12	14 9
				£618	19 0
				£618	19 0

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OFFENHAM

<i>Estimated Receipts.</i>				<i>Estimated Expenditure.</i>
	£	s.	d.	
Rents of 6 houses at 3s. 6d. per week	54	12	0	Repayment of Loans :
Rents of 4 houses at 3s. 9d. per week	39	0	0	On Land (80 years at 3½ per cent.)
Rent of 16 houses (with land) at 6s. 9d. per week	280	16	0	On Buildings (60 years at 3½ per cent.)
Rent of 2 existing houses at 2s. 6d. per week	13	0	0	Rates
Rent of 1 existing house (acknowledgment rent)	0	1	0	Water Rate
Rent of land reserved for extensions	6	0	0	Income Tax
				Fire Insurance
				Tithes and Chief Rent
				Collection and Super- vision
				Repairs and Maintenance
	393	9	0	
Less allowance for voids and losses (2½ per cent. on gross rental)	10	0	0	Estimated surplus
	£383	9	0	361 4 11
				- 22 4 1
				£383 9 0

LITTLETON

<i>Estimated Receipts.</i>				<i>Estimated Expenditure.</i>
	£	s.	d.	
Rents of 12 houses at 4s. 8d. per week	145	12	0	Repayment of Loans :
Rents of 12 houses at 4s. per week	124	16	0	On Land (80 years at 3½ per cent.)
	270	8	0	On Buildings (60 years at 3½ per cent.)
Less allowance for voids and losses (2½ per cent. on gross rental)	6	15	0	Rates (including Water Rate)
				Income Tax
				Fire Insurance
				Collection and Super- vision
				Repairs and Maintenance
				Estimated surplus
	£263	13	0	262 19 10
				- 0 13 2
				£263 13 0

The period for which the loans are granted of course markedly affects the annual repayments, and Local Authorities usually endeavour to obtain their loans for as long a period as possible. Loans for land are now usually granted for eighty years, while for the houses, if constructed of brick, stone or other permanent material, the loans are generally for sixty years. When the scheme includes the making up of roads, the loan for the expenditure on this head may be only for a short period, such as twenty years.

The rate of interest which has to be paid on the loans is of material importance in relation to the cost of any housing scheme, as can be seen from the following Table XVI.

TABLE XVI
REPAYMENT OF A LOAN OF £100 BY WAY OF ANNUITY

Rate of Interest.	Repayable in 60 Years.	Repayable in 80 Years.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
3	3 12 3½	3 6 2½
3½	3 16 2½	3 10 5½
3¾	4 0 2½	3 14 9½
3¾	4 4 3	3 19 2
4	4 8 4¾	4 3 7½
4½	4 16 11	4 12 9
5	5 5 7¾	5 2 0¾

If, as an illustration, we assume that the cost of erection of a cottage (apart from land) amounts to £170, the loan to be repaid in sixty years, an increase in the rate of interest paid from 3½ to 4 per cent.

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means an annual increased payment of 13s. 11½d., or about 3¼d. per week. With ½ acre of land at £100 per acre this difference of interest (for eighty years loan) will mean a further addition of ¼d. per week on the land loan. A rise of interest of ½d. means, therefore, an addition of about 3½d. to the rent per week in a self-supporting scheme.

Rates.—The balance-sheets given show the amounts paid to the Local Authorities for rates. If we assume an equality of rates for all the houses in each scheme the rates per house (including water-rates) are as follows :

TABLE XVII

Scheme.	Rates in the £.	Each House per Year.	Each House per Week.
	s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
Broadway - - -	6 1	1 8 11	0 6½
Offenham - - -	4 11	2 11 6	1 0
Littleton - - -	6 8	1 14 8	0 8
Radstock - - -	4 2	2 10 8	0 11¾
Montacute - - -	—	1 11 1	0 7

In nearly all cases of cottage property the rates are included in the rent paid the landlord compounding. This table shows that an appreciable part of such total rent is due to the local rates.

It is, perhaps, worth pointing out that the rates which have to be paid depend not only upon the

amount in the £, but also upon the capital cost of the housing scheme. The more expensive the capital cost (for example, due to a rise in the price of building material), the higher the houses are rated and the greater the rates to be paid per week. There is obviously much that is unsatisfactory in this method of rating.

Collection and Management.—Private owners frequently allow 5 per cent. on the gross rental for this item, but in most housing schemes a lower percentage is allowed. For example, in the Montacute scheme it is about 2, Broadway $2\frac{1}{4}$, Offenham $2\frac{1}{2}$, and Littleton about $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

Much will depend upon local circumstances, and with a larger number of houses a lower percentage on the rental can usually be allowed. If rents can be paid monthly, as is the practice in some villages, a saving on this item may be effected.

Repairs and Maintenance.—In the above schemes the estimated amounts for this item are shown in the balance-sheets. For Montacute it is 10 per cent. on the gross rental, and for Broadway, Offenham and Littleton, $9\frac{1}{2}$, about 7, about 9 per cent. respectively on the rental.

I have inquired into the sufficiency of a 10 per cent. estimate in a number of schemes and this amount is usually anticipated to be sufficient. None of the houses in the schemes, however, were

sufficiently old to enable a definite opinion to be formed. Obviously two factors influencing this item are the initial quality of the work and materials, and the type of tenants living in the houses.

There is much to be said for the system adopted in some parts of Switzerland, and advocated in this country by the late Alderman Thompson, of separating up the rent paid into the three items of rent, rates and taxes and repairs rental (10 per cent.). The tenant would then know how much of the rent was for repairs, while at the end of the year any unexhausted percentage is returned to the tenants. The Departmental Housing Committee, 1906, recommend giving this a trial, and in regard to it state (p. 27):

“A charge of 10 per cent. is put on the cottages, and at the end of the year a refund, more or less according to the amount of the repairs required, is made to the tenant. This acts by way of a bonus to the careful tenant. It stops the little defects that would otherwise become more serious, and the rough or careless occupier is trained to good habits.”

The drawback to this method, in addition to the trouble involved, is that it is inequitable in its incidence. The tenant of the newly-erected house will, without effort, get most of his rebate, while the

occupier of the ageing cottage will not only have the drawbacks of an old house, but through no want of care on his part will receive little or no bonus, since the repair bill will be high. The principle is a very sound one, and if this inequality could be adjusted, such an arrangement would have a beneficial effect upon the tenants.

Voids and Losses.—The usual allowance is about 2 to 4 per cent. on the rental. In the schemes which I have inquired into, these limits seem to have allowed a quite sufficient margin.

Up to the present rural housing schemes have only been put in hand where there has been an urgent need for houses, and unless the rents are fixed abnormally high, there is no likelihood of a lack of applicants to occupy any house as soon as it becomes vacant. Obviously this may not always be the case and estimates must be framed accordingly.

The above considerations show that the rents charged have to cover a number of items only some of which can be included as repayment for the construction of the houses. This is clearly shown in the following figures for two of the schemes which have been set out. In the Broadway scheme, the rents paid varied from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d., but it is assumed they are all at the same uniform rental of 4s., the rent paid for most of the houses and about the average rent for the whole. At Montacute all the twelve houses are

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let at 3s. 9d. The individual items are only roughly correct :

Share of Payment.	Montacute.	Broadway.
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Repayment of Land - - - -	0 1½	0 1½
Houses - - - -	2 4	2 8
Rates (including Water) - - -	0 7½	0 6½
Fire Insurance - - - -	0 0½	0 0½
Collection and Management - - -	0 0½	0 1½
Repairs and Renewals - - - -	0 4½	0 4½
Income Property Tax - - - -	0 1	0 0½
Allowance for Voids and Losses -	0 1½	0 1½
Total Rent - - - -	3 9½	3 11½

APPENDIX

AN EXAMPLE OF CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

As will be explained in Chapter X much may be done to facilitate the provision of houses by co-operative means. The following particulars of a co-operative scheme in a rural district in Somerset may be useful as an example of the lines upon which such schemes are worked.

The need for more houses at Winscombe was urgent, and was met by the formation of the Winscombe Cottage Society. The capital is about £3,600, consisting of:

(1) A mortgage from the Public Works Loan Board at 3¼ per cent., with a Sinking Fund of 22s. per cent., which will extinguish the mortgage in forty years.

(2) Four per cent. Loan Stock.

(3) Shares with interest limited to 5 per cent.

Tenant members are required to take at least three £1 shares.

For every five shares held by a tenant, one penny per week is deducted from his rent; equivalent to $4\frac{1}{3}$ per cent.

The Public Works Loan Board are prepared, in schemes which they approve, to lend up to two-thirds of the capital required, but in this case sufficient Loan Stock was offered in the parish by those interested in local housing to make it necessary to only ask for one-half of the capital.

In all, $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land were bought at £100 per acre—3 acres in one place, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ at another. Each house has 600 square yards of land. Eighteen houses, in pairs, were erected, the tender for the houses working out at £320 per pair, exclusive of fencing, drainage, water supply, roads, and paths.

The rent to members is 4s. 3d. per week and rates.

No tenant can be disturbed as long as he pays his rent, and is not guilty, in the opinion of the Tenant Members' Committee, of any conduct detrimental to good neighbourship. As is usual in such schemes, a tenant may leave on giving three months' notice, when he may sell his tenant rights and any improvements he has effected in house and garden to the incoming tenant.

The Tenants' Committee is empowered to act as a co-operative society, and, for example, buy a truck of coals at wholesale price for the members.

The houses are built of concrete blocks. The blocks used and the appearance of the houses when completed is shown in Figs. 27, 28 and 29. Each house contains a kitchen, 12 ft. by 12 ft. by 8 ft.; parlour, 11 ft. by 8 ft. by 8 ft.; scullery, 9 ft. by 9 ft. by 8 ft.; larder, 3 ft. by 3 ft. by 8 ft.; and three bedrooms of following sizes: 15 ft. by 9 ft. by 8 ft., 11 ft. by 7 ft. by 10 ft., 8 ft. by 7 ft. 6 ins. by 10 ft. The third bedroom is obviously very small. Earth closets are provided in pairs.

I am indebted to Mr. Edmund Ashby, Secretary of the Society, for these particulars.

HOUSING AND HEALTH

CHAPTER IX

HOUSING AND HEALTH

THE fact that the present work is concerned with *rural* housing at once removes from discussion the large question of the influence of urbanisation upon health. No one acquainted with the facts will deny that crowded urban populations are, in bulk, less healthy than populations of similar social position living in the country. Individuals in each are perfectly healthy, but group for group, the rural population has a lower death-rate, while, if figures were available, it would be found to show a lower disease rate. The factors bringing this about are many and varied, and only in part to be ascribed to actual housing conditions.

The problem under consideration is a more difficult one. Evidence is required as to the extent to which living for long periods under conditions of housing which are defective and insanitary is prejudicial to health.

Attempts are frequently made to produce such evidence in the form of statistical data, showing the excessive prevalence of certain diseases and demonstrating an increased death-rate in insanitary

blocks of houses compared with groups of houses in a sanitary or less insanitary condition. It may be said at once that evidence of this kind which is free from fallacies, is most difficult to obtain and much of the statistical data which has been advanced in this connection is of little or no value.

This is particularly the case when it is based upon the relative death-rates of populations varying in their density per acre or varying with the average number of persons per house. Since most important factors, such as poverty conditions, abundance of food, etc., are not identical in the two groups compared, the poorest and worst-nourished living in the most crowded houses, and since these factors greatly affect morbidity and mortality, it follows that these statistics are valueless to show the influence of bad housing. It is useless to compare groups of populations in regard to the relative influence of one factor unless the other factors are identical in the two groups or unless their differences can be estimated and allowed for.

Statistics are useful in this connection to but a limited extent, and for this reason are rather sparingly used in this chapter.

Hereditary influences and the sufficiency of nutrition are two factors which greatly influence health, and both of them are independent of housing conditions.

Apart, however, from statistics in the mass, there are some general considerations which may be

used to show that bad housing must prejudicially affect the health of those constantly subjected to it. The essential housing defects which are found may be considered in their relationship to health.

(1) INSUFFICIENT AIR SPACE AND INSUFFICIENT VENTILATION

It has been shown that defects of this character are by no means confined to towns, but are fairly frequently met with in even purely rural districts.

Insufficient fresh air acts prejudicially in two ways, it increases the liability to bacterial infection, and it lowers the resistance against such infection of those habitually exposed to it.

Although, with quiet breathing, as is well known, expired air is germ free, expired air when exhaled explosively, such as occurs in coughing, loud speaking and sneezing, disseminates minute droplets of saliva for considerable distances, and these droplets contain many bacteria. If some of the bacteria are harmful they may and do spread infection, especially influenza, pneumonia, colds and pulmonary tuberculosis. The closer human beings are congregated, the greater the probability of the conveyance of infection, and the likelihood of such infection being massive in character.

It is well known that a vitiated atmosphere constantly breathed lowers the resistance powers,

although it is difficult to scientifically demonstrate the fact.

Obviously, the deficiencies of air-space may be remedied theoretically by efficient ventilation, but in practice, the smaller the cubic space, the greater the practical difficulties of efficient ventilation without draught, so much so that with a small available air-space ventilation appliances are less likely to be used than when the air space is larger and the evils of insufficient fresh air are accentuated.

At the present time the cult of the open window is widely taught, but is not widely practised, while even if the countryman can be persuaded of its importance he is often not in a position to put his beliefs into practice.

With many of the existing bedroom windows in cottages, owing to their faulty position or inadequate size, keeping the bedroom flushed with fresh air at night is impossible of attainment, at least with any degree of comfort. When, as is not infrequent, they will not open or, if once opened, owing to rotten sashes, etc., will not shut again, the difficulties are enhanced.

The open-air schools, residential and non-residential, are demonstrating very clearly the value of open air conditions upon development and physical well being.

The importance of housing conditions in relation to disease is well illustrated by the great improvement in the Army mortality returns. The mortality figures

given by the Royal Commission* reporting in 1858 were very high as regards respiratory diseases. This is shown in the following table :

TABLE XVIII

Branch of Army.	Number of Deaths from Diseases of the Respiratory Organs.		
	England and Wales.*	Actual.	Difference per cent.
Household Cavalry - -	62·8	79	+ 25
Dragoon Guards, etc. - -	251·1	400	+ 59
Infantry - - -	760·0	1,641	+ 115
Foot Guards - - -	203·5	555	+ 172
Total - - -	1,277·4	2,675	+ 109

* Ratio of deaths according to the experience of the general population of England and Wales.

The Commissioners gave other figures of the same general character and then went on to demonstrate that a vitiated and polluted atmosphere was the factor to which this excessive liability of the soldier to respiratory diseases could chiefly be attributed.

The minimum cubic space allotted to each soldier by regulation was only 450 cubic feet, while in a majority of cases even this minimum was not attained, and the Commissioners reported "in a number of barracks there is a deficiency of one-third, and in some cases, of more than half of the space allotted by regulation."

* Report of Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Army. 1858.

Even the regulation space of one foot between the beds was frequently unattained in practice, while very inefficient means of ventilation were provided. The Commissioners remark: "The result is, that the soldier sleeps in a foetid and unwholesome atmosphere, the habitual breathing of which, though producing for the most part no direct immediate effects, probably lays the seeds of that pulmonary disease which is so fatal in the British Army."

We have but to change three words and the whole sentence applies to only too large a part of our industrial and agricultural populations.

In the Army the defects were recognised and remedied with immediate and striking results, as shown in the following table, which gives the mortality from lung diseases in four branches of the army:

TABLE XIX

Branch of the Army.	1837-46 (10 years).	1864-70 (7 years).
Household Cavalry - - -	6.28	3.76
Line Cavalry - - -	5.65	1.41
Foot Guards - - -	11.9	2.30
Infantry - - -	7.75	2.12

The only decided alteration was the increased cubic space allowed for each soldier and improvements in ventilation.

The statistics relating to back-to-back houses are also important and, although they specially deal with

urban populations, they are germane to rural housing in view of the considerable number of houses in rural districts without through ventilation.

The subject has been investigated by a number of workers of whom may be mentioned Dr. Barry, Mr. Gordon Smith, Dr. Tatham, Dr. Herbert Jones at Shipley, Dr. Niven at Manchester, and Dr. Evans at Bradford. One of the most recent detailed investigations was by Dr. Darra Mair, and dealing with thirteen industrial towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The report of Dr. Mair was very detailed, and steps were taken to remove possible sources of error, and to make the different populations strictly comparable. All the results are in very general agreement, and demonstrate unmistakably that absence of through ventilation in houses is a cause of increased mortality.

A few conclusions may be selected from Dr. Mair's Report.*

In this report a distinction was made between back-to-back houses built in rows and those of a better type built in blocks of four, with, in consequence, some air-space round. Taking both types of back-to-back houses, the corrected average annual death-rate from all causes was greater in the back-to-back houses than in the through houses to the

* Report on Back-to-Back Houses to Local Government Board, by Dr. Darra Mair, 1910.

extent of 15 per cent., and if the type only built in rows is taken, the excess of mortality was a little more than 20 per cent.

The outstanding causes of death which produced the excess of mortality in back-to-back houses were :

(a) Pneumonia, bronchitis and other pulmonary diseases (exclusive of phthisis), and

(b) Diseases of defective development and of malnutrition in young children.

The corrected excess of mortality from each of these two groups of diseases, in back-to-back houses, approached 40 per cent.

There was also some excess of mortality (10 per cent.) in back-to-back houses from infectious diseases, and a small excess (5 per cent.) from diarrhœa.

Mortality from phthisis showed an excess, amounting to 12 per cent., in back-to-back houses built in rows, but not in back-to-back houses built so as to admit of side ventilation (blocks of four).

Approximately, the ages at which the excess of mortality in back-to-back houses occurred were the early ages of life from infancy up to fifteen years, and the late ages of life from 65 years and upwards. At both of these periods of life, the predominating cause of the excess was mortality from pulmonary diseases, and at the early ages, from diseases of defective development and malnutrition as well.

(2) OVERCROWDING

Statistics exist in abundance to show that when populations of different densities are compared, there is invariably a higher general death-rate and a higher death-rate from most separate causes of death in the populations of higher density. For example, in Glasgow, Dr. Chalmers,* the Medical Officer of Health, has worked out extensive statistics comparing the death-rate in inmates of one, two, three and four or more rooms. These figures he corrected for varying age and sex distribution of the populations under consideration so as to make the data comparable. He found that, after this estimation had been made, the following figures were obtained (Table XX):

TABLE XX

Accommodation.	Death Rates.		
	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 to 5 years.
1 apartment - - -	20·14	210·25	40·56
2 apartments - - -	16·83	163·8	32·20
3 apartments - - -	12·63	128·5	17·94
4 apartments and upwards -	10·32	102·57	10·29

These very striking figures cannot, of course, be taken as in any way demonstrating that this enormous

* *Proceedings Royal Society of Medicine*, 1913, Vol. VI., "Epidemiology" Section, p. 155.

difference of death-rates is due to the housing conditions alone, since obviously the poorer and worst nourished persons, and so the most susceptible to disease, would in general be housed in the smaller accommodation. A part only of the increased mortality can be ascribed to actual housing conditions, and the proportion due to overcrowding and diminished air-space does not permit of direct statistical measurement.

Overcrowding is largely a question of insufficient air space, the influence of which upon health has already been discussed, but there is in addition the very important question of the greater liability to infection.

The relationship of the ordinary infectious diseases—such as scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles and whooping-cough—to conditions of housing is mainly one of cubic space. It is true that an insanitary house will, in itself, predispose to infection by lowering the general vitality, while overcrowding, by facilitating the transmission of minor catarrhal complaints, must still further diminish the resistance of the human organism; but these factors probably play but a secondary part in the general question of infection.

Our widening knowledge of infectious diseases shows more and more plainly that the essential factor in the spread of infectious diseases such as those mentioned (apart from explosive transmission by water or milk) is personal infection from case to case.

We are also learning that the extent of infection is largely dependent upon the *closeness* of contact, and that the effective range of infection is small. The closer children are associated and packed together the greater the liability of infection resulting from case to case.

It has been shown in Chapter III that in a large proportion of the homes of the rural population there are but two bedrooms and frequently but one living-room. In such houses, opportunities for the spread of infection are greatly facilitated, and when in addition the rooms are inadequately ventilated and of small cubic capacity, there is very little opportunity for the infecting bacilli to become diluted with abundance of fresh air.

The impossibility of "isolating" cases of infectious disease under these conditions does not need demonstrating. The provision of isolation hospitals is no real remedy for insufficient air space, as is so frequently asserted to be the case. Under the conditions which exist in so many rural cottages, infection of the other susceptible inmates has already taken place before the infectious character of the disease has been recognised, or before the case has been removed to the isolation hospital. It sometimes means removing the whole of the susceptible members one after the other.

It is most difficult to statistically demonstrate the relationship between infectious disease and housing conditions, since the primary factor is the

presence of a source of infection—largely a matter of “chance”—while the most important secondary factor is the presence of susceptible persons in the house. If these two factors are equally in operation undoubtedly there is likely to be a higher incidence of infectious disease upon houses with an insufficient air space per inhabitant.

I am not aware of any figures for such districts, but the following from Glasgow (Dr. Chalmers' paper *loc. cit.*) are very interesting :

TABLE XXI
MALES AGED 1 TO 5—DEATH RATE PER 1,000.

	Measles. (1).	Whooping Cough. (2).	Scarlet Fever. (3).	Diph- theria and Mem- branous Croup. (4).	Cerebro- Spinal Fever. (5).	Totals of Columns 1, 2, 3, 4.
1 apartment	8.63	4.36	1.26	2.02	0.13	16.27
2 apartments	5.90	2.79	0.97	1.56	0.18	11.22
3 apartments	2.85	1.42	0.22	1.87	0.30	6.36
4 apartments and upwards	1.01	0.67	—	1.01	—	2.69

In large urban districts infection is nearly always present, so that the influence of other conditions can be measured, but in more scattered rural areas this is not the case, and the extent to which infectious disease is present is much more influenced by the chance of infection than by any question of local sanitary conditions.

It is for this reason that the statement, so frequently advanced by the parish council or by the inhabitants individually of a parish in which the housing has been found to be inadequate and bad, that there cannot be much wrong with their sanitary condition since there have been no outbreaks of infectious disease, is really valueless and beside the point. Bad housing does not breed infectious disease, it only facilitates its spread when introduced. The actual introduction of infection to light up an outbreak may not occur for years.

A striking illustration of this came under my notice a few years ago. A large, purely rural village, with a population of 1,140, urgently needed a sewage scheme, the houses being in some parts very closely packed together, while the general sanitary conditions were most unsatisfactory. It was advanced as a convincing argument by those who opposed the sewage scheme that there had been little or no infectious disease in the village for many years past, and that therefore it could not be insanitary. My explanation of the absence of direct relationship was discounted as that of someone who wanted the village sewered.

While the scheme was still not fully passed and only existed on paper, a case of diphtheria was introduced into the village, and an extensive outbreak of this disease occurred (about twenty-five cases) which lasted for the first five months of 1910. In the same year, but from June to December, a fairly

severe outbreak of scarlet fever occurred, with some forty cases.

The occurrence of the outbreaks was no additional proof that the village was insanitary any more than their absence demonstrated a satisfactory condition of affairs, but their occurrence at this juncture greatly facilitated the passing of the scheme, and it was acquiesced in as an undoubted necessity.

The relationship of tuberculosis to conditions of housing is, I believe, an intimate one, although it cannot be stated statistically, since tuberculosis is a disease which closely affects wage-earning capacity, so that tuberculous families tend to become poor and so occupy the worst houses.

Damp, ill-ventilated houses, by reducing resistance to infection, predispose those inhabiting them to tuberculosis. Important as is this fact, the influence of diminished accommodation and air space in houses is a far greater factor in spreading the disease.

Pulmonary tuberculosis is an infectious disease, and one in which the chances of transmitting infection to others are mainly influenced by the dosage and the degree of susceptibility of those exposed. In a large proportion of the existing cottages for agricultural labourers it is practically impossible to effectively isolate cases of tuberculosis. In advanced cases proper control of the discharges is very difficult to ensure, and under existing conditions the other occupants are daily exposed to heavy

risks of infection. The larger the cubic space and the more efficient the ventilation, the greater is the dilution of the infectious material with corresponding diminution of risks of infection.

Experience, and particularly recent experience, is showing conclusively how large a proportion of the home "contacts" of pulmonary tuberculosis (Phthisis) cases are themselves infected with tuberculosis. At least 20 to 30 per cent. were infected, for example, in an investigation at Bradford dealing with over 1,000 cases.

The following table (Table XXII) gives particulars of 490 cases of pulmonary tuberculosis investigated in 1913 in the rural districts of Somerset, showing the number of bedrooms and the number of occupants.

TABLE XXII

ACCOMMODATION IN HOUSES WITH PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS CASES.
SUMMARY OF RURAL DISTRICTS.

No. of Bedrooms.	No. of Occupants of House.											Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Over 10	
1 bedroom	17	5	4	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	30
2 bedrooms	1	22	38	39	21	22	18	9	5	—	1	176
3 bedrooms	—	12	30	52	35	30	15	14	8	4	4	204
4 bedrooms	—	6	9	12	11	9	3	2	2	2	3	59
Over 4 bedrooms	—	—	3	4	4	2	5	2	1	—	—	21
All houses inspected	18	45	84	109	72	64	41	27	16	6	8	490

This table shows that 6 per cent. of the cases occupied houses with but one bedroom, 36 per cent. with but two bedrooms, 42 per cent. with three bedrooms, and only 16 per cent. occupied houses with four or more bedrooms.

The figures showing the number of occupants also make it clear that in only a minority of the cases could the patient occupy a separate bedroom and be, in any sense of the word, isolated. To take but one example, in fifty-five cases out of the 176 in occupation of two-bedroom houses there were six or more occupants of the house. It may be added that the figures for the urban parts of Somerset were very similar.

These facts as to accommodation are still more clearly shown in the following table, which gives the results of specific inquiries as to bed and bedroom accommodation in the same groups of cases.

TABLE XXIII

PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS CASES IN RELATION TO SEPARATE BED AND BEDROOM ACCOMMODATION.

Accommodation.	Cases.		Percentages.	
	Urban.	Rural.	Urban.	Rural.
Separate Bedroom at time of first visit - - - -	278	239	49·8	47·7
Not a Separate Bedroom :				
Subsequently remedied - -	54	62	9·7	12·4
Subsequently partly remedied -	7	12	1·2	2·4
Not remedied - - - -	219	187	39·3	37·5
Separate Bed at time of first visit	382	314	67·2	63·3
Not a Separate Bed :				
Subsequently remedied - -	40	45	7·0	9·0
Not remedied - - - -	146	138	25·8	27·7

This table shows that 52 per cent. of the cases in the rural districts did not occupy a separate bedroom, and that in more than three-quarters of these it was not found practicable to get the condition remedied. Most of the patients would have been glad to obtain better accommodation, but could not obtain it, either because larger houses were not available or because, if available, they could not afford to move into them.

Even more striking and deplorable is the fact that in over one-third of the cases the patients did not even have a bed to themselves. A good many of these were married couples, but by no means all cases.

Vast sums of money are now being spent upon the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis, but the claims are so many and the measures to be taken have of necessity to be spread in so many directions that it has not been found practicable to arrange for the removal to institutions of all cases of this disease. Improvement of housing conditions must be put in hand at the same time for any anti-tuberculosis crusade to be effective.

(3) DAMPNES

It is very difficult to assess the influence of a damp house upon the health of those occupying it: there are so many mixed factors at work. Rheumatic fever is one of the common causes of heart diseases

but it is doubtful whether there is any relationship between this condition and prevailing dampness. The relationship of damp to chronic rheumatic conditions and diseases of the respiratory organs is, however, one which is generally accepted.

(4) CONDITIONS INIMICAL TO CLEANLINESS AND TO LIVING UNDER SANITARY CONDITIONS

It is convenient to group these conditions and to discuss together their influence upon the health of occupants of houses which are defective in this way. By so doing repetition is avoided.

Conditions such as very defective kitchen and scullery flooring, absence of paving round houses and dilapidations in the house are—as has been explained in previous chapters—very common in houses. These conditions make for the absence of cleanliness and the prevalence of dirty and filthy conditions in the home.

It is often contended that dirty and ill-kept houses are chiefly a question of tenants, and it is not very difficult to point to houses side by side not structurally different, in which one is kept clean and tidy, because occupied by a clean, tidy, self-respecting housewife and family, while its neighbour, because its tenants are the opposite, is filthy, dirty and ill-kept. While this can be done, and is instructive, it does not in the least invalidate the general principle.

We have to bear in mind that the wife of the agricultural labourer and the like has a hard task to make ends meet, and to bring up a family, and if things are made difficult for her by an environment requiring persistent constant effort to preserve cleanliness, it is inevitable that in many cases this persistent effort will be too great, and conditions of dirt and absence of cleanliness tolerated which are far from her wishes, and which under happier surroundings would be avoided. The strain is severe, and the tendency to give up is great, and it is only too easy to start a vicious cycle—the deterioration of actual cleanliness leading first to a deterioration of standards of cleanliness, followed by a lowering of the tone and spirit of the occupants, causing in turn a further decline in standards and leading to a nearly complete loss of appreciation of cleanliness and sanitation and all these terms stand for.

Stated another way we must all realise that a person living in an insanitary house becomes rapidly accustomed to an insanitary environment. Personal hygiene is all important, but amongst the lower strata of society it is often a tender plant, badly developed, and to nourish it to sturdy growth the assistance of a healthy and clean environment is necessary. To supply it we must have for one thing good and decent houses.

If a good tenant can make an insanitary cottage clean, it is equally true that a good sanitary cottage

can elevate inherently insanitary tenants, and make them appreciate their surroundings.

The statistics of the rehousing work carried out at Liverpool are particularly interesting in this connection, since for the most part the populations are comparable.

A very large amount of demolition and rehousing has been carried out in Liverpool, the cost of which up to the end of 1912 has been as much as £1,135, 041, equal to a rate of 2½d. in the £.* From 1901-1912 inclusive, eighteen unhealthy areas have been dealt with, involving 2,521 houses.

The number of dwellings provided by the Corporation up to the end of 1912 has been 2,727, with a population of 10,099. The houses are let at rents of 1s. 9d. to 5s. 6d. for the tenements, and 6s. to 7s. for the self-contained cottages. Of these dwellings 2,171 are reserved for persons who have been dispossessed. The comparative vital statistics of the two groups are therefore comparable.

In the Corporation tenements for the four years 1909 to 1912 inclusive, the death-rate was 27·9, and the phthisis rate 1·9 per 1,000, while for the insanitary areas destroyed for the period 1905-1910, the death-rate was 33 to 34, and the phthisis rate 4 per 1,000, although the average annual death-rate for Liverpool city during the same period was 19 per 1,000.

* Annual Reports of Dr. Hope, Medical Officer of Health, Liverpool, 1911, 1912.

Dr. Hope points out that many of the tenants of the Corporation have hitherto been accustomed all their lives to insanitary surroundings and insanitary habits, and that while many of them carry to their new surroundings their old customs, they can be greatly improved by instruction and supervision. Dr. Hope adds :

“ There is undoubtedly a marked improvement in the habits of the majority of those who occupy Corporation tenements, as indicated by the external and internal appearance of the dwellings. To fully appreciate the marked change one must be conversant with the original insanitary conditions under which these people lived. The improvement is particularly noticeable amongst the children, and is so marked that one can hardly realise that they are the same children who formerly lived and played in the insanitary courts.”

Those who have visited Ireland and studied the influence of the extensive rehousing work there, have been struck by the better health enjoyed and particularly by the increase in general vitality and the diminution of zymotic diseases. They also found that a marked improvement in all respects has been effected in the habits and standards of life of the people.

The absence of proper food storage, defective and insanitary methods of excreta and refuse disposal,

and in particular a bad or inaccessible water supply are all conditions making for a faulty environment and predisposing to disease.

It will be seen from the above broad consideration of the subject that the relationship of housing to health is all part of the larger question of the relationship of environment to health, and as part of the environment housing plays a considerable share in its influence on health.

All these factors, important as they are, do not exhaust the relationship of housing to health. Indeed, in my opinion the essential importance of *rural* housing in relation to health is not solely or even chiefly a question of the effect of an insanitary house upon the health of the inhabitants of the house. The essential point is that many of the rural cottages are not such as self-respecting country people are any longer willing to live in. They are inconvenient and lack the ordinary minimal decencies of living.

We teach children hygienic wisdom by *precept* in the schools, and then let them return to homes insanitary in construction and arrangement in which decent living is impossible, and then wonder they do not profit by their school instruction.

We teach them cooking and washing, and send them back to homes in which even simple cooking and all washing is most difficult, owing to the lack of even elementary facilities. We inculcate habits of decency and the children return to houses in

which both sexes have to sleep together from lack of bedrooms and in which sanitary conveniences are defective or insufficient.

It must be remembered, that to the rural dweller, his house is much more vital than it is to the townsman. Outside attractions are few, and the life of the countryman centres round his home. His spare time is often put into his garden, and many show their love of their home by the beauty with which they surround the very poor stuff within.

Facilities for cooking and washing are essentials. There is no fried-fish or other shop round the corner for the wife to buy her food ready cooked: everything has to be done in the country cottage.

The ordinary conveniences of life are not available in many cottages. Frequently there are no washing facilities, while water has to be pumped or fetched considerable distances. In some places the roads are deplorable.*

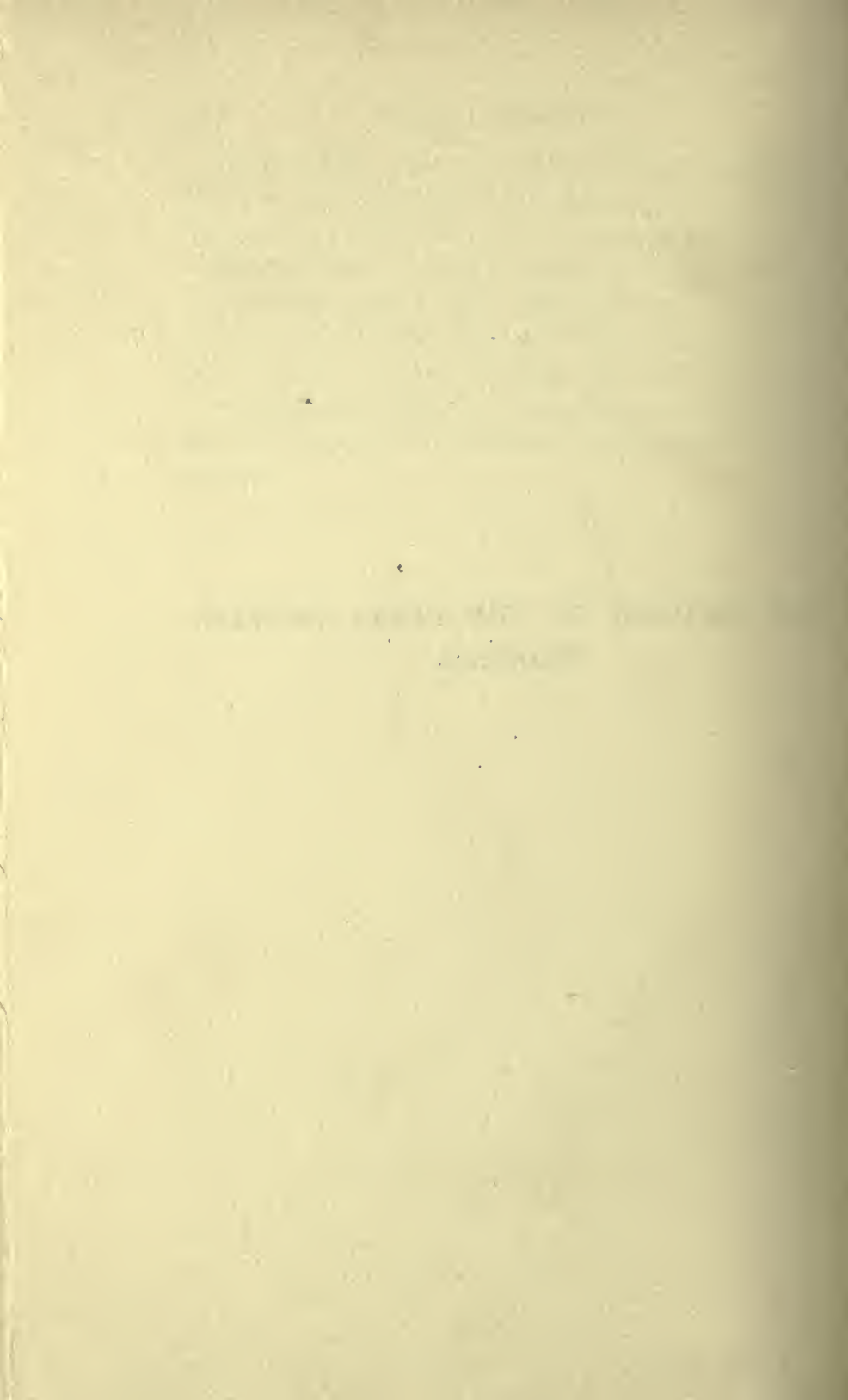
For every housewife in a cottage who complains of the absence of through ventilation, I know of ten who complain as to defective floors or dilapidations or absence of washing facilities. The one they do not appreciate, the other they feel as a heavy burden.

* I know a hamlet where in winter the children often *stick* fast in the mud of the road going to school until an elder releases them, and in which the one plaintive cry was not for better houses (although they were bad enough), but to live on "a hard road."

These things may not damage their health or increase the death-rate, but they are one factor driving the countryman to the towns and abroad.

The townsman cannot compare in health with the countryman, and so this migration is a cause of national ill health. In estimating, therefore, the health value of a good cottage, we must take into consideration its influence in keeping the countryman and his family in the healthier environment of the country.

THE SOLUTION OF THE RURAL HOUSING
PROBLEM



CHAPTER X

THE SOLUTION OF THE RURAL HOUSING PROBLEM

It is comparatively easy to enumerate the factors which make the rural housing question such a difficult one; the difficulties arise in its solution. There are a number of ascertained facts, such as the following :

(1) Instead of the natural increase which might be anticipated there is a diminution, in places a marked diminution, in our rural population. This diminution is greater than is to be accounted for by the lessened requirements of rural labour due to altered methods of land cultivation, cessation of local industries, etc.

(2) This diminution is associated with the migration of large numbers of the best and the most virile of the countryside to the large towns or abroad.

(3) There is a shortage in many rural districts in the actual number of cottages, good, bad or indifferent, and a marked shortage of houses fit to live in. Not only are many existing cottages unfit for human habitation, but many others

are rapidly wearing out and are not being replaced.

(4) The wages received by most sections of the agricultural labouring population are insufficient to enable them to pay a rent which will yield a fair return on the cost of erecting cottages for their occupation. From this it follows that private enterprise looking for profits cannot supply the deficiency of houses.

(5) While cottages are being built by land-owners in connection with their estates, this is only being done to a limited extent, and while mitigating the shortage is in no sense an adequate or even a partial solution.

(6) The action now being taken by local authorities to close unfit houses, important and valuable as it is, only aggravates the housing shortage, unless it is carried out hand in hand with housing provision.

(7) The existing constructional authorities, the Rural District Councils, are averse to acting as building authorities when a working deficit is probable, while the legal powers of the supervising authorities to compel them to build cottages where they are needed are inadequate and will never result in sufficient houses being erected to materially affect the problem. What is being done is to provide a few blocks of cottages in

places where any loss to the ratepayers is likely to be either nil or trifling.

(8) If things are left as they are the solution of the problem which will occur will be a continuance of the migration of the agricultural population to the towns or colonies.

Re-stated briefly, the rural housing problem may be said to be the following: Existing cottages are wearing or have worn out; economic causes prevent private enterprise erecting more in anything like sufficient and compensatory numbers; the Local Authorities will not build if loss is likely to fall upon the rates, and the powers to make them are ineffective: the State, through the Local Government Board, exhorts and stimulates, but provides no pecuniary help: the problem is being solved in each place in which it arises by the migration to town or colony of some of the best of the agricultural working classes.

If the shortage of houses is dealt with, the question of dealing with defective houses presents no great administrative difficulty. The remedy for defective houses is simple: it is more houses. If only there are enough houses the defective houses can be closed or made fit.

In the past, vast sums have been spent in urban areas in slum removal schemes. Immense expense has been incurred in compensating the owners of insanitary houses, and then removing these houses

to reconstruct on the site others which will accommodate but a minority of the population dishoused, and for the most part, a population different in composition to that displaced. This is a wasteful method which is unsuitable in rural areas. In the latter we need to provide fresh houses, by private enterprise if possible, but provide them even if rate or State aided. Then the insanitary houses can be dealt with; and since no value is to be attached to an unfit house no compensation is or should be payable.

To arrive at anything like a solution of the housing shortage question, two separate aspects must, in my opinion, be considered—one the immediate relief, the other the permanent solution.

Many suggestions have been advocated as solving the housing question, but no one of them deals with both these aspects. Some of these solutions require careful consideration.

I.—*To give recent legislation time to show its value and to increase its utility by fresh legal powers in the directions which practical experience has shown to require strengthening.*—The last Housing Act was passed as late as 1909, and it may be advanced that this Act has not only done a good deal, but that the results show a progressive activity on the part of Local Authorities, and that all that is required is a little more encouragement.

The details given in Chapter V do, indeed, show

that valuable work has been accomplished, but the facts given show that it has been chiefly in the direction of improving existing houses, while the actual constructional work has been trifling. The solution for the housing shortage in effect proposed by this Act is that the deficiency is to be made good by the Local Authority building the houses where required, any deficiency in the balance sheet, if it occurs, being made good from the local rates. It has been shown that Local Authorities, except in the rarest cases, will not undertake this work if there is any probability of a deficiency, and that the powers to make them are totally insufficient.

On this view, what is required is additional legislation to increase the coercive powers of the superior authorities. Undoubtedly, something could be done by legislation in this direction, but this raises the question as to whether it is a fair and proper charge on local rates that they should be burdened with a housing deficiency charge which is due to the fact that rents lower than will make the houses self-supporting, have to be charged.

Since the low rents necessary are mainly due to the low wages of the agricultural labourer, such charges are obviously a subsidy to agriculture, and it is making the non-agricultural part of the area which is rated, subsidise the wages of the labourers employed by farmers and others who themselves may or may not be in the part rated. If extensively practised, it would have the same tendency as the

disastrous Speenhamland experiment and system referred to in Chapter I, the deficit falling on the sanitary rates instead of the poor rates.

Regarded as a temporary measure pending a proper solution on economic lines, I believe such a procedure is justifiable, but it cannot be advocated as *the* solution of the problem.

It is evident from clause (2) of Section 10 of the 1909 Act, that any extensive housing construction financed by the rates was not contemplated. Until comparatively recently, the Local Government Board practically prevented any rate subsidy by not sanctioning schemes unless probably self-supporting. In connection with a housing scheme in certain parishes in the Swaffham Rural District, the Board pointed out that although they regarded it as important that a scheme for the erection of working-class dwellings should, as far as possible, be self-supporting, the fact that such a scheme showed a small annual deficiency would not preclude them from sanctioning a loan for the provision of the houses if the circumstances did not admit of a satisfactory self-supporting scheme. This was in September, 1912, and since that date other applications have been dealt with in the same way.

II.—*To Increase the Wages of the Agricultural Labourer.*—All political parties seem to be agreed that the agricultural labourer is underpaid for his work, and that to retain him on the land in

sufficient numbers his wages will have to be increased.

Obviously, if they are increased sufficiently, the labourer will be able to pay an economic rent, and, whoever builds the cottages, there will be no loss, or at the most a trifling risk of loss, on such provision to be made up from other sources.

An adequate increase of wages will to a large degree solve the housing problem *ultimately*, but will not even do that altogether, while it will only very partially deal with the immediate difficulties. To increase wages by law or otherwise will take a considerable time, while there is an *urgent* need for houses.

At present many of the low rents paid in the country are artificially low, that is, they bear no definite economic relationship to the cost of the houses, and if more rent could be obtained more would be charged. If a minimum wage is established it is probable that the rents of many of the existing houses would rise considerably. The "tied" house being no longer a part of the wages would have a separate rent attached to it and one proportionately increased in relation to the increased wages. The landlords who possess cottages, the rents of which are an essential part of their income, would almost certainly increase their rents proportionately to the increased ability to pay.

But not all the village population will benefit by a minimum wage, and the increased rents which

will rule are likely to press especially hardly upon those who will not share in it, such as the old-age pensioner, the widow, the lower-paid grades of workers with large families, the local post-man, etc.

Just as the ordinary agricultural labourer suffers now in the competition for houses from the better-paid town labourer who bicycles out to the village a few miles from the town, so in the future will these people suffer from the competition of the then better-paid agricultural labourer. Provision will have to be made for this contingency.

At first many will live in the worst of the existing houses at a nominal rent, and will die there. Then fresh tenants will come along, for example, old people who can no longer earn a minimum wage and so cannot pay an economic rent. They will have to leave their 4s. to 4s. 6d. per week cottages, and there will probably be no cheap houses for them to go into. The only solution seems to be the provision of special houses—almost almshouses—which are let at a loss, the loss falling upon the community.

The proposals set out below take into consideration this question.

While the increased wages of the agricultural labourer may enable him to pay a rent which will enable houses to be built without loss, it is unlikely that the houses required will be provided by private enterprise except in exceptional cases. The investment can never be a remunerative one, and at the

best not sufficiently so to counterbalance its speculative nature. This is shown by the fact that at the present day, in many small towns in which there is really urgent need for houses, and in which remunerative rents can and would be paid, there is often the greatest difficulty in inducing local builders to erect houses. I know of at least half a dozen towns in which this is the case, and in several of these the Local Authority has been reluctantly compelled—in default of private enterprise—to themselves build.

III.—*To take Steps to increase the Wages of Agricultural Labourers, and at the same time to actively stimulate the Building of Cottages by immediate State Assistance.*—A solution along these lines receives much support at the present time, since it hopes to deal with both branches of the problem. It aims at providing a permanent solution on economic and proper lines, while concurrently dealing with the pressing need for the provision of more houses.

At the same time there is considerable difference of opinion as to the form the State assistance should take, and three distinct proposals have been advocated :

A.—The Central Authority to build the houses.

B.—The Central Authority to assist private enterprise.

C.—The Central Authority to assist and finance the Local Authorities.

A.—*The Central Authority to Build the Houses.*—At first sight there is much that is attractive to the social investigator and worker, concerned not with political points of view but only to have a glaring defect remedied, in a solution in this manner. It can be advanced that Local Authorities have been faced with the problem for many years, but have looked at it and passed quickly by on the other side when they have found that the solution involved financial commitments, and that therefore the best way is for the State to deal with the matter itself.

Yet this remedy, when looked at a little closer, presents very considerable difficulties, while it involves a still further weakening of local government and a concentration of powers in the hands of an already overburdened Central Authority. Those who believe that good local government is the best form of government for preventive and public health work may well plead that this strikes at the root of it, and if local government is at fault, what is wanted is to improve, not abrogate, it. Housing is essentially a local matter and intimately inter-related to other public health work now in the hands of local authorities of one sort or another. What would seem to be required is not a new machinery which ignores Local Authorities, but an improvement of local government, more imperative and fewer permissive duties, more supervision, and more help financially.

Great difficulties will be experienced if the Central Authority builds, whether it be the Local Government Board, the Board of Agriculture, or a new specially-constituted body.

For example, houses are not required in every rural parish; who is to determine the need and measure its extent? If houses at low rentals are to be built, the present quiescence will be altered to a widespread demand for houses, and it will be a big task for any Central Authority to hold local inquiries and investigate the degree and genuineness of the demand. It would probably be found necessary for the Central Authority to themselves make a housing survey and compile a housing record, work which, under the 1909 Housing Act, is now being done by the Local Authorities. This would involve an expensive, vexatious and useless duplication of work. The complaint frequently heard as to the nuisance of repeated official visits has some solid truth behind it, and any extension in this direction is to be deprecated.

Presumably the work of closing or having made fit the existing unfit houses will still be left to the local authorities. This is work which is intimately connected with the provision of more houses, and it will lead to confusion if the two functions are separated. Local Authorities will undoubtedly tend to wait to take action against unfit houses until the Central Authority has provided additional houses.

It is not clear as to who is to supervise the construction, collect the rents and generally look after the houses. If all this has to be dealt with apart from the Local Authorities and through new machinery its cost will add considerably to the total cost and expenses of the houses.

Great difficulties will, I think, arise in fixing the rents to be paid. If the houses are let at economic rents they will not solve the housing shortage. It will require considerable local knowledge to say at what figure rents should be fixed, and they may need adjustment from time to time. A Central Authority will be handicapped in carrying out such fixings and adjustments.

An advantage which may be claimed for the erection being directly done by a Central Authority is that by standardising designs, some economy of construction may be effected. A policy by which the country is flooded with cottages of a few rigid types will not add to the beauty of rural life, and most of the advantages of standardisation can be otherwise obtained.

There can be no objection to the State, when it is in the position of a landlord or a direct employer, erecting houses for its own employees, but this is very different from the State itself acting as a builder for the community at large.

B.—The Central Authority to financially assist Private Enterprise.—In the Rural Cottages Bill,

1912, it was proposed that money should be advanced to owners of land willing to provide land free of charge for the erection of new cottages. Certain conditions as to cost of building, amount of land, etc., were attached. The money was to be repayable in sixty-eight and a-half years, but only in part by the owner. The houses were to belong to the owners of the land. The suggestion that the State should finance landlords to erect houses which remain their property, is one to which considerable objection may be taken, and a solution along these lines is not likely to result. A good deal more could be done to encourage and financially assist Co-partnership Housing Societies.

C.—*The Central Authority to assist and finance Local Authorities.*—The sanitary control of existing houses has always been an important part of the function of local sanitary authorities, and is intimately mixed up with their ordinary work. There are, therefore, strong reasons for retaining the provision of sufficient houses, if not provided by private enterprise, in the hands of Local Authorities. It is true that Local Authorities have in the main neglected their constructive powers whenever their using them has involved a likelihood of a charge upon the rates. It does not, however, follow from this that the best results will follow by transferring their powers to a Central Authority, but it is a powerful argument that considerable alterations

must be made in the procedures and powers now in force.

Granted the advisability of a State subsidy, its method of distribution is of very great importance. In the Boscawen Bill (and its successors under different titles) it is to be worked through the Local Government Board. No exception can be taken to the strengthening of this Government Department by the creation of a special Housing Sub-department and by its increased powers of coercion of Local Authorities when in default. The Bill, however, goes further and contemplates that when a Local Authority is culpably neglecting its housing duties, the Local Government Board should be empowered, after application to the High Court, to itself deal with insanitary houses and provide housing accommodation when required at the cost of the Local Authority. It may be permitted to doubt the effectiveness of this procedure. Unless the Board maintains a large staff, it will not be in a position to know the facts while, after default has been proved, the Board has itself to do the work. It is, however, well known that such a proceeding is just what the Local Government Board has always found to be a most unsatisfactory thing to do. It is not constituted to act in the place of Local Authorities, and although this power is now possessed by the Board to be used for certain special purposes, it has very rarely indeed been made use of. What would probably happen is what happens now. The Board draws

the attention of the Local Authority and invites their observations, lengthy correspondence ensues, and it may be years and years before anything effective is carried out. By doing just a little each time it is pressed a Local Authority can easily keep itself just outside the definition of culpable negligence.

Far more effective results would be obtained if the Local Government Board worked through the County Councils. These bodies have much of the machinery available, and in case of defaulting authorities it would not be a difficult task for them to undertake the work. As the Small Holdings Authority, they are in a position to buy land and erect cottages.

Local Authorities who do not efficiently carry out their housing work can best be kept up to a respectable efficiency by a double grant. A *grant in aid* for general sanitary efficiency, including housing, and a special grant towards losses on housing schemes, on a basis of a proportion of the annual deficiency—for example, equal to four-fifths, as suggested by the Boscawen Bill. Both, in my opinion, would be most effective if administered through the County Councils (or some Central Health County Committee), the grants to be subject to the approval of the Local Government Board.

Personally, my own experience leads me to the conclusion that administrative units for public health purposes are usually far too small at the present day. We have an enormous number of

small public health bodies which leads to bad and wasteful administration. Each of these bodies (except for the few combined districts, and then only as regards certain services) has its own separate staff of officers and usually its own public health appliances and institutions. For the most part they cannot afford to have, and if they are lucky enough to obtain, they cannot afford to keep, fully trained and experienced officers. For example, their Medical Officer of Health is usually a medical man in practice with no special experience in Public Health Administration (and this is now an expert matter), and who is frequently selected on grounds other than his experience in Public Health. His opinion on public health matters is of no greater value than that of other medical practitioners in his area, and his activities are hampered by the claims and risks of his private practice.

The Sanitary Inspector in these small districts is often Surveyor, Water-rate Collector, and holder of other appointments, and may be quite untrained in the duties of a Sanitary Inspector previous to his appointment.

Travelling expenses are, as a rule, included in the salaries paid, so that the more work these officers do the less is their remuneration. They have no security of tenure, are insufficiently paid, and frequently are called upon to comment adversely upon the property or methods of conducting the business of those who pay and can dismiss them.

It is remarkable to note the valuable work done by these officers under such unpromising conditions, but it cannot be doubted that better results would follow if the units of administration were larger and more fully trained and independent officers were available.

It must also be remembered that the easy communicability of present-day conditions makes it possible to group many services with great advantage. For example, isolation hospitals can serve a very much wider area. Although it is possible for Local Authorities to combine for these purposes, yet it would greatly facilitate such large administrative areas if the Local Authorities were themselves combined.

The really magnificent response of County Councils in the matter of tuberculosis, a purely voluntary response on their part, shows that they are prepared to deal with important public health matters in no niggardly spirit if such powers are entrusted to them. The contention often advanced that they do not now efficiently exercise their public health powers does not really bear upon the question, even if it be accepted as partially true. A study of their powers shows that, apart from tuberculosis and the medical inspection of schools work (work admittedly well done) their public health duties are very inadequate, and are chiefly in the direction of directing them to act as sanitary detectives against their own constituents, a thankless task. They are not given

powers to *do* the public health work or even much power to see that it is done.

The close association of housing and tuberculosis has been dealt with in Chapter IX, and it is important that a close relationship should exist between the authorities responsible. County Councils already deal with small holdings, and could equally well manage housing problems through the Rural or smaller Urban District Councils. They could be trusted to take a wide view of their responsibilities.

It is not suggested (pending the reorganisation of local administration) that the housing work should be entirely removed from the smaller Local Authorities, but that the County Councils should be definitely made the responsible authorities under the Central Authority for administering the housing grants and for seeing that the housing responsibilities of the smaller Local Authorities are efficiently carried out.

The Housing Departmental Committee in 1906 were strongly in favour of such a course, and went even further. They reported :

“The Committee have to recommend that the administration of the Public Health and Housing Law should be transferred to the County Council, leaving, however, to the Rural District Council the power to exercise, if it thinks fit, Part III. of the Housing Act of 1890 concurrently with the County Council.”

“ The Committee consider that the sanitary condition and housing of a district can best be looked after by a more powerful authority already having duties sufficiently important to attract men of education and ability, able to discount any harmful results of local influences, and aided in their administrative work by competent permanent officials, to whom a sufficient salary can be paid to demand their exclusive attention.”

If it is recognised that a State subsidy towards rural housing is merely a temporary immediate remedy pending a solution on sound economic lines, I think a very strong case for State assistance can be made out.

It has been shown that raising agricultural wages will be a slow business, while the need for more houses is urgent. The only way to get the urgent problem dealt with promptly is to give financial assistance from the Treasury. Used as a temporary palliative most of the objections raised disappear, such as that it is a direct subsidy to wages, and that it will put a stop to building by unsubsidised agencies.

I think a useful parallel may be drawn from the action of the State towards bovine tuberculosis. Under the Tuberculosis Order, 1913, the Treasury pays half the compensation costs for cattle slaughtered on account of certain varieties of tuberculosis. It is a direct subsidy out of public funds to the farmer,

and the only economic justification for it is that the farmer has allowed his herds to be so infected with tuberculosis that he is totally unable to deal with the disease himself without outside help. In return for the money spent, it is hoped that the general public will benefit by a safer milk supply. Other than for the public benefit and the extent and urgency of the problem, there is no real reason why the farmer should be compensated for having tuberculous cattle (which traced to its source is due to the neglect by the agricultural interest of preventive measures) any more than the butcher should be compensated for having diseased meat.

In the urgency of the problem is the economic arguments for a housing subsidy and in return the general public will benefit by the improved physique and stamina of the well-housed countryman as compared with the townsman.

Under the Irish Labourers Acts, 1883-1911, a large number of defective and insanitary houses have been replaced by sanitary dwellings, and all who have personally investigated the matter, comment on the improved social and sanitary conditions of the rehoused labourers. Under these Acts the Local Authorities erect the houses and find some of the deficiency, but are largely financed by grants from the Central Government.

An adequate subsidy towards rural housing applied for a few years, would, I believe, eliminate the existing housing problem and enable the permanent

solution, the placing of the agricultural labouring classes in a position to pay economic rents, to be applied under improved and favourable conditions.

To ensure that the houses should be built within a few years, any such subsidy should be available for only a limited number of years. Undoubtedly it would nearly or quite put a stop to building of cottages by private enterprise, but this is not a serious matter since there is not much of this going on, while it would only be for a few years. The grants for building should not cover the whole of the estimated deficiency, but a definite proportion should be met by the Local Authority, whether County Council or District Council. This would prevent unnecessary houses being demanded and erected. Also, as in Ireland, regulations would have to be made governing the classes of persons to occupy these houses.

The houses would belong to the Local Authority providing the local share of the deficiency. Such houses would not be worn out when the loans were paid off, and would be a valuable asset.

As explained above, in my opinion, raising the wages of the agricultural labourer will not altogether solve the rural housing problem, and it will be of great value in the future to have a number of houses scattered through the country, which, as they are erected partly out of State money, could become subsequently ear-marked (the regulations of the Central Authority could provide for this) for old-age

pensioners, agricultural labourers of the poorer grade with large families, widows, etc., who would not be in a position to pay the comparatively high rents which would be ruling even in agricultural districts.

After the loan charges are paid off (in say sixty years) these houses could be let at quite low rents without any loss to Local Authorities.

There is one difficult case which I think should receive special consideration, that of the agricultural labourer with a large family. The larger the family (not wage earning) the less rent can he afford to pay, and if we are to consider healthy children as an asset to the State, it is not unreasonable that some special help should be given. A reasonable view is that the rent should be reduced for children under fourteen years (not wage earners).

The labourer would apply for a reduction in rent to the Local Authority, who, if they were satisfied that he was living under satisfactory sanitary conditions, would grant his request. The deficiency of rent would be made up to the landlord by the Local Authority, and would be recovered by them from the Treasury as part of their housing grant.

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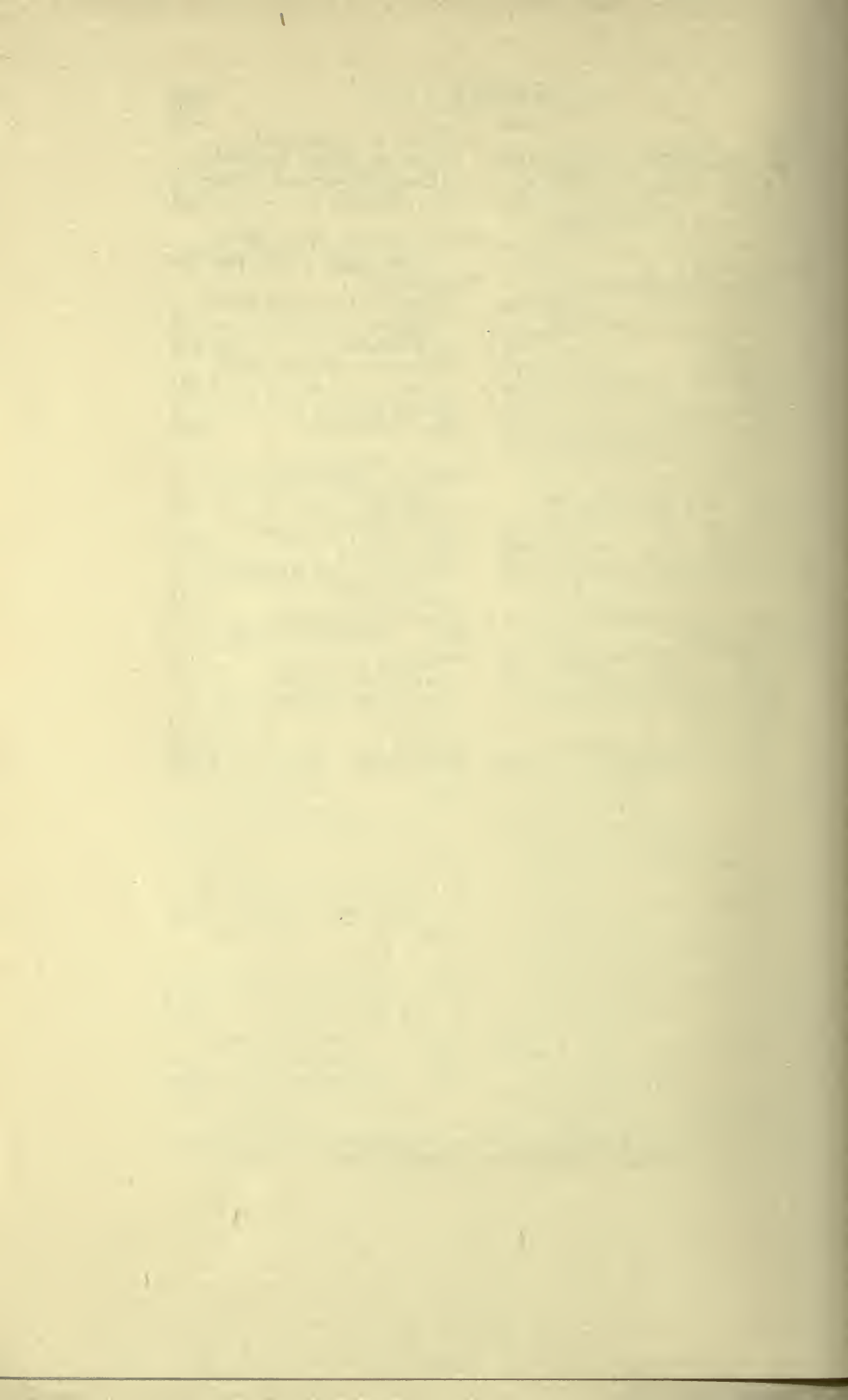
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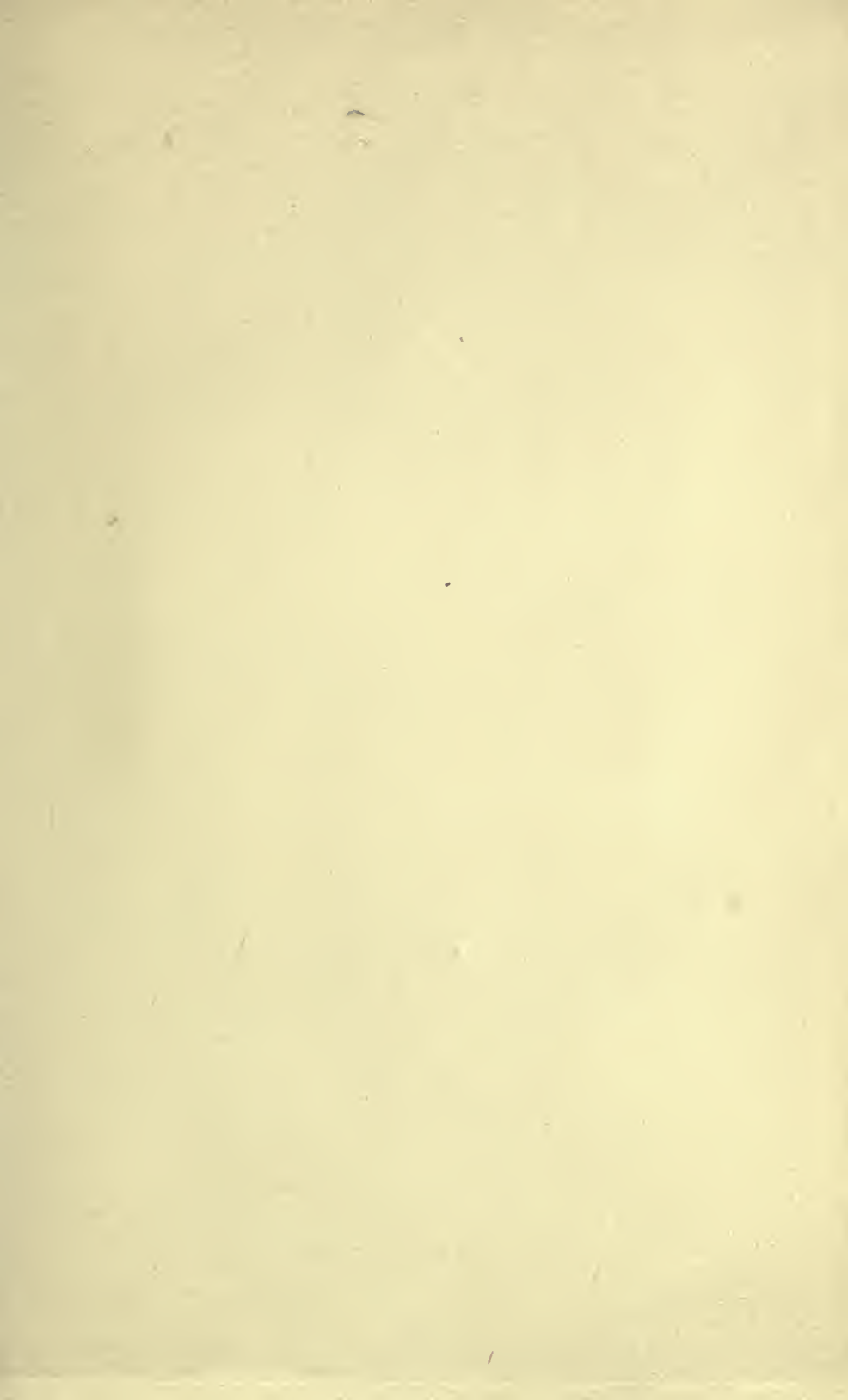
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