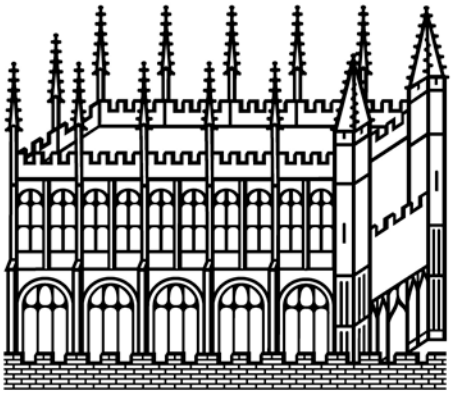

The Peasant's Home.

1760 — 1875.

[HOWARD PRIZE ESSAY, 1875.]

THE PEASANT'S HOME

1760—1875.

BY

EDWARD SMITH, F.S.S.

"NON NOBIS SOLUM NATI SUMUS."

LONDON:
EDWARD STANFORD, 55, CHARING CROSS, S.W.

1876.

" Labourers can never pay rent to make it answer. But, after all, it is worth doing."

" Worth doing! yes, indeed!" said Dorothea, energetically, forgetting her previous small vexations. " I think we deserve to be beaten out of our beautiful houses with a scourge of small cords—all of us who let tenants live in such sties as we see round us. Life in cottages might be happier than ours, if they were real houses fit for human beings from whom we expect duties and affections."

MIDDLEMARCH.

CONTENTS.

THE HOWARD MEDAL was founded in 1873, by the Statistical Society of London, at the instance of Dr. William A. Guy, then President of the Society. The design was, to award the Prize to the Author of an Essay on some question of Social Statistics in which John Howard was himself interested. In November, 1874, the subject of the Essay for the ensuing year having been announced as—"*The State of the Dwellings of the Poor in the Rural Districts of England, with special regard to the Improvements that have taken place since the Middle of the Eighteenth Century, and their Influence on the Health and Morals of their Inmates,*'—the Author was induced to prepare the following Sketch, with the result, that the Medal was duly awarded to him at the opening of the Session of 1875-6.

It will readily be understood that a record of this kind might have been indefinitely expanded;—indeed, it would have been far easier to produce an elaborate history, than to bring the case within the

limits prescribed. As it is, however, it may be hoped that a sufficient outline is here presented, so that men and women interested in the subject may fill up the blanks for themselves,—a matter which is in the power of any one who chooses, either by personal enquiry, or through published documents. There is food for thought and study in nearly every day's newspaper.*

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* One very important illustration occurs, for example, while these pages are going through the press, which is well worth making note of:—At page 26 of the text, and elsewhere, mention is made of the difficulties attendant on the disestablishment of freehold hovels by the wayside. That there is still a conflict of opinion concerning these cherished dwellings, is evidenced by the report of a recent deputation to the Home Secretary, on the Commons Inclosure Bill; for—

"Mr. Blackwell called attention to a case in which twenty-five cottagers were turned out, or made to pay rents by the lord of the manor for cottages which had been built by them on waste lands in the village of Harbury, in the county of Warwick. One of these cottages had been in possession of his family for one hundred years."—*Daily News*, 29th February, 1876.

THE PEASANT'S HOME.

1760—1875.

INTRODUCTORY.

In the following pages it is proposed to submit a general view of the efforts which have been made, since about the middle of the eighteenth century, to raise the condition of the British peasant by the improvement of his home. That it is through his home (using the word in its widest sense) that the character and prospects of the rural labourer are likely to be the most influenced for good, is undoubted; and it is the principal object of this essay to show, by examples of results, the intimate connection that exists between improved dwellings and improved health and morals. The amelioration of the lot of the rural population by the reformation of their homes has become one of the crying questions of the day; and it is hoped that the present endeavour to throw light upon it, by recording some of the efforts at improvement which have been made, noting the principal obstacles to improvement, and, lastly, viewing the question in its social aspects, may be of service.

Seeing that this important social question has now

taken firm hold of the public mind, it will not be necessary to dwell at any length upon the deplorable state of things which has so long existed with reference to the homes of the poor. A matter which has reached the point of legislative interference may be considered as pretty well ventilated, and as not requiring any more facts or reiterations to show the necessity for reform. Royal Commissioners and special correspondents have left us no excuse for ignorance upon this vital point. But, with a view to comprehensiveness,—even within the small limits at our disposal,—it will be as well to give a passing glance at the conditions which call so loudly for reform.

The principal features of defective cottage accommodation may be thus summarised:—Dilapidation, bad sanitary arrangements, insufficient water supply, deficiency of sleeping-room accommodation, and inferior structural qualities; to which may be added numerical insufficiency,—these defects prevail to a greater or less extent in every part of the country, but they are more obvious in strictly agricultural counties than in others. Some of the large villages in these counties are simply collections of hovels, utterly unfit for human habitation, possessing, as they do, all possible defects accumulated under one roof.

"The natural history, so to call it, of these miserable, ruinous dwellings, is very various. Some of the worst are parish cottages, either erected in the time of the old Poor-Law, or bequeathed to the parish as a last home for its aged paupers, which there are no

funds to repair. Another almost uniformly bad class are the cottages run up by squatters on the waste, or held upon a lifehold or copyhold tenure, and which have not yet fallen in to the lord of the manor. Others have been put up by speculative builders, of the flimsiest materials; others are converted stables or farmhouses. . . . . Some belong to small proprietors, too indigent to have any money to spare for their improvement; some to absentee or embarrassed landowners." These remarks, from a report of Bishop Fraser,* shortly and vividly describe the evil and its cause; but the account may be further epitomised, and brought within the compass of two words—*Indifference* and *Neglect;* and I do not put it so unadvisedly, as if it were certain individual persons or classes of individuals whose neglect is to be reprobated; rather is it our habitual national indifference which requires to be repeatedly disturbed, and our sympathy to be rudely awakened, before we can be induced to act. Witness the hard battle that is even now being fought on behalf of general sanitary improvement, against the spirit of slovenliness and negligence. Damp walls and leaky roofs, semi-putrid wells, infected rooms, open sewers, and polluted rivers, all belong to the same category; and, with the public mind uneducated and unconcerned on these matters, it is not surprising that reform is so slow as it is, and that the majority of the cottages

* *Royal Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (1867), *First Report*, p. 35.

that still exist (1868) in rural parishes "are deficient in almost every requisite that should constitute a home for a Christian family in a civilised community."* That this indifference is of long standing, will be evidenced by such an observation as the following:— "In a country where so little attention has been paid to *farm-houses*, it can hardly be expected that labourers' cottages should have been an object of much regard." †

Many of the dwellings of the farm-labourers consist of ancient lath-and-plaster houses, which, whatever they may have once been, are now little more than a shelter from the weather. Dr. Fraser mentions "an old converted farm-house, with so huge a chimney that on a wet day the fire can't be kept alight, and the occupiers have before now been obliged to go to bed on a cold stormy day, to keep themselves warm." At this very day, a large proportion of the older "labourers' cottages" are farm-houses which have been abandoned, as anyone will discover who travels through the rural districts with an observant eye. But it must not be forgotten that many old houses possess, in themselves, the elements of durability, if only attention is occasionally given to the destructive action of Time. Many of these old timber and lath-and-plaster tenements are sounder in frame than are

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* FRASER, *Report*, p. 35.

† *Agricultural Survey of Northamptonshire*, by WM. PITT, London, 1809.

some of the "model" cottages of to-day. Many dwellings of the poor in the bye-streets of rural towns proclaim, by the character of their doors and windows, that they are erections of the sixteenth century; it is not, however, their venerable age which produces the squalid appearance they too often present; it is, rather, the vice and improvidence of their inhabitants, or the selfish neglect of their owners. Broken windows, dilapidated furniture, and a meagre supply of proper fittings, will often give an appearance of squalor to an old house whose structure is still sound, and which is capable of being transformed into a decent and healthy habitation. When, however, the materials and construction of a house are of such a character that the first hard winter commences a rapid process of deterioration, the helpless inmates are exposed, without any hope of remedy, to all the vagaries of our variable climate, in a dwelling scarcely more weather-tight than are the neighbouring cattle-sheds. Rheumatism is the well-known scourge of the rural labourer in England; the wonder would be if it were not so, when we hear of such cases as the following:—"A cottage occupied by a man named Shale, in the hamlet of Kilcote [Gloucestershire], his own freehold, but which, from some circumstances attached to the title, he cannot sell. Part of one of the outer walls had fallen down, and the space was filled up by a feather-bed; the door could not be hung on the jambs; one of the sides was of wattle and dab—and the dab had peeled away—and a neighbour, who lived fifty yards

away, said he could see the lights at night as plainly as through a wattled hurdle."*

But, when to this ramshackle condition is added the general unconcern upon sanitary matters which is almost universal in rural districts, it is not surprising that almost every agricultural village is, more or less, a fever-bed. The limits of this paper will not permit a great array of examples; and it will suffice to direct anyone who desires to study the question in all its details, to the Evidence accompanying the Report of the Commission of 1867. A more recent collection of facts bearing upon the subject will be found in "The English Peasantry," by Mr. F.G. Heath (London, 1873). Mr. Heath's vivid description of certain villages in Somersetshire is simply appalling, as such items as these will show:—"The ground-floor was literally the earth" (a two-roomed cottage at Montacute, at 1s. per week); "in many cases the cottage closets were built over the village brook, from which the inhabitants drew some of their water-supply" (at Wrington); in one cottage, the stone floor had gradually "got broken away, leaving a number of pits. The cottage was placed in a sort of hollow, and consequently, in winter, water would oftentimes soak up through the uneven floor" (at Stoke-sub-Hamdon; rent, 1s. 6d. for two rooms, one of several, "all of the same kind, and all similarly comfortless"); and so on.

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* Fraser, *Report*, p. 35.

My own recollections of this county are very distinct, although referring to a visit many years since; and I think it was the walk through Wrington that was one of the first instances of my attention being drawn to the stolid ignorance prevailing throughout society upon rural sanitary conditions. Viewed from the northern slope of the Mendip hills, the village appears in the centre of a smiling, populous, well cultivated valley—the landscape for many miles one varied collection of orchards, villages, and silver water-courses. But, on descending to the plain, behold, a straggling series of ill-built cottages, culminating in the village street of Wrington; the inhabitants dirty and unhealthy-looking; their dwellings dilapidated; and the "silver" water-courses nothing but open sewers! I knew St. Anne's, Soho, and St. Giles-in-the-Fields (at that period) very intimately. I knew that hundreds of families in towns were overcrowded; and that many of the lower-class habitations were sinks of dirt and crime; I knew that many efforts were being made in London to improve the dwellings of the poor, and that these efforts were, as yet, only "a drop in a bucket;" but when I beheld an English village, set in the midst of a smiling landscape, turn out to be little better than a collection of pig-styes, I was disgusted, and depressed beyond measure. I don't think I ever, in the course of a tour, hurried out of a place (from sheer disappointment) so quickly as out of Wrington.

Somersetshire and Devonshire are probably the worst counties in England, as far as the *extent* of the evil is

concerned; but there are black spots to be noted, more or less, all over the country. Even in Northumberland, the paradise of cottage improvers, there are "some of the best *and some of the worst* cottages in England." *

Then, with respect to overcrowding. Perhaps, after all, this is the worst part of the story. A man may carry his rheumatism, acquired from the sweating walls and "heaving" floor of his ruinous dwelling, to a good old age; the peasant, gaining immunity from his open air existence, may escape the noxious results of stagnant drains, and even of impure water; but it is his sleeping accommodation which produces the most insidious (and often fatal) results upon his health. Overcrowding has probably killed more than all other evil conditions whatever. And a great deal of this is due to the poor ignorant people themselves; for families will often occupy one bed-room in a crowded state, and leave the other unoccupied.† So extensive is this practice, that some large proprietors are in the habit of keeping a strict cottage registry; so that, under a vigilant steward, overcrowding is impossible.

But, in the large majority of cases, overcrowding is distinctly caused by there being an insufficient number of cottages available for the required labourers. For example, as in the Unions of Depwade and Docking (Norfolk), where several considerable estates are de-

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* *Commission* (1867), HENLEY, *Report*, p. 65.

† *Commission* (1867), Hon. E. STANHOPE, *Report* I., p. 92.

scribed as utterly without the proper provision of cottages; "in Sedgeford, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have an estate of 2,000 acres on which there does not exist a single cottage; in Snettisham the Corporation of Lynn own 800 acres of land distant three miles from the heart of the parish, on which there are only two cottages."* The consequence is, that the labourer has to find a lodging at a great distance, and after a hard day's work succeeded by a toilsome trudge, has to rest his exhausted frame in a small room, already occupied by perhaps some eight or ten other persons.

I.—OBSTACLES TO IMPROVEMENT.

THE foregoing preliminary observations will be sufficient to indicate, for our present purpose, the extent and gravity of the evil. Let us now glance at some of the causes which have prevailed, and at some of the obstacles which stand in the way of improvement; and it may be proper, first, to observe that many causes act one upon another. It would be unjust, for example, to stigmatise the lord of a manor upon whose "waste" or otherwise unprofitable land a squatter has built a mud hovel, and subsequently refuses either to be governed by sanitary laws on the one hand, or to pay a trifling rent for the new brick-and-slate building which has been provided for him, upon the other; and it

* FRASER, *Report*, p. 35.

would be confessedly difficult to show to a person who has inherited some small cottage property—perhaps his only source of income—that it is his duty, in obedience to enlightened sanitary authority, to pull down his poverty-stricken buildings, and re-erect them. In truth, it is the strict notions concerning "property" which prevail throughout Great Britain, which are at the root of many of our failures in social reform.

But there can be little hesitation in giving, as the first cause of bad or deficient cottage accommodation, an indifferent, needy, or "absentee" landlord. It is generally admitted that we must look to the landowners for any great improvement, on account of the increased cost of labour and materials forbidding the prospect (now-a-days) of any profit being made in cottage-building; whilst the healthy moral condition of the labouring population upon an estate is conceded to be worth more than (what would be considered commercially) a remunerative return in the shape of rent. As a general rule it will be found that, of the proprietors of landed estates, whether great or small, they who spend a large portion of the year "at home" will see the most happy and contented peasantry. Not, but very favourable exceptions will occur, where affairs are in the hands of an able and intelligent steward. Such a steward was the late Mr. John Grey, of Dilston, Northumberland, under whose care the Derwentwater estates of Greenwich Hospital were placed for a long series of years, with the greatest benefit at once to the proprietors and to the humblest labourer.

The Commissioners of 1867 (already quoted) never lose an opportunity, in their Reports, of insisting upon this point—that cottage improvement is principally a landlord's question; and instances are repeatedly adduced, in which contiguous parishes clearly betray by their characteristics of filthy degradation in the homes of one, and comfort and moral improvement in those of the other, the characters of their respective landlords. Besides, however, the broad distinctions of a "good" and a "bad" landlord, the former class may be sometimes subdivided into, 1, those who believe that by increasing the comforts of the labouring poor, caring for their immediate interests by personal sympathy, and enabling them to house their families in decency and comfort, they are augmenting the value of the work performed upon the estate; and, 2, others who, with narrow views of life, consider that pounds, shillings, and pence, and so much per cent., must be the basis of all outgoings for agricultural improvement. To these may be added persons whose estates are so encumbered, and whose means are so straitened, that £1,000 for a row of cottages is an impossibility.*

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* It is a mere truism to say that the man who is receiving his rents and squandering the proceeds of his estate upon the turf, or upon urban pleasure, is undermining the resources of that estate. But there is another kind of recklessness—that which pursues political and social fantasies, and neglects the reforms which lie at one's own door—that spirit which will give thousands of pounds to endow a college, or build a church, or found a library, and yet will forget the demands of one's natural dependants. And it is to be

But the best-disposed landlord is often obstructed by the very persons he wishes to serve. Numberless instances are upon record of poor families being unwilling to exchange the cherished hovel for a brand-new cottage; and it requires, generally speaking, a long and intimate acquaintance with many among the uneducated poor, before they can learn to appreciate a disinterested endeavour to serve them. In such cases it requires a strong sense of duty to prevent a man relinquishing his benevolent aims in disgust.

One of the principal conclusions come to of late years, is that it is far more profitable to the farmer as well as to the labourer, if the latter be housed in immediate contiguity to the farmstead; and there is unanimous disapproval of the system of compelling the peasant to walk long distances to and from his home. There was a time, within the memory of men still living, when cottages were demolished in a wholesale manner, as in some parts of the north, in order to provide extensive sheep-walks; but, in very numerous instances, also, under the ridiculous impression that by encouraging the settlement of poor labouring families, the poor-rates would be augmented. To these ignorant devices a good deal of the existing deficiency is to be ascribed; and, instead of some intelligent and humanely-conceived arrangement of the dwellings of the

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feared that an energetic "public" life will often be found to bring so many engrossing claims of its own that neither money nor time are available for such demands.

labourers being judiciously distributed over the different parts of an estate, many a poor man is driven into the nearest village,* and, consequently, into the hands of some small house-proprietor, whose only object is his weekly rent.

The Assistant-Commissioners of 1867 state that the farmers are fully alive, not only to the need of raising the quality of, but also to that of providing sufficient, cottage accommodation; insomuch, that a large farm is often difficult to let if there is a deficiency in this respect. Some farmers are even willing to pay interest on the outlay upon new cottages.† Dr. Fraser says‡: "Tenants are beginning to fight shy of farms without cottages, and of a labour supply that has to be fetched three or four miles. It would almost be a less loss and inconvenience to a farmer to go that distance after his water." And the Hon. E. Stanhope§: "How to keep their labour at home has become a vital question to employers. . . . . All seem agreed that the one great means of doing so is to provide decent houses at a reasonable distance from work, in which the young men may be induced to settle. 'Once put a man into a really good house,' it was often said to me, 'and his wife won't let him leave it.'"

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* At Meysey Hampton, Gloucestershire, Bp. Fraser found a man who had worked on the same farm for forty years, and had walked six miles a day to and fro; the total of which would be about 70,000 miles.

† Norman, *Report*, p. 117.

‡ *Report*, p. 36. § Report I., p. 91.

On the proper proportion of cottages necessary for the labour upon an estate, there is naturally much conflict of opinion; the conditions vary in different parts of the country, and no absolute rule can be laid down, to be of universal application. But, whatever be the actual number necessary, it is quite certain that there are very many districts which are inadequately supplied; and, the question being raised as to who is responsible for the deficiency and consequent overcrowding, either in the villages or in lone cottages, we can only look to the landowner. On the principle that a farm must have a tenantable homestead, proper accommodation for horses and live stock, granary room, and so forth, before a tenant can be attracted, it is only in common sense that there should be eligible housing for the average labour required; instead of this, it has too often been the last thing thought of, if ever thought of at all. And how the labourer is often treated, let us hear from the lips of Mr. Mechi:*—"I assure you, from my own experience, that a great deal of the time of the labourer, and of his physical power, is devoted to walking extreme distances to and from his work. On every well-farmed piece of land of 100 acres it is supposed that four horses and five labourers be employed. Strictly speaking, there should be five cottages for these labourers. Landed proprietors generally take especial care that there shall be a convenient place

* At the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Labourers' Friend Society.

for the horses, so that they may be close to their work. They know practically, that if the horses were to go two or three miles backwards and forwards, there would be a great loss of power. I am sorry to say that I have known labourers walk four or five miles to their work every day. I have known them get up at half-past three, on a winter's morning, to be with their horses at five o'clock, having to walk for an hour and a half in a most inclement season, and to return the same distance in the evening."

Whilst, however, this evil phase exists in many quarters, it is not to be denied that there is a difficulty at the other extreme. It is sometimes necessary to discourage an unnecessary influx of population into rural districts. Bishop Fraser himself presently says,* that "a superabundance of cottages and of population is nearly, if not quite, as great an evil as a defective supply. It lowers wages and produces pauperism, and the lowest type of rural civilisation is to be found in those large, over-peopled, 'open' parishes in which, at the slack seasons of the year, there is always a considerable number of men out of employ." The conversion of large tracts of land into sheepwalks has often been made capital of by persons interested in defaming the character of landed proprietors; but, as is often the case with such persons, a knowledge of the fact—of the actual cause of such a step being taken—is absent from their minds. During the periods of agri-

* *Report*, p. 36.

cultural distress, in the earlier part of the present century, the short-sighted policy of demolishing cottages was pursued to a large extent, with the object, as was plainly said, of discouraging pauperism; but there have been other causes at work. For one example, a reference may be made to the Statistical Reports of Scotland: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that portion of Great Britain was often subject to years of scarcity, and occasionally of dreadful famine. At such times the result has been that whole families have perished from want. On one farm, in the parish of Montquhidder, "out of 169 individuals, only three families (the proprietors included) survived." In the first half of the eighteenth century, "many farms were waste." Extensive farms, *being entirely desolated, were converted into sheep-walks.*"* Happily, it is long since such dismal things happened in Great Britain, and I think I am right in saying that it is very long since there was any wholesale destruction of arable farms. Frequent locomotion and rapid communication have closed for ever the days of unmitigable distress; and times of scarcity, when they do come, are met by alleviation of some kind or other, long before such fatal results ensue.

It depends then upon the nature of the farm, and to some extent upon the distance from the nearest village, as to what numerical accommodation is necessary. But,

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* Quoted from *Malthus*, by a writer in the *Highland Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, 1842, p. 527.

besides the physical well-being of the labourer, there are certain moral considerations which cause a good deal of pondering, and even anxiety, to the benevolent landowner. The plan of clustering cottages into a hamlet or village "brings the population nearer to the church and school, but also probably nearer to the beer-house too." At Rackheath, in Norfolk, "dispersion was thought to have a bad effect on education;" at Great Witchingham, in the same county, "concentration was thought to have a bad effect upon morals." In some large parishes the population is "clustered into a number of independent groups, each probably with its own beer-house, but remote alike from church and school, dissipating and thereby weakening the energies of the clergyman."* In short, the whole question is beset with difficulties, and it is at least impossible to lay down any hard-and-fast rule.

Again, as to the parties themselves who are directly interested. The farmers generally ("almost invariably," says Mr. Norman) prefer the labourers to live near the homestead. Most farmers, and their wives, take some personal interest in the welfare of the labourers' families; but this is difficult when their dwellings are miles apart. At the same time, the safety of the farmstead, and of the stock, is far more likely to be an object of solicitude to the peasant if his cottage is upon or near the farm.

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* Fraser, *Report*, p. 39.

On the part of the labourer, there is as much difference of opinion, and of taste, as could well be supposed. Some prefer a "lone" cottage,* some object to it; some like the society of the village, others fear the contamination of their families by bad company; and so on. To us, in towns or suburbs, it is natural to expect that the presence of near neighbours would be desirable; but I have often had opportunities of observing that, born and bred under such conditions, the peasant finds it very little hardship to be the occupant of a lonely cottage,† indeed, no hardship at all compared with that of having to trudge to his work several miles, wasting his morning energies, with the prospect of the same weary task in the evening. And when the ordinary farm-labourer is so situated that there is no dwelling to be had within two or three miles of his daily work, it means so much additional *unremunerated* labour, and is unjust and cruel, besides being altogether in favour of the beer-shop, as against the garden or allotment. A Report upon the condition of the labourers and their dwellings in Chillingham (North-

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* I have been informed, by a rural medical man in Dorsetshire, that the frequent preference for a "lone" cottage is based upon the dislike to the prying of neighbours.

† Only this summer (1875), being in the heart of the New Forest, I fell in with an under-keeper, who, with his family, lived in a cottage completely isolated, the nearest habitation being perhaps a mile off. But there was no trace of discontent on that score. He had been used to that sort of thing from his childhood, and he couldn't understand it being made a grievance of.

umberland) and the neighbouring parishes, in the year 1838,* states, that one cause of the superior condition of the agricultural labourer in that district was alleged to be "their comparative isolation. Few of the hinds in this district live in villages, but are located in cottages around the farm-stead; and, with the farmer, form a colony of themselves. They are generally in a considerable degree detached from the world, have no near neighbours but their fellow-labourers—no beer-shops to resort to in the evenings. They have few temptations, and are moral, almost from necessity."

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that this matter has had considerable weight, of recent years, in the minds of those who are endeavouring to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry around them; and it is now the practice in many quarters, particularly in Scotland and the northern counties of England, to provide cottages (or lodgings for single men) sufficient to accommodate as many labourers as the ordinary cultivation of the farm requires.

Again, from the unwillingness to spend money upon that which does not bring in a direct pecuniary return, how deplorable is the state of disrepair into which many small tenements are allowed to get! Many of our rural villages, at the first glance, are stamped with an appearance of the grossest neglect; the dilapidated tenements of which they are principally com-

* *Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. I.

posed, having been allowed, year after year, slowly to rot away, with only the inefficient patching-up which is possible by the unfortunate tenants. There are many lone cottages in a similar condition; which, however, do not strike the observer with such force as does a streetful of them. In such cases another class of ownership comes in. Many of these village houses are the direct property of the lord of the manor; but many more are in the possession of tradesmen and other small proprietors, who simply expect that the cottages shall be a remunerative source of income.

Here, then, is the second great cause of bad housing for the rural poor. The tenant has often to pay an exorbitant rent for very limited accommodation in a village tenement, and generally endeavours to recoup himself by taking in lodgers, the inevitable result being overcrowding, and a still further restriction of the accommodation necessary for himself and his family. To the class of proprietors, however, whom we are now considering, that is a matter of no concern whatever; and there is no influence in existence powerful enough to interfere. From a stringent local sanitary supervision, alone, can any hope of reform be looked for. Many spirited improvers of landed estates have the strictest rules laid down concerning the admission of lodgers, and such rules have been found to act in a very salutary manner; but with the small proprietor, whose object is solely a punctual payment of the rent, it is almost hopeless to expect any such praiseworthy care for the welfare of his tenants.

Similarly, the slow (but insidious) process of dilapidation and decay is seldom arrested by necessary repairs: as Mr. Heath says* of the cottages at Milborne-St.-Andrew, Dorset, "they do occasionally succumb to old age, and get pulled down, but no other form of innovation is permitted amongst them." And what makes the case appear more hopeless, such proprietors are not amenable either to public opinion or private counsel. Lord A—— is a bad landlord, and straightway the fact is a bye-word throughout his county; Lord B—— is a liberal-minded agricultural improver, and lo! his name and fame are in everybody's mouth, and in the pages of every newspaper. But who cares to ask about the cottage property of Mr. Mixer, the village grocer, or that of Mr. Simpson, the dairyman in the next town?—unless it is to congratulate those gentlemen upon the snug little addition to their incomes thereby furnished.†

Connected with this class of small proprietors is the modern building speculator. The Assistant Commissioners of 1867 bring grave charges against him;

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* *The English Peasantry.*

† "It is estimated that the proprietorship of less than half the cottages in Norfolk is in the owners of the soil. The small proprietor looks to his cottage property as a source of income purely . . . . He grudges every 6d. expended on repair. Not unfrequently he has mortgaged it nearly to its full value, and he is the proprietor only in name."—FRASER, *Report*, p. 39. "In two villages (in Bucks) the occupiers of certain cottages *are expected to deal with the tradesmen* to whom they belong."—CULLEY, *Report*, p. 131.

one instance will suffice:—"Four cottages stood together in the village near a malt-kiln; they had gardens; a speculator bought them; he turned the kiln into six cottages, and *built five others on the ground which had been used for gardens.*"* Similar iniquities are constantly being perpetrated, on the very easy plea that an increasing population must have house-room, "and it's no business of mine," if people pay their rent regularly. In some populous villages there is frequently a serious diminution of garden ground by the wholesale erection of cottages for poor persons, in the rear of existing houses. Perhaps we shall hear the rejoinder that these persons have their allotments at the other end of the town; but, at the best, an allotment is a poor substitute for a home garden.

I make bold to say that one of the greatest foes to the welfare of the British artisan or labourer is the heartless and selfish building-speculator. In the suburbs of London, particularly, whole districts could be pointed out in which the dwellings are, from their slovenly character, both of the foundations and the superstructure, apparently intended to be devoted to the production of rheumatism and low fever upon the most extended scale. "Eligible building land" may mean anything; in point of fact, it is usually any piece of ground upon which bricks and mortar will produce better crops than anything else, whether an undrainable marsh-land, or a "gravelly" soil from which all

* Mr. NORMAN'S *Report on Northamptonshire*, p. 117.

the gravel has been studiously extracted (and replaced by the contents of dust-carts). Flimsy materials—green wood, cheap mortar, and cheaper bricks—are thrown rapidly together, and the "villa" is soon ready for sale to some deluded building-society victim. "Nine-tenths of the purchase-money may remain on mortgage if preferred," but the victim does not pay many instalments before he finds that economy is not studied by purchasing a cheap house, which is constantly requiring repairs, besides bringing the doctor too frequently to the door.

Then, what is to be the remedy? There is but one for this class of delinquents—authoritative supervision, and the evil will only increase under Artisans' Dwellings Acts, and Labourers' Cottage Acts, unless grants of public loans are always accompanied by stipulations that the work accomplished by their aid shall be carefully supervised, and be in strict accordance with the enlightened sanitary views of the present day.

The third great difficulty which has to be met in the important reforms we are considering is that presented by the lowly dwellings scattered upon the heaths and commons. The feeling of proprietorship entertained by the man who has built his own house, is as strong in the breast of the poor labourer, who has been allowed to run up a mud cottage upon a piece of waste ground, as in that of the lordly proprietor behind the park-palings yonder; he is no more to be ejected from his "castle" than is the squire. His dwelling may have degenerated into a filthy hovel,

but his ignorance and simplicity are an effective bar to the interference of any well-meaning outsider. It is not easy to say when the custom first arose, but it is probable that during the first half of the eighteenth century, when the enclosure of common-land began to be reduced to a system, compensation for the loss of common-rights sometimes took the form of the peasant being allowed to appropriate a small plot of ground for a cottage and garden. Later, as population increased, and house-room was required, the custom became general; and, in some counties, where extensive heaths cover a large portion of the surface, the road-side is now fringed, at intervals, with these primitive dwellings. At last, prescription has established a right to which these small "free"-holders cling with the utmost tenacity; and prescription often wins the day against a well-disposed landowner who wishes to demolish the wretched huts and replace them by something better, unless he is willing to pay the extravagant compensation demanded. It is here that the principal obstacle lies. For it by no means follows that, because a peasant has become an amateur builder, his performance will necessarily be a bad one; and, with respect to the materials, mud or clay cottages, properly thatched, and fairly well built, will endure for many years, as long as the demon Neglect is not allowed to enter. Dr. Fraser himself says (speaking of clay villages in Norfolk), that "sun-dried clay, when kept clear of rain and damp and frost, forms an excellent material, but *perishes rapidly when ingress has*

been once given to the elements of decay."* No, a mud cottage is not to be despised, if but the conditions of health and decency are observed; and if the hitherto irresponsible *status* of its owner can be reduced by the application of strong local powers, we shall soon hear of fewer stories of the dilapidation, dirt, and wretchedness too frequently associated with our notions of such dwellings.

I suppose that the spread of education, and a vigilant sanitary inspection are the two forces upon which we may rely in the future for the removal of these blots upon our civilisation. When the poorer classes of society learn, at last, the intimate connection that exists between overcrowding and fever, and between dirt and disease, there will be some fairer prospect than at present for their comfort and welfare. Until then, good wages, cheap food, personal sympathy between classes, Royal Commissions, general prosperity, will be unavailing to improve the condition of the labouring poor. It is evident that a principle of stagnation has too long prevailed concerning the health of the community. We have offered to the labourer the *stone* of

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* "The cob-walls of Devonshire have been known to last above a century without requiring the slightest repair; and the Rev. W. T. Elicombe, who has himself built several houses of two stories with cob-walls, says that he was born in a cob-wall parsonage, built in the reign of Elizabeth, or somewhat earlier, and that it had to be taken down to be rebuilt only in the year 1831."—*Cottage Building*, by C. B. ALLEN. 7th Edition. London, 1873, p. 31.

household suffrage, without first giving him the *bread* of household reform. Now that the proper housing of the poor is one of the most prominent questions before us, let us hope that earnest, honest efforts will not cease before a wholesale reform is effected. It is a matter for the consideration of the country at large—not the responsibility of any particular class. From Parliament alone, under the pressure of enlightened public opinion, is real reform to be hoped for.

II.—THE WORK OF REFORM.

It will be surprising to many persons to find how much paper and print have been expended on the study of cottage-building, for some years past. At this moment there are several Societies in existence whose object is the diffusion of practical information as to the improvement of the houses of the poor, and the preparation of plans and working-drawings; besides, several individual persons have compiled works upon the subject which are of standard service to those who are interested in it.

The Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes was established about thirty years ago; and the means which have been adopted to promote its objects are:—1st, Arranging and executing plans as models for the improvement of the dwellings of the labouring classes; 2ndly, The issue of publications calculated to facilitate these objects; 3rdly, Correspond-

ence with landed proprietors, clergymen, and others desirous of improving the condition of the labouring classes in their own neighbourhood. Since 1851, the Society has published a periodical under the title of the "Labourers' Friend;" and the volumes already issued are a mine of information upon all matters connected with the welfare of the poor. Besides this, the Society has issued some useful pamphlets, which have passed through several editions; and a series of working drawings, on a large scale, for the use of the promoters of cottage-building. The operations of this Society have been principally in London; consisting of the erection of large blocks of buildings, in which the poorer classes can obtain one or two rooms, according to their means, fitted up with modern sanitary appliances and the best household conveniences which can be devised, on a small scale. The public approval and liberal support which the Society has constantly obtained is not the only result of its labours, for its houses may be considered as having furnished the model of most subsequent establishments of the same character, whilst its plans have been extensively followed in other large towns of the kingdom. But, besides urban dwellings, the Society has greatly promoted the extension of improved cottage-building for agricultural labourers—and, in its earlier years especially, of allotment gardens. The working plans for labourers' cottages published by the Society have now stood the test of many years' experience, and are extensively used in all parts of England. It should be

mentioned, that this Society has always been partly supported by voluntary subscriptions.

The Central Cottage Improvement Society, also supported to some extent by liberal donations, has devoted itself to similar objects for a number of years; with this difference, that it is essentially a *Cottage* society. The professed objects of the Society are:—

1. The Improvement of Suburban Dwellings for Artizans.
2. The Erection of Cottages for Labourers in the Agricultural Districts, on such plans and specifications as will give a fair return on the outlay.
3. The construction of Village Hospitals and Lodging-houses, and the best means of providing village accommodation for Single Labourers.
4. The Improvement of existing Dwellings and Cottages, Garden Allotments, etc.

The Society is now represented in upwards of eighty localities, in some of which large clusters of cottages have been erected, and attract the observer at once by their neatness and apparently substantial character. The Alexandra Cottages at Penge, for example, present a most agreeable aspect, surrounded as they are by ample gardens, and inhabited by a class of artizans and others who can appreciate the value of a neat and cheerful home. Another set of model cottages on one of the plans of the Society erected at Walthamstow by Mr. Ebenezer Clarke, (described by him at a meeting of the Statistical Society in February, 1875), have met

with the utmost favour by the class for whom they were designed. And in some strictly rural districts the plans of the Society have been extensively followed. The Society has now merged in the Land, Building, Investment, and Cottage Improvement Company (Limited), and has extended its operations to the making advances for the erection of improved dwellings and the repair of existing ones, as well as for the improvement of other landed property.

The Windsor Royal Society, established in 1852, under the auspices of the late Prince Consort, has been the means of materially adding to the comfort and well-being of the labouring classes in and around Windsor; indeed there are few more important examples of the kind of reform we are considering, than those furnished by the work of the lamented Prince. His wise and benevolent mind was early directed to this object, and he constantly laboured in the interest of his peasantry by adding to the eligibility and comfort of their homes. The very plans of their cottages were prepared upon his suggestions, and received corrections from his hand during their design, besides being personally superintended during their erection. An account of the Prince Consort's Farms, by Mr. John C. Morton,* gives very full particulars, with plans of the model cottages erected on the royal estates. With reference to the resulting improvement in the sanitary condition of the inhabitants, Mr. Edwin Chadwick is

* London, Longmans, 1863.

quoted by Mr. Morton, to the effect that the death-rate among the labouring classes at Osborne was only 12 per 1,000; the rate for the whole kingdom being 23; and that of the best rural districts, about 17 per 1,000.

Besides these, cottage improvement societies have been started at Reigate, Maidstone, Hastings, Hertford, and other places, which have run an almost uninterrupted career of usefulness and prosperity.* The various agricultural societies have, from time to time, given valuable premiums for prize plans, which have been subsequently published in their journals; and one of the most singular evidences of growing interest in the subject is to see the Northampton Architectural Society, departing from the usual line taken up by such associations, devote itself to the consideration of improved labourers' cottages. The Society of Arts, as is well known, has taken up the subject at different periods; an exhibition of cottage plans, held at the office, in the Adelphi, in the year 1864, attracted a good deal of notice, and gave some impetus to the public mind.

Plans of various kinds are also to be found scattered through the pages of such publications as *The Builder*,

* The Windsor Royal Society has paid upon its capital an average dividend of 4¼ per cent.; the Hertford Society about 4 per cent.; the Redhill and Reigate Society 5 per cent. The Hastings Cottage Improvement Society, established about 1857, paid 6 per cent. dividend as early as the third year of its existence.—(*Reports* quoted in the *Labourers' Friend* journal).

The Agricultural Gazette, &c.; and such comprehensive works as Morton's *Cyclopædia of Agriculture,* Loudon's *Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture,* and others, devote a large portion of their pages to more or less complete guides for the erection of dwellings for the labour upon a farm. A small work (forming one of what is known as *Weale's Series*) on Cottage Building, by C. B. Allen, Architect, has numerous good plans, and is very much to be recommended.

The work accomplished by the Royal Agricultural Society of England deserves, I think, a fuller notice. It may not be generally known, that among the objects contemplated in the original formation of the Society, was "to promote the comfort and welfare of labourers, and to encourage the improved management of their cottages and gardens." An examination of its published Transactions will show that the Society has given a fair proportion of effort to the ventilation of the subject, not only in the offering of prizes, but also in having considered the condition of the labourer's dwelling as a necessary item in any Report upon Improvements.

The following summary of the principal Essays which the Society has published, will much contribute to our knowledge of the subject:—

I. "On the Construction of Cottages," by the Rev. Copinger Hill,* a paper for which a prize was awarded in the year 1843. This gentleman was himself a land-

* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal,* IV., 356.

lord, and took a landlord's interest in the welfare of his tenants, and in the condition of his property. The principal points of his Essay are :

1. Cottages are too much in the hands of speculators, who exact an exorbitant rent for very inferior accommodation. From personal experience, the writer considers that cottage building by landowners is not necessarily an unprofitable investment, if proper attention is given to durability in the structure, combined with economical modes of building; the first means of reducing the expense being, to buy the materials retail, and employing trustworthy journeymen tradesmen.

2. The accommodation required is, a dwelling-room thirteen feet square ; a pantry, or cellar with stairs, and a cupboard beneath ; two bed-rooms above—bed-rooms on the ground-floor undesirable.

3. Walls to be fourteen inches thick ; or nine inches battened within ; or stud-work plastered on both sides.

4. Aspect, a little west of south.

5. Different interior accommodation is required in country cottages as compared with those in towns.

6. A thatched roof is far preferable to slate or tile in point of comfort, while the expense in the long run is not greater.

7. The oven and copper to be in the dwelling-room.

8. The chimney to be an open one.

9. Clay for walls is very durable, and looks well—if care is exercised in its manipulation. The writer describes fully its preparation.

10. Full detailed estimates are given ; the result

being, that a *double* cottage, with clay walls, and thatched roof, would cost £120; the same, with stone walls, £147.

11. Labourers would willingly pay £3 3*s*. annual rent for such cottages, which amount would exceed five per cent. upon the outlay.

12. A supplementary estimate is given for two ground floor cottages for aged persons, at a cost of £50. These would each pay six per cent. at a rent of only 30*s*. per annum.

In dismissing Mr. Hill's Essay, it may be remarked that he wrote from the county of Suffolk in the year 1842. There would, therefore, at this date be some slight increase in the price of labour, and in part of the materials, by which the estimates would have to be considerably modified.

II. The next paper to which we will refer is that of Mr. John Grey,* Agent to the Greenwich Hospital Estates at Dilston, Northumberland. Here we find a totally different state of things as regards the materials for building to that which we have just considered. Here, stone walls and slated roofs are universally preferred to any less durable materials; and that not entirely because stone and slate are the natural products of that part of England, for the storms and snows of a Northumbrian winter would unquestionably cause a greater relative difference in the durability of stone and mud, of tiles and thatch. Mr. Grey con-

* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, V., 237.

siders the step of reformation in labourers' dwellings, and care for their personal comfort, as "exclusively the landlord's business," and that it is "the line of good policy to bestow care and consideration on all that relates to the comfort and happiness of the peasantry around us." In pursuance of this object, a dry and healthy site should be chosen for a dwelling, with a cheerful aspect; interior comfort should be studied, by furnishing means for the proper separation of the different members of the family in their bed-room accommodation; in contrivances for obtaining warmth and dryness throughout the house; in providing a good fire-range, with oven; means of conserving rain-water; and plenty of room for milk, household utensils, &c. Accommodation must also be provided for a cow, pigs, &c., as these animals are almost universally kept by the peasants of Northumberland. The cost of a cottage at the period (1843) when Mr. Grey wrote, was estimated at from £60 to nearly £90, there being a difference of about £25 on a cottage of two floors. The writer gives several plans and elevations, and a detailed estimate.

III. Sir George Nicholls contributes an Essay * on the "Condition of the Agricultural Labourer, with Suggestions for its Improvement." Of four principal "suggestions," that of providing comfortable cottages is justly considered by the writer as being of the highest importance; and he, in common with most persons who

* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, VII., 16.

have studied the question, throws upon the landlord the responsibility of existing deficiencies, and the duty of protecting the labourer alike from the thoughtless neglect of his employer, and from the cupidity of building speculators. The cottage-garden is also considered by this writer to be indispensable.

IV. The Duke of Bedford made an important communication to the "Journal"* in the year 1849, on Labourers' Cottages, recording the great interest he had always felt, as a landlord, upon this subject; and the efforts which he made to meet the demands for improvement. His Grace admitted that cottage-building was a "bad investment of money; but this is not the light in which such a subject should be viewed by landlords." Several plans were contributed in illustration of the paper.

V. A prize Essay, by Mr. J. Young Macvicar,† was accompanied by some very superior plans. The writer strongly recommended that cottage-holdings should be rented direct from the landlord, and that a convenient portion of grass land should be provided with each.

VI. Another Essay, by Mr. Henry Goddard, of Lincoln,‡ calls for no special remark, except that his plans are characterised by the admission of several modern mechanical improvements.

VII. A Report upon the farming of Dorsetshire, in the year 1854, by Mr. Louis Ruegg,§ devoted a good

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* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, X., 185.

† *Ibid.* X., 400. ‡ *Ibid.* X., 230. § *Ibid.* XV., 389.

deal of space to the cottage improvements of Mr. Sturt, and of the Duke of Bedford in that county.

VIII. In the same volume* will be found a description, with specifications and plans, of prize double cottages, by Mr. George Arnold, of Crediton; accompanied by a testimony of their general suitableness, by a gentleman who had erected some cottages according to these plans.

Besides these special papers, occasional references to the gradual process of improvement which is taking place, will be found in the subsequent Transactions of the Society. The above will suffice to show that the agricultural world is not behind the rest of us, in the desire to reform the peasant's home.

With reference to the mutual relations which exist between the various classes of society, the difference between the moral tone of our times, and public feeling a century ago, is most unmistakeable. At that period the public mind was in a sluggish state of ignorance, generally speaking, as to the condition and the wants of the poor. One has only to glance at the literature and the newspapers of the latter part of the last century to see that the lower classes were uncared for, almost universally. Such examples as those furnished by the labours of HOWARD, Wilberforce, Bernard, and others, were made the theme of admiration, truly; but they seemed to fail in giving any stimulus to similar

* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, XV., 455.

benevolent exertions. The practice of unselfishness (where it cost much money, particularly) seemed to that age something angelic, superhuman—altogether too good for this world: "THOU, MILD BENEFACTOR!" was the kind of strain in which such persons were addressed by the turgid poetasters of the time; cenotaphs, and chaplets, and wreaths, and other imaginary rewards were freely offered; but, as to any of the fruits of good example, they were almost *nil*. It is true, that upon this particular matter of the agricultural labourer's increasing demoralisation, the evil was not so prominent, for it is more recent than many other social sores;* but general combination in works of beneficial reform, and the improvement of mankind through the masses of the people, was only represented by some few stray examples; which examples were held up to wondering admiration for a while, in turn with Mongolfier's balloon, Burford's panorama, and the achievements of Admiral Lord Nelson.

However, about the close of the century, evidence appeared that the leaven of practical benevolence was, at last, spreading. In the year 1797, a preliminary address was issued to the public, signed THOMAS BERNARD, concerning a new Society "For Bettering the Condition of the Poor." Besides Sir Thomas Bernard, amongst the promoters are to be found the names of William Wilberforce, the Rev. Wm. Gilpin,

* The condition of the rural labourer is represented, on good authority, to have been "most prosperous," before the year 1775.

the Thorntons, the Barclays, and many names which subsequently became familiar, as the originators or the supporters of useful and benevolent projects. The principal aim of the Society was "to carry domestic comfort into the recesses of every cottage," and the means adopted were the obtaining and circulating information as to the following matters:—

The best form of parish relief, and the amendment of workhouses.
The management and the encouragement of Friendly Societies.
The condition of cottages, and the usefulness of cottage gardens.
Parish mills, village shops, village kitchens.
The economy of fuel, and improved fire-places.
Etc., etc., etc.

A glance through the early reports and papers of the Society shows that an awakened interest in the condition of the poor was at hand. It may safely be said that the stimulus given by the Society's efforts to restore the cottager to a share in the cultivation of the land has borne fruit in the now prevalent system of allotment gardens; and that the hopes with which it started, to "sweeten and encourage the labourer's toil and attach him to his condition and situation," have been, in numerous cases, fulfilled. At any rate, since the days of that Society there have always been men to follow in its footsteps; and we cannot turn to any part of England or Scotland without finding persons who

represent, in a greater or less degree, the principles and the practice of Sir Thomas Bernard's philanthropic friends. Indeed it will not be difficult, upon reflection, to conclude that what was *philanthropy* in those days is only COMMON SENSE in our own times:—experience having shown, for example, that keeping fever away from your neighbours' homes is the same thing as keeping it away from your own; that securing pure water, and fresh air, and sanitation for your poorer neighbours, reacts sensibly upon your own health; that teaching people to be honest, clean, comfortable and happy, simply means adding to your own comfort and happiness. Undoubtedly, with the decent home is to be found the first step towards alleviating the miseries and raising the moral and social condition of the poor. Mr. Disraeli once gave it as his opinion that the proper housing of the agricultural labourer was a more important question than that of food or raiment; and that although a man "might eat quite enough, and many might (and actually do) drink a good deal too much, no one could possibly be too well housed." Lord Palmerston said, "How can the land be well cultivated, if the labourers are not well housed?" The late Earl of Derby was well known not only for his advocacy of the decent home, but for his active provision in his own county.

Now, if three Prime Ministers, of our own day, could hold such principles, and not only that, but constantly make good their words by careful attention to the wants of their respective estates, I may safely repeat that the philanthropy of 1795 ought to be considered as the

common sense and the daily principle of 1875: that, whereas it was sufficient, eighty years ago, to admire with a sickly sentimentalism—it is now the plain and simple duty of everyone who has the ability to *follow* a good example.

And if it is the duty of individuals to recollect that they are in the position of stewards of the property and the wealth that they enjoy, it would seem that the same obvious duty lies also with the country at large. To whatever pitch of prosperity we have reached, or may reach, there will always be in the community a great number of ignorant and helpless persons—a large proportion of the population, who can never be moved to improve their outward condition but through legislation.

There is one characteristic of the statutes which have been enacted during the present reign, that so many of them bear upon the sanitary and general improvement of the poorer classes; and we need not be without hope that we shall soon have special legislation upon their actual dwellings. It is very plain that far more stringent powers are required than at present exist, to act upon the sanitary condition of the people, and the conclusion which I have arrived at is, that there will never be wholesale reform until it is rendered compulsory for sanitary officers to cause the demolition of bad and unimprovable houses, and the erection of decent ones in their stead, and until there is stringent inspection through more independent means than at present exist. Bishop Fraser says ("Report," p. 37), that "the exist-

ing Sanitary Act is quite ineffective, owing to the local influences by which it is hampered." Inspection of cottages, by a Government official, would be likely to do some good.

It has seemed to me also as very probable that something like a decennial sanitary Commission would have a very beneficial effect upon the public mind. In spite of the increasing interest in sanitary matters, people are still very slow to act, and it is quite certain that the voice of *authority* alone will move the majority of people. The day is coming, sooner or later, when there will be compulsion to a far greater extent than now exists. We cannot possibly go on, as a nation, with our increasing population exposed to the risks of open sewers, ill-drained and over-crowded houses, as did our forefathers; the evil results of such matters being neglected are now too well known.

To return, however, to that branch of the subject more immediately before us, let us take a cursory glance at some details of the progress in reform during the past century or so. And there can be little hesitation, in the first place, in considering JOHN HOWARD as the pioneer in the good work of reforming the homes of the poor. Known as he is, and will be to future ages, as the prison philanthropist, we must recollect that those public labours which have given him undying fame belong to a period of his life after domestic ties had been broken by death, and when he had begun to seek in travel, and in the performance of public duties, the

diversion needed by a mind overwhelmed with grief; and when his appointment as Sheriff of Bedfordshire, in the year 1773, afforded him the first *authoritative* opportunity of inquiry into the terrible prison abuses which then existed. Previously to this date he had led the life of a country gentleman of moderate means upon his patrimonial estate at Cardington, in Bedfordshire. Here he had resided (with an occasional interval of home and foreign travel) for a period of above seventeen years, and "the work that stamps this period with a character of its own, was that continuous and progressive improvement of his estate, which consisted in the pulling down and rebuilding of all his cottages, and of all others that he could purchase, and their reconstruction, coupled with other local improvements. . . . . This was probably the earliest, and certainly the most complete work of physical, and incidentally of moral regeneration, undertaken by any English landlord. To its thorough-going and truly practical character, and the transformation it effected in the health and habits of the people, all Howard's biographers bear testimony."*

As we have seen, such an example was not at first contagious. Several isolated instances, which we shall presently note, occur during the next quarter of a century, of which particulars are to be found in what was

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* On John Howard as Statist, by Dr. W. A. Guy, *Statistical Journal*, XXXVI., 9.

then one of the most valuable statistical publications, now almost forgotten. I allude to the Agricultural Survey of all the Counties of England and Wales, prepared under the authority of the old Board of Agriculture,* and with the supervision of Mr. Arthur Young, who was Secretary to the Board. This Survey included a section upon the condition of farm buildings (including farm-houses and cottages), and the result of the enquiries was, generally, by no means favourable; this, however, probably contributed to the awakening of public interest upon the subject. The Board itself, in the year 1800, offered prizes for the best plans of cottages. To Mr. Young is due the production of several of the best volumes of the series of Surveys; and he seems to have given a great deal of careful consideration to the welfare of the labourer, as one of the most important items in the economy of farming. His volumes refer to the Eastern Counties.

Of Essex, Mr. Young says† that there were a good many modern-built cottages "very superior to the old ones, being erected with brick, and covered with tile; and such as are built with lath-and-plaster, are in a superior style," although many more were still wanted. The Earl of Winchilsea, one of the leading supporters of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, did a great deal for the peasantry in this and other counties where he held estates; his especial anxiety

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* Abolished about the year 1816.

† *Agricultural Survey of Essex*, 1807, p. 49.

being, however, to provide large plots of garden ground. At Gosfield, the Marquess of Buckingham; Mr. Joseph French, at East Horndon; Mr. Bramston, of Skreens; the Rev. Mr. Scott, at Oakley, are named as having either extensively built cottages or provided garden-ground—the gentleman at Horndon having the additional merit of being only the tenant of his farm. Mr. Young's Report on Suffolk states, that* some "individuals had distinguished themselves most laudably by building neat and comfortable cottages for the poor;" but such instances were not general, and could only be "effected by persons of a certain income." In Norfolk, one name only is given of a proprietor at Carbrook who had built some capital cottages of flint-work, with walls eighteen inches thick, and a roofing of pantiles.† Of Lincolnshire, Mr. Young speaks‡ much more cheerfully as to the labourer generally, as being far better off than in the more southerly of the Eastern Counties. Some improvements in the dwellings had recently been made at the period of the Survey; and the allotment question had been well taken up.

Let us now take these four counties, with a few references as to what has been done since the period referred to. The late Mr. Philip Pusey could say, in 1842, concerning Lincolnshire, that the labourer's cot-

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* *Agricultural Survey of Suffolk*, 3rd Edition, 1804, p. 11.

† *Agricultural Survey of Norfolk*, 1804, p. 24.

‡ *Agricultural Survey of Lincolnshire*, 1808, p. 39.

tage was "neat and cheerful."* Another notice,† of a particular parish in Lincolnshire (1842), says that the "cottages are good, being brick and tile, and contain each four rooms, viz., two low rooms and two chambers, besides a back-kitchen, pantry, &c. . . . rent thirty shillings." But, in 1868, Mr. Stanhope‡ could state that there was still a great cry for more cottages, and better ones, although "within the last few years the number of cottages built on many estates has been very large."

Again, as to Norfolk and Suffolk: where there exists ample means, a great deal has been done. A writer in the "Edinburgh Review" for January, 1875, speaks of two land-owners in Suffolk who had recently spent £10,000 and £8,000 respectively, in cottage-building. One of the most important instances of general reformation is that presented in West Norfolk, consequent upon the establishment of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Under the former proprietor (an "absentee"), the Sandringham estate is described as having been in a very miserable condition, with tumble-down huts, and squalid inhabitants; but, since it came into the hands of the Prince, the cottages have been rebuilt, all have gardens and out-houses, and are let at from £3 to £4 per annum; at the same time that the people themselves have been raised up from a condition of ignorance and semi-pauperism. Naturally

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* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, IV. 315.

† *Ibid.* V. 282. ‡ *Commission* (1867), *Report* I., p. 91.

the contagion has spread, and many surrounding parishes have partaken in the general improvement. Bishop Fraser* mentions the estates of the Duke of Grafton and Sir Edward Kerrison, in Suffolk, as deserving of special notice, in respect of the favourable condition of the labourers' dwellings. The *Times* correspondent,† during the Strike in 1874, reported the labourer in some parts of Suffolk to be "most comfortably housed."

But it would appear that this reformation in Norfolk and Suffolk had begun in earnest forty years ago. For example, Mr. Edward Twisleton, an Assistant Poor-Law Commissioner, under date 1840,‡ thus reports upon improvements which had been made in Norfolk and Suffolk:—

"Some of the best which I have seen belong to the Earl of Stradbroke, at Henham, near Halesworth, in Suffolk; to the Earl of Leicester, at Holkham; and to the Rev. Mr. Benyon, at Culford, about five miles from Bury St. Edmunds. Those of the Earl of Stradbroke are built of brick, roofed with tiles; have four rooms at least, and have all proper conveniences—of pantries, cupboards, and out-offices; but, at the same time,

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* *Report*, p. 39.

† The letters to the *Times* have been recently republished, under the title of *The Agricultural Lock-out*, 1874. They present a most impartial and interesting account of the condition of the Suffolk peasantry. (W. Blackwood and Sons, London and Edinburgh).

‡ *Report* on *Sanitary Condition of the Labouring population* (1842) p. 264.

they are principally with only one story, so that the bed-rooms are on the same floor with the parlour and kitchen. Such cottages would only be built where land is no object; and they must be considered in the light of luxuries and ornaments. Some of the cottages of the Earl of Leicester, at Holkham, are perhaps the most substantial and comfortable which are to be seen in any part of England; and if all the English peasantry could be lodged in similar ones, it would be the realization of a Utopia." After some small details as to interior and exterior arrangements, the writer adds that "the drainage is excellent, the water is good, each cottage has about twenty rods of garden-ground, and the rent (including gardens) is only £3 3*s.* a-year. Hence it is not to be wondered at, that Mr. Emerson, the builder, has been enabled to say, in a letter to me, *I have never known in them an instance of fever, or any epidemic*," certainly a good deal to boast of, considering that the observation referred to an experience of twenty years, which was the age of these particular cottages. The cost of these was stated to be about £110 or £115 each; and, consequently, the rent paid for them was little better than half what would be thought a fair remunerative return, as a matter of mere speculation. Of Culford, near Bury, Mr. Twisleton observes:—"This is a remarkable village of about fifty cottages, built within the last twenty years, by Mr. Benyon de Beauvoir. The outward appearance of them is pretty, and it was this which first attracted my attention to them. They are built with bricks, faced

with blue flint stones, which harmonize agreeably with the blue slate of the roofs. They have each four rooms —two below and two above—with a pantry, and cupboard. . . . . The principal room is fourteen feet by twelve feet wide, and seven feet high, which is inferior in size to those at Holkham, and they have only two bed-rooms, while those at Holkham have three. At the distance of a few feet from each set of cottages there is a wooden building, roofed with tiles, which comprises a space for fuel, and a privy for each cottage; and a common oven." The average cost of the double cottages at Culford is stated to have been £170, or £85 each.

Lastly, of Essex; a favourable mention appeared in the "Royal Agricultural Society's Journal," for 1844,* which stated that "excellent cottages" were common in the district. During the succeeding quarter of a century very extensive improvements have been made. In one instance, the appearance of the county has been completely revolutionized. Before Mr. Mechi purchased Tiptree Hall farm, it was one of the worst in the county; but, under his careful management, combined with bold experiment, it has not only become one of the most productive, but has given the initiative to improvement for many miles around: the Heath has been reclaimed, and placed under cultivation; and where a few squatters dwelt, in lonely, dismal cabins, are now to be seen groups of neat brick and slate cot-

* Vol. V., p. 31.

tages, inhabited by an industrious and well-behaved population. I don't think any one who wished to see for himself a thriving and happy agricultural district, could do better than select this part of Essex, between Colchester and Maldon.

In Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, the work of improvement would appear to have been somewhat slow, and the existing accommodation for housing the poor is much condemned. The "Times" correspondent of 1874, however, mentioned in very favourable terms the improved cottages on the Duke of Rutland's estates, near Cheveley: and the Hon. E. B. Portman * those of Lord Dacre, in the south of Cambridgeshire. These latter are alluded to by Mr. Elihu Burritt, who, on one of his visits to England (in 1863) saw the great farm of Samuel Jonas at Chrishall Grange: "There was one feature of this great farm-home which I regarded with much satisfaction. It was the housing of the labourers employed on the estate. This is done in blocks of well-built, well-ventilated, and very comfortable cottages, all within a stone's-throw of the noble old mansion occupied by Mr. Jonas. Thus, no long and weary miles after the fatigue of the day, or before its labour begins, have to be walked over by his men in the cold and dark. . . . ." † What is more, Mr. Jonas confessed (to Mr. Portman) to a loss of five per cent. by the interest he paid to the landlord on the cost of their erection.

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* *Commission* (1867), *Report* I., p. 106.

† *Walk from London to John o' Groat's*, p. 182.

In the northern and north-eastern counties of England, the agricultural labourer is usually represented to be in much more comfortable circumstances than are his brethren in the south. His wages are higher, his *physique* is better, and, as a general rule, his dwelling is superior; besides—and this is greatly in his favour—he does not rely upon beer as a leading article of food: cases are upon record of northern labourers having been transported to Dorset and Wilts, from whom a great deal more work, and of better quality, was obtained than from the native population.*

The following remarks, amongst others which have come under my notice, have produced a very favourable impression upon my own mind with respect to the Northumbrian peasant; they form part of a report upon the condition of the labourers and their cottages in Chillingham and neighbouring parishes, in the year 1838†:—

"Look into one of our north-country cottages during a winter's evening, and you will probably see assembled the family group round a cheerful coal-fire—which, by the way, is an inestimable blessing to all classes, but chiefly to the poor of this county, who enjoy an abundance of cheap fuel; you will see the females knitting or spinning; the father, perhaps, mending shoes—an art which almost all acquire; and one of the young ones reading for the amusement of the whole circle."

* *The Agricultural Labourer*, by J. Bailey Denton, *quoted by* Mr. Stanhope, *Evidence* II., p. 39.

† *Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. I.

Now, much of this pleasant picture is the outcome of the somewhat patriarchal system under which the farming population live in many parts of Northumberland; but his superior dwelling, constructed as it is of more durable materials, and presenting a capacity for the exercise of household virtues, which in a hovel are impossible, has very much to do with it. And if the people are "a remarkably sober race, rarely touching beer at their work, and bearing a high character for honesty," it only requires extended education and cottage-building to be universal (instead of partial, as they really are), to render northern Northumberland a model in every way, to the entire country. That improvement is not by any means universal is undoubtedly the case: as has already been mentioned, there are in Northumberland "some of the best and some of the worst" cottages in England. Still, from the point of view we are taking, it is unmistakeable that Northumberland has made great advances in this respect, particularly within the last twenty-five years, and it is somewhat singular to learn that public opinion and taste have likewise so advanced in that time, that the models and plans of 1847 would now be considered antiquated and deficient; as a minor obstacle, it can "hardly be expected that landlords will deliberately pull down, and lay out money" in building cottages upon an improved model, considering the admittedly unremunerative character of such outlay. The Northumberland Cottage Improvement Society, established at a public meeting at Alnwick about thirty years

since, has been the means of giving a very great impulse to the good work; and Mr. Henley* names several large proprietors who have spent a good deal of money upon improvements: "On the large estates of Earl Grey (at Howick) and Mr. Cresswell Cresswell, attention is particularly attracted by the excellency of the cottages. The Dukes of Northumberland have, in this county, built and improved 931 dwellings for farm and other labourers on their estates during the last twenty years. The work of improvement is rapidly progressing, and I could mention many other estates on which they are all that could be wished, but *the list would be too long.*"

To the late Mr. John Grey, of Dilston, steward for the Greenwich Hospital estates in Northumberland, the greatest credit is due as a liberal-minded employer of labour, and during his long period of office he devoted special attention to the homes of the peasantry. Of Durham I have not obtained any notices of modern improvements of sufficient importance to particularise. The report to the Board of Agriculture, early in this century, was, comparatively speaking, favourable. Mr. Henley's district included also this county, and part of his general observations are intended to apply to it, but he does not name any individual proprietor who has signalised himself by extensive cottage building.

Of Yorkshire, Mr. Portman, Assistant-Commissioner of 1867,† states that in most parts of the county there

* *Report*, p. 66.

† *Report*, pp. 104, 105.

is much comfort in the cottages. In some places, however, non-residence of the proprietors produces its usual fruits; there is also a good deal of over-crowding in this county for want of a sufficient number of dwellings. Lord Wenlock, at Marston, in the West Riding, is mentioned by Mr. Portman as having devoted a good deal of attention to the best modes of providing increased and improved cottage accommodation. In the East Riding people were fully alive to the necessity of improvement, and much had "been effected in cottage dwellings during the last twenty years." The Yorkshire Agricultural Society* held a very successful exhibition of plans of cottages some years ago, and awarded prizes for the best designs.

The survey of Westmoreland and Cumberland, made to the old Board of Agriculture, stated that there were not many cottages purposely built for labourers in agriculture, "very few of that class being wanted in this county,† as the farms are so small, the occupiers and their families are generally sufficient for the work, without any foreign aid," most of the land being in the hands of small proprietors, under a customary tenure.

Another writer of the period states that there were "very few mere cottages" in Westmoreland.‡ However the case may be now, as to the need of extraneous

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* *Labourers' Friend*, 1861, p. 39.

† *Agricultural Survey of Cumberland*, 3rd Edition, 1805, p. 208.

‡ *Agricultural Survey of Westmoreland*, p. 301.

labour, it is certain that some proprietors have had need to go into the cottage question. Of late years the small farms have considerably diminished, and these counties are becoming more like the rest of the country, with respect to the conditions of labour. One consequence of this is, that there is a good deal of overcrowding, and deficient accommodation, which is, however, being met by the exertions of some of the landed proprietors. Mr. Tremenheere* (Commissioner of 1867), reports that "on the extensive estates of the Earl of Lonsdale, efforts are being made to increase the number and improve the accommodation of labourers' dwellings. Mr. P. H. Howard, of Greystoke Castle, who has long been convinced of the necessity of improvement in this direction, has built a considerable number of excellent cottages. Mr. George Moore, an extensive Cumberland proprietor, by offering prizes for the best-kept cottages, has done much to raise the character of the population in his neighbourhood. Lord Kenlis, of Underley Park, Westmoreland, builds five or six new and improved cottages on his estates every year, and every married labourer on his property will eventually be provided with a cottage containing a sitting-room, three bedrooms, a pantry, and a small back court-yard. The rent charged for such a cottage is only £2 10s. a year. The Earl of Carlisle has also recently built some excellent cottages on his estate at Naworth, in Cumberland."

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* *Report*, p. 146.

Mr. Tremenheere gives it as his opinion, that the cottage question cannot be effectually dealt with until there is more aggregation of small estates, and the labourers themselves become more amenable to the progress of civilisation. There has hitherto been great scarcity of extraneous labour for the small farms of Cumberland and Westmoreland; and, as a rule, the labourer does not settle down, by marriage, into a mode of life which makes it worth a proprietor's while to encourage.

Miss Martineau published some articles on "Health, Husbandry, and Handicraft," a few years ago,* which contained the most valuable hints, principally on the ways of life as they are and as they ought to be, amongst the working classes. She describes therein some cottages which she had built for her labourers, which are deserving of the highest commendation, and will serve as a further illustration of the progress which has been made in Westmoreland:—

"I have built five Westmoreland cottages, the specifications of which, and the receipted bills for which, lie before me now. The first was a dwelling for my farm-man and his wife, without children; it was built in conjunction with a wash-house for my own house, and a cow-stable for two cows, with all appurtenances. The cottage consists of two good rooms on the ground-floor, with two large closets, one used as a pantry, and the other containing a bed on occasion. The wash-house

* London, 1865.

has the usual fittings—boiler, pump and sink, and all conveniences. The cow-stable has stalls for two cows, and a smaller one for a calf; two windows in the walls, and one in the roof: a gutter and drain joining the one from the cottage, and leading to a manure-tank, which is flagged and cemented so as to be perfectly water-tight, and closed with a moveable stone lid; all the buildings are two feet thick in the walls, which are of the grey stone of the district, mortared in the outer and inner courses, and the cavity filled in with rubble. The cottage kitchen has a range with an oven, and the bedroom has a fireplace. The cost of this group of buildings was £130. The other four cottages are built in pairs, on a terrace, with a space of a few feet between the two pairs, and a flight of broad steps leading up from below. There is a good piece of garden ground to each cottage. The walls are *two feet thick*, and may stand for centuries. The foundations are on excavated rock. The roofs are of Coniston slate, and the corner-stones are from the Rydol quarry. The woodwork being properly seasoned and duly painted, there is no call for repairs beyond the occasional painting and whitewashing, and replacing of a slate now and then in stormy weather. A more durable kind of property can hardly be. When once warmed through, these dwellings, if well built at first, are warm in winter and cool in summer; and they are perfectly dry, which is not always the case with houses built of stone in blocks —some kinds of stone absorbing moisture. The kitchens and passages are flagged. One pair has a

boarded floor in the sitting-room; the other is flagged. Boards are usually preferred. Each cottage has two out-houses behind — a coal-shed, and privy (with a patent water-closet apparatus); the passage between the house and out-houses being roofed, with a sky-light. There is a cistern in each roof, to afford a fall for the water-closet. Each dwelling has a pump and sink; each kitchen an oven and range; each house has two closets (for which the thickness of the walls affords convenience). There is a fire-place in every room; a fan-light over the kitchen door; a window (to open) on the stairs; a dresser in the kitchen, and shelves in the pantry. Each cottage has a porch, like most dwellings in this part of the country, where the protection of a porch to the house-door is needed in stormy weather. Such is the character of my cottages. As for their contents: the ground-floor consists of a kitchen, a good-sized, light, cheerful sitting-room, and a pantry under the stairs. In one pair the living-room is 12 feet 8 inches long by 11 feet 3 inches broad, and 7 feet high. In the other pair, the same room measures 15 feet in length by 12 feet in breadth. The respective kitchens are 10½ feet by 10 feet, and 12 feet by 10 feet. Up-stairs there are three bed-rooms, one of which is convenient for a double-bedded room. The estimate in the contract was £110 per cottage; but some of the conveniences above-mentioned were an after-thought, and cost £7 per house; thus the total cost of each dwelling was £117. The tenants pay no rates, but a rent of £7, including the garden ground."

"The nearest cottage to these is one built by a friend of mine, containing a sitting-room, with a kitchen-range, a back-kitchen, and out-house; and two bed-rooms above, each with a fire-place. Cost £100. Rent, £5, exclusive of 5*s.* for garden-ground."

The condition of the farm-labourer in Lancashire varies more than in some districts; but, upon the whole, like all the northern ones, this county is enabled to pay and to house its peasantry better than in the south; particularly in the vicinity of great manufacturing centres. Yet there are some "retired" parts where things are as bad as anywhere. The following is an extract from a Report, of seventy years ago.*

"Cottages for the farming labourers are not by any means so deficient in number or accommodation as in many other districts. . . . . On the eastern side, and most of the more northern parts of the county, they are in general roomy, well built with some sort of stone, and covered with slate, or sometimes with thatch. This is also the case in some places on the western border, as about Ormskirk, Wigan, Bolton, Chorley, &c; in others, they are occasionally with bricks, and tiles or slated. . . . . Charles Gibson, Esq. of Quernmoor Park, keeps a few cottage houses for his labourers, each of whom has a small piece of garden-ground. . . . . On his fine property at Rossal Hall, F. B. Hesketh, Esq., has at present about fourteen neat farm cottages with small gardens annexed, and intends

* *Agricultural Survey of Lancashire*, 1815, p. 103.

to build half a dozen more, and attach an acre of land to each. . . . . The late Thomas Eccleston, Esq., of Scarisbrook Hall, had a great number of cottages built on his different estates, both for the accommodation of the farm-labourers and the artizan. They are very neat, convenient, and kept in good order in most cases."

Again, of Cheshire:* "The cottages in Cheshire, generally speaking, cannot be considered inferior in point of comfort to those of the neighbouring counties; and a gradual improvement in this respect appears at present to be taking place. Those of modern erection are usually built of brick, and covered with slate, or neatly thatched, furnishing a comfortable habitation to the farming labourer."

And in Derbyshire,† about the same period, the Earl of Chesterfield, Sir Richard Arkwright, and other noblemen and gentlemen, had furnished the "most important accommodation for the labouring poor."

In Staffordshire‡ "Sir Edward Littleton has turned his thoughts to the accommodation and comforts of the labourer, by erecting warm and comfortable tenements for their use; his idea is, for the sake of economy, three dwellings should be put together, with a fourth room to serve them all for washing, brewing, baking, etc., and an oven large enough to bake for all three at

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* *Agricultural Survey of Cheshire*, 1808, p. 86.

† *Agricultural Survey of Derby*, 1815.

‡ *Agricultural Survey of Stafford*, 1808, p. 28.

once, they heating the oven in rotation, and giving notice to their neighbours;" etc., etc.

In these counties, and in all the north Midlands, there has been much improvement also of late years. In Nottinghamshire particularly, several large proprietors, such as the late Duke of Newcastle, and the late Lord Ossington, took a most fatherly interest in the welfare of their tenantry; indeed, the former, from his experimental acquaintance with them, must have understood the affairs of his poorer neighbours, quite as well as any of those matters of State in which he was so well versed.* At Clumber and at Hardwicke, he, in course of time, swept away everything that was an offence, substituting model cottages of the best designs. Lord Dartmouth in Staffordshire, also spent a great deal of money and time in the improvement of farm-buildings and labourers' cottages.†

In Warwickshire and Worcestershire, seventy years ago, the cottages had "nothing particular to recommend them;" although some few proprietors were beginning to realize the existence of the evil, and some small attempts at reformation were made. But, since the establishment of the Worcester Cottage Improvement Society, there has been a good deal of useful improvement carried out, principally near the towns. The result, however, of Mr. Norman's enquiries (1868-9) is not particularly creditable to these two counties; and out of ten large

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* *Labourers' Friend*, 1852, p. 26.

† *Ibid.*, 1856, p. 77.

parishes in Worcestershire, in which special enquiries were made by him, only one, viz., Madresfield* (Lord Beauchamp) was showing much evidence of improvement. At Wellesbourne, Tysoe, and other places in Warwickshire, the cottages belonging to the landowners were represented as in fair condition. In Shropshire, the names of Lords Powis, Bagot, and Craven are mentioned by the Assistant-Commissioner of 1867, as having built a few modern cottages; but this county, as well as Staffordshire, seems to lag behind in the march of improvement.

Of Cheshire, Mr. Stanhope gives a bad report, but states that great improvements have been made upon the Duke of Westminster's estates; that Lord Crewe's new cottages are very good; and on some estates near Malpas the cottages were "very good and comfortable." Mr. Tollemache (near Tarporley) is also named with approval.†

Mr. Culley visited Derbyshire (1868-9), and appears to think hopefully of the condition of the cottager; the following extract from his report records one phase of his opinion‡:—"I don't recollect visiting any cottage in Derbyshire in which there was not a fireplace, with a boiler on one side and an oven on the other, a provision which one seldom sees in other counties. . . . . There was, too, an air of cleanliness and comfort about the interior of the Derbyshire cottages which gave me

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* *Commission* (1867), *Evidence* II., p. 317.

† *Ibid*, p. 73, etc. ‡ *Report*, p. 120.

a very favourable impression of their mistresses." Of several districts specially mentioned in his report, Mr. Culley says:—"In South Derbyshire, many of the cottages are very poor, but within the last twenty years very great improvements have been made." "Mr. R. Nesfield, agent to the Duke of Rutland, speaking of the Bakewell district, says, 'Cottages are generally good in this neighbourhood, and are sufficient for the supply of labour, and are, for the most part, conveniently situated with respect to the farms;'" and, near Chesterfield, "agricultural labourers' cottages are above the average." Lord Scarsdale's steward, speaking of Kedleston and the neighbourhood, informed the Assistant-Commissioner that the cottages were "nearly all new and good."

Mr. Henry Tremenheere (1868-9), reporting on Lancashire,* speaks very favourably of the cottage accommodation, both from his own observation and from the answers to his circular of questions; but he adds that the improvement is comparatively recent in one portion of the county, viz., "The Fylde." In that district the cottages were in a deplorable condition at a late period, but "by the liberal expenditure of the Earl of Derby and Colonel Clifton, the two largest proprietors in the Fylde district, these wretched dwellings are rapidly disappearing, and in their places have been built substantial brick cottages with slate roofs, and amply provided with all the conveniences which a

* *Report*, p. 155.

labourer's family can require. All have three bedrooms, and the rent is fixed less on a calculation of the outlay than on what a labourer, in receipt of fair wages, may be reasonably expected to pay."

Northamptonshire presents a great contrast, in some respects, to other Midland counties, as far as regards the improvements in cottage building. Not that it was always so, for the report made some time before 1809 gave a deplorable account of the appearance of both cottages and farm buildings, and only two persons are recorded as having paid much attention to them, viz., the Duke of Grafton, and Lady Carbery, at Laxton; and even now there is a good deal to complain of; but Mr. Norman (1868) speaks of many excellent cottages which had recently been built. In fact there is a public taste for neat dwellings for the poor in this county, which shows itself in constant efforts to improve them, and there is scarcely a large estate in the county which does not give evidence of it. Perhaps this is partly to be accounted for by the sensible but somewhat unusual line taken up by the Northampton Architectural Society, which, along with ancient tile pavements, sepulchral remains, window tracery, and ecclesiology generally, has found time to study plans of cottages. More than twenty years ago Lord Overstone, Lord Southampton, and Earl Spencer had very much improved the villages on their estates; and the Assistant-Commissioner of 1867 shows that a lively interest in the subject is kept up in this county, in the

minds of the landowners.* "In close parishes a great number of new cottages are being or have recently been built. They are of stone or brick, roofed with slate or tiles; the living-room is about 12 feet by 14; behind this is a kitchen, of rather smaller dimensions. None of these cottages have less than two bed-rooms, most of them have three, and a scullery in the house. The water supply and drainage are usually excellent; all have gardens of from 20 to 40 poles adjoining the cottage; a pigstye, wood or coal-house, and privy, out of the house, and usually an oven in the house, or access to an oven adjoining it. Besides these newer and more improved cottages there are a great number of old cottages belonging to the landowners in the close parishes, which, although not so complete in their accommodation, are nevertheless in good repair, wholesome and comfortable." One passage in Mr. Norman's report† certainly betokens some amount of thoughtful attention given to the matter:—"Mr. Albert Pell and Sir C. Isham are in the habit of building cottages in blocks of two, with two bedrooms in each, and with a third common bedroom, which can be entered from either cottage. The advantage of this is that either cottage can be increased or diminished in size by blocking up one or other of the doors of the third room, without moving the inmates of either house. This is very desirable in order to meet the requirements of increasing or diminishing families. Mr. Pell has also

* Norman, *Report* I., p. 116. † *Ibid.* p. 118.

been in the habit of building a large landing to the staircase, on which one or two of the children can sleep when the cottage becomes crowded. One gentleman (Mr. Hughes) thought it desirable that a common barrack or lodging-house should be established in each village, under the regulation of a respectable labourer and his wife, in which the young men could board and lodge."

The cottages in Leicestershire (1868) are described as generally bad; but "in spite of this general inferiority, some landowners have very much improved their cots. All Lord Howe's villages are most agreeable to the eye, contain excellent cottages, and (what is far more rare) almost enough of them. So with Lord Berners' estate."

In Rutland "decent labourers' cottages" were "much wanted." *

The cottage accommodation in Wales and the Border Counties is mostly very deplorable. And in North Wales, and the counties of Pembroke and Carmarthen, "very bad everywhere." Mr. Tremenheere† says that the want of improvement is only just beginning to be recognised. Still, there were exceptions to the universal neglect, seventy years ago. Mr. Davies's Report,‡ after a vivid description of the prevailing wretchedness,

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* Stanhope, *Report* I., p. 92.

† *Commission* (1867), *Report*, p. 53.

‡ *Agricultural Survey of North Wales*, 1810, p. 82.

describes three sets of cottages "as a striking contrast. . . . . In the Vale of Clwyd are several neat brick-built cottages. Some of them, the property of Mr. Wilding, of Llanrhaiadr, and others of Mr. Edwards, of Cerrig Llwydion. The latter, some years back, erected thirteen cottages, all within a mile of his residence. They have upper stories for bed-rooms; and a skilling at each end—one for a cow-house, the other for a milk-room. They are slated, whitewashed, and many of them ornamented with sham windows and balustrades . . . . this information was procured from one of the cottagers, who, in the dusk of the evening, was literally sitting under his vine—for the wall was covered with grapes. A smile of complacency sat upon his countenance. And the heart of the writer of this Report also, being, as it were, in unison with his, felt an agreeable sympathetic sensation. Of all the excellencies which this Vale—the Cambrian Paradise—can boast of, the comfort and contentment which these cottagers appeared to enjoy, gave him the greatest delight." Besides this, "the late Lord Penrhyn had built forty cottages between 1790 and 1800:" and Arthur Blayney, Esq., of Gregynog, Montgomery, attracted "a set of constant labourers," by providing good cottages, and annexing land to each.

And in South Wales,* Sir John Morris, Bart., of Clasemont, near Swansea; Mr. Vancouver, of Llangennech Park, near Llanelly, Carmarthenshire; and

* *Agricultural Survey of South Wales*, 1815, p. 134 *et seq.*

Sir Edward Hamilton, in Brecknockshire, built extensively "comfortable habitations for the labouring class;"—the last named declared to the writer that it was his great ambition to make his labourers comfortable. Of the somewhat unique cottages in Glamorganshire, Mr. Davies gives a long and commendatory notice,* of which the following is a resumé:—The Glamorganshire cottages are universally white-washed; the people are very long-lived. Some of the cottages are very ancient. Both from the interior and exterior, the writer considers them unsurpassed in comfort and convenience to any in England. They are of stone, well laid in mortar; thatched with wheat-straw, and sometimes with fern (which is very durable). Mr. C. S. Read, writing in the "Royal Agricultural Society's Journal" (1849),† notices these cottages, and adds, that "white-washing the exterior, which is mentioned by a Welsh Bard in the 6th century, is still universally practised."

Mr. Portman (1869), reporting on Glamorganshire and Brecknockshire,‡ says that the cottages are "fairly good throughout his district." Mr. Norman, whose district comprised the counties of Anglesea, Carnarvon, Denbigh, and Flint, says§ that good cottages appeared to him to be "less numerous in Wales, and to be increasing at a slower rate than in any part of England" with which he was acquainted; but he mentions with

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* *Agricultural Survey of South Wales*, p. 137.
† Vol. X., p. 149. ‡ *Report*, p. 26. § *Report*, p. 35.

approval those of Mr. Hughes at Kinmel, and Lord Penrhyn at Bangor.

Mr. Culley (1869), reporting on Pembroke and Carmarthen, says that the dwellings are very bad everywhere;* but "the Earl of Cawdor has not only recently built several improved cottages, but has also published a book of cottage plans" for the use of landowners and tenants anxious to provide decent accommodation for the labourers. In Montgomeryshire, the cottages of Earl Vane and Sir W. W. Wynn were in "a very satisfactory condition."†

Mr. Tremenheere, writing of Cardiganshire, says that the great blot upon the county is the condition of its cottages; and their wretchedness would appear "to have originated in two causes: 1. In squatters building upon the wastes at a time when manorial rights were very little looked after, and any one possessed of a few pounds might, unmolested, erect a hovel for his residence; 2. In a long-established custom of granting building leases for a long term of years, leaving the tenant to form his own plan and choose his own materials. Most of these cottages are occupied by their owners until the expiration of the leases, or they tumble down from age and decay. . . . . Out of 500 cottage tenants of Sir Pryce Pryce, Bart., only forty pay rack-rents." A landed proprietor is thus powerless for the purpose of improvement.‡

Mr. Loxdale, of Castle Hill, Llanilas, a gentleman

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* *Report*, p. 49. † *Report*, p. 54. ‡ *Report*, p. 53.

who had taken much interest in the improvement of labourers' dwellings, informed Mr. Tremenheere that a marked change for the better had "taken place of late years in the Welsh people in regard to the observance of some of the proprieties of life. This gentleman has built a considerable number of cottages in the place of the hovels which were a disgrace to his neighbourhood, and he assured me that the desire for better accommodation is becoming general among the labouring classes. He has been enabled to build a considerable number of excellent cottages, with three bed-rooms above, and kitchen, pantry, etc., below, for £120 each, for which an agricultural labourer in receipt of fair wages is willing to pay £5 a year; and as a hopeful sign of progress, he stated that he had been often reminded by labouring men, while engaged in carrying out his building plans, not on any account to omit a privy for every cottage."

Mr. Boyle (1869), speaks as badly of Monmouthshire,* and mentions that there are more than 800 cotters who have acquired land by the roadside on the Duke of Beaufort's estate alone; "the greater number of these cotters pay ten shillings a year, some as low as *sixpence*." Mr. S. R. Bosanquet told Mr. Boyle that when he came into the property of Dingestow Court, all the cottages were owned by squatters, but now he had bought them up. But there was a general disinclination, at the period of this Report, to spend money on

* *Report*, p. 53.

building cottages; the progress of improvement was more rapid in the adjacent county of Radnorshire. Mention is made of Mr. Phillips, of Abbeycwmhir, who has built "model" cottages at the rate of £400 a pair, charging only £4 for the yearly rent. Still, Radnorshire has some sad specimens, especially on the outskirts of towns.

Bishop Fraser, reporting on Gloucestershire, gives most miserable accounts of the cottage accommodation;* but he adds that it "was pleasant also to find out a few of the largest landowners setting a noble example of their consciousness of responsibility in respect of the dwellings of the labourers who cultivate their land;" and especially mentions the Earls of Ducie and S. Germains as having made great efforts upon their estates in this county. Although things are as bad in this county as anywhere, there were some steps taken to improve, in several districts, at the close of the last century; but they do not appear to have been very generally imitated. Lord Sherborne is mentioned in Dr. Rudge's report of that period as having erected twenty good cottages near Northleach, to each of which was assigned a garden, all for the yearly rent of thirty shillings. A plan is also given of a semi-circular row of cottages, with "a centre room," intended for a Sunday school, 18 feet by 12, under which are a public oven and furnace on one side, and a coal-house oppo-

* *Report*, p. 35.

site, built by E. Chamberlayne, Esq., of Maugersbury, near Stow.*

In Herefordshire Mr. Norman represents the cottages in those parts to which the evidence he obtained refers, as not so very deficient, and where they were bad, improvements were being gradually made.† The cottage plans of the Labourers' Friend Society were certainly in use in this county as far back as the year 1852.‡

We will now glance at the South Western counties. If any part of England can be considered as worse than another in the matter of housing the poor, we should probably take the countries of Somerset, Devon, and Dorset; and what strikes one most here, is the *wholesale* condition of neglect in which large villages exist. These are, in some cases, hopelessly bad, as we have already seen; and I do not think it will cease to be a hopeless affair until there is thorough inspection under a central authority. Local powers in these places are a farce, generally invested in the hands of a few persons, through whose pockets alone any interest in the matter survives,—and that is dead against reformation. Consequently "little progress is being made, except by some of the larger proprietors."

From calculations of expenses, as well as actual balance-sheets, shown to Mr. Boyle (Assistant Commis-

* *Agricultural Survey of Gloucester*, 1807, p. 50.

† *Evidence* II., passim.

‡ *Labourers' Friend*, 1852, p. 62.

sioner of 1867) it would appear to be tolerably well proved that every new cottage is so much out of pocket; notwithstanding this, there is gradual improvement being carried out by many proprietors. "Sir Alexander Hood,* who builds his new model cottages of red brick and tile from Bridgewater, by contract, calculates that he puts up a pair for £300, fifty or sixty pounds of which are expended in an out-building, containing the copper, etc. . . . The cottages are plain, though neat; he considers that they lose in strength wherever the roof is broken, so there are no gables, and the only break is where the chimney rises. He lets them for £4 a-piece, rather more than $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. Lord Taunton's model cottages, built of red stone found on the spot, cost £220 a pair, besides pig-sty and privy, which are away at the back of the garden. They are perfectly square, according to a plan of his agent, Mr. Robertson, the block of two measuring 48 feet by 24. Mr. Robertson thought they were a little too small, and is going to build some 54 feet by 27, of which he calculates the cost at about £10 more. The present cottages are let at £3 a-piece. Mr. Birmingham, agent to Sir Thomas Acland, told me that he calculated the value of a pair of three-bedroomed cottages at £200; but the stone is close at hand, and the estate provides timber. . . . Some of the best cottages I saw in Somersetshire were those that had been converted from old farmhouses; as the farms were enlarged many of the smaller farmhouses fell out of use, and have been divided into

* *Commission* (1867), *Evidence* II., p. 442, etc.

pairs of cottages." Sir Arthur Elton and the Earl of of Cork are also named by Mr. Boyle as having built improved cottages.*

The Assistant Commissioner proceeds to describe very fully the difficulties that lie in the way of improvement;† some of these difficulties being financial ones, and some arising from the obstinacy and ignorance of the poor themselves. A case came under his notice "at Winsford. A husband, wife, six children, and a pair of old people lived all together in a cottage with but one bedroom and one sitting-room, and were all moved into a new three-bedroomed cottage. They said there was not room in the new cottage for the old people, who remained in the old cottage. The fact was that the new bedrooms were small; in the old cottage the one bedroom had been very large, and they did not appreciate the advantage of separate rooms. . . . Where there are three bedrooms they will often fill the house with lodgers, and herd with the whole family in the kitchen. Where there was no lodger, I saw in most cottages I entered that the third room was unfurnished, and used as a store-room for potatoes and other vegetables."

At Maiden Bradley, on the borders of Wilts, "the cottages are as good generally as any in England. . . . . The Duke of Somerset is a good landlord, and the rents are cheap, from 4d. as a *minimum*, to 1s. 2d. a-week *maximum*, being charged to agricultural la-

* *Report*, p. 129. † *Ibid.*

bourers . . . . . The cottages, as a rule, have one living-room, about 13 to 14 or 15 feet, by 12, 13, or 14 feet, one back place or scullery, with two or three bed-rooms over, famous gardens, good out-houses; all belong to the Duke of Somerset." *

At Somerton, "visited one of Col. Pinney's model cottages, with three bed-rooms. . . . . Nice cottage, not too good, and room enough for the people in it. . . . . Cost probably about £200, let at £4. Built of red tile and blue lias." †

At Over Stowey, Lord Taunton's cottages; ‡ and some new ones at East Pennard, belonging to Mr. B. Napier, § are fully described by Mr. Boyle; besides these, there are others only mentioned, but all which serve to show that the blot upon the fame of Somersetshire will have some chance of being removed, when the present beginnings have developed into general improvement.

And, although the labouring population are badly housed in Devonshire, there are not wanting examples of noble endeavours after amendment. Upon the Duke of Bedford's estates near Tavistock, the cottages are, and have been for many years, very good; besides these, Mr. Portman (1869) speaks ‖ very favourably of those of Lord Clinton, at Hatherleigh; of Mr. Montague Bere, at Morebath ("three bed-rooms and half-an-acre

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* *Evidence* II., p. 496. † *Ibid*, p. 479.
‡ *Ibid*, p. 482. § *Ibid*, p. 491.
‖ *Report*, p. 43.

of garden for £5 5s. a year"); and of Mr. Amory, M.P., upon whose property near Tiverton, "great improvements are being made in the dwellings of the agricultural poor."

Mr. Chas. Vancouver, although in his report to the Board of Agriculture early in the present century,* he could say of one place that "three mud-banks and a hedge-bank form the habitation of many of the peasantry,"—could give several instances in which there was displayed a good deal of thoughtful attention to the comforts of the poor. The following will serve as illustrations:—

"Lord Clifford builds very neat cottages for his workmen; the window in the upper story is so placed as to admit light to the two rooms into which this floor is divided. His lordship attaches to each tenement a small piece of garden-ground, ... a small orchard, sufficient to produce from one to two hogsheads of cider, with a sufficiency of good hoarding or winter apples, is also granted to each peasant family in lieu of the grazing of a cow, which they were formerly indulged with." The Rev. Mr. Luxmore built "some cottages at Bridestow, designed merely for the occupation of the labouring poor. . . . . In one row, where two old ruinous cottages formerly stood, and which were scarcely sufficient to afford a single night's shelter to a gang of gipsies, there are now twelve neat comfortable cottages. . . . . The first range of these buildings

* *Agricultural Survey of Devon*, 1808, p. 92 *et seq.*

was constructed uniform, and nearly in the following manner: rooms below 16 feet square, one door and one window in front; fire-place, with an oven opening back into a shed or lean-to, for fuel, tools, pig, etc. Another door from this lean-to opens into a small back yard fenced off from a small garden attached to each tenement; under the stairs in the front room, leading up to the bed-room is a pantry fitted up with shelves; opposite to the fire-place, over which there is a mantelpiece, a sort of dresser is fastened to the wall with shelves, and these constitute the fixtures in the room below. The bed-room above is the same size as the room below. The walls of the first eight feet of these cottages are built with stone, the superstructure with cob, covered with a slate roof; and cost, upon an average, when finished in a plain and useful manner, from £38 to £40 each." The writer adds full details as to materials, etc. They were let for 1s. a week. Mr. Luxmore soon found that his cottages were in request; and, at the same time, that the want of a second bed-room was often a great evil, as it induced overcrowding. So he set about the only real remedy—built some more cottages, with *two* bed-rooms.

Lord Rolle is also represented by this writer to have encouraged the peasantry to build, and make improvements, by inducing them to leave the villages, and settle upon the borders of the commons—with the result, in many cases, that the cottager "was withdrawn from his former haunts in the village; and the time that would otherwise be spent in the ale-house, or in

frivolous conversation with his neighbours, was now employed to the immediate benefit of himself and family."

Although it is now generally admitted that these dwellings on the borders of the waste present formidable obstacles to moral and sanitary improvement, it is impossible not to commend efforts like these; the object in view being the general welfare of the peasantry.

There is much misunderstanding as to the real nature of "mud" or "cob" walls; and I have thought it worth while to reproduce here an account of the process of building a mud cottage, extracted from a paper on the farming of Devonshire, which appeared in the Royal Agricultural Society's ninth volume:—

"The material commonly used for the walls of cottages is provincially called 'cob-earth;' it is made by mixing three bundles of straw with two cart-loads of sharp or gravelly soil (red sandstone is very good for this purpose); the whole is well wetted, and afterwards trodden by men or horses. A foundation of stone having been raised two feet above the ground this mixture is laid on it to the depth of eighteen inches or two feet, and remains until it has become firm. The length of time necessary for it to harden is regulated by the weather, and also by the soil used; if it should be a free soil, and the weather fine, it requires seven or eight days; but if heavier, closer in its texture, and containing clay, the time will be proportionately increased. A second layer is then placed on the for-

mer to an equal depth, and thus (always observing the precaution of having the previous bed of earth hard before any more is laid upon it), the walls are raised to the required height. They now present the appearance of a stack of straw rather than a part of a human habitation. The roof, and other wood-work having been completed, the walls are trimmed by cutting them smoothly with a common hay-knife; a coat of plaster is now applied to both sides of the wall, and the inside receives a second coat. Before this becomes dry, it is 'rough cast,' by portions of fine gravel being thrown violently against it, by which much adheres to the surface. A coat of white-wash generally finishes this part of the building. This material (cob-earth) is used alike for the dwelling of the peasant and the residence of the more opulent classes, and is equally adapted for the cottage or the mansion. By strangers to the county, as well as by many who although residing in it are unacquainted with the value of these walls, they are contemptuously designated *mud* walls. But by whatever name they may be distinguished, their intrinsic worth remains unaltered; for the most durable, healthy, economical, and comfortable wall for a building is that made with *good* cob-earth. It appears to form a strong concrete, which will equally resist the action of the atmosphere and climate with our best building stone. In building a large house, it should be commenced in May, so as to have the heat of the summer months for hardening the walls. The advantage of increasing the height gradually, is to

prevent bulging, which would necessarily result if the weight were laid on the top whilst the previous layer was yet moist. For a low building, the walls may be eighteen inches thick (when trimmed), but for a cottage or house it should be two feet; the walls of old erections are often as much as three feet in thickness. The materials and labour for a cottage wall cost 3*s.* per perch (16½ square feet)."

"The lime-ash floor is also peculiar to this county; it is formed from a composition of lime and sand, mixed in varying proportions, according to the character of the former; thus the lime of Sandford does not require any mixture of sand, and forms the hardest floors of the kind; if the lime forms a good mortar, or what the masons term a 'brittle mixture,' it may be employed for these floors. The proportion of sand should be such as will form with the lime a good mortar for plastering walls; this mixture is poured on a layer of stones (of the size of good road metal) to the depth of four or five inches, and remains until moderately hard, when it is occasionally beaten by heavy pieces of wood with large flat bottoms. In about three months from the time of laying, it has the hardness and durability of stone, and forms a very permanent floor: but until it has attained this firmness it must not be used. The usual price for this floor when complete, is 1s. a square yard. The kitchen and dairy-floors of farm-houses are generally formed in this manner, and for these it is certainly much superior to any other material.

"The roof is, with few exceptions, made of thatch,

which, like the cob-earth wall, tends to maintain an equable temperature within the building, however severe the changes without. The use of reed (instead of straw) diminishes many of the objections raised against these roofs, and if their durability could be increased, and their liability to fire diminished by any available process, it would form the best covering for a labourer's cottage."

The cost is about £50, or six for £250.

Cornwall does not present quite so unfavourable a picture as do several other western counties; but, even here are to be found many miserable dwelling-houses; and there are some populous districts which offer, through over-crowding and bad drainage, ample opportunities for the importation and spread of fever. The Sanitary Report of 1842 gave a sad account of some parts of the county near large towns. Mr. Worgan's report to the Board of Agriculture,* gave some particulars of cottages which had been furnished by Captain Penrose, of Ethy, one plan being for an ingenious circular cottage.

Mr. Portman (1869)† does not consider the accounts of the cottages in Cornwall very satisfactory:—"It would seem that the tenure by leases on lives does not conduce to a good state of dwellings, neither the lessee nor the landlord being interested in repairing them." Where the landowners have power, there is a general

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* *Agricultural Survey of Cornwall*, 1811, p. 26, *et seq.*

† *Report*, p. 43.

disposition to improve them, but otherwise, "very slight progress is being made towards increasing the cottage accommodation."

Perhaps we may consider the Dorsetshire labourer and his dwelling as the pivot upon which revolves all discussion as to the condition of our peasantry. The grievance-monger begins and ends with the Dorset "serf;" and the picture of his poverty-stricken family, his meagre dinner and his dilapidated dwelling, are put along with that of his immorality and his ignorance, so that he has become a bye-word. There is, no doubt, a great deal in his condition to justify this; but that he is worse off than in other counties I have never yet seen evidence enough to prove; on the contrary, I am convinced there is a good deal of exaggeration about it, most likely founded upon his low wages. From what I have seen of the Dorsetshire labourer I should say that he was not nearly so badly off as is generally stated. Only this summer I conversed a long time with a waggoner, somewhat advanced in years, employed near Wareham (the Earl of Eldon, lord of the manor).* This man was cheerful and contented, had been upon the estate all his life, remembered the great Chancellor; didn't believe in the Labourers' Union, although his wages had been raised 1s. since the strike in the Eastern Counties. But let me quote from those who may be presumed to be able to judge, from their expe-

* There are some famous new cottages upon Lord Eldon's estate.

rience, better than myself. Hear, first, what Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne, the Rector of Durweston says:—"As to the low moral tone of the agricultural labourer, in the case of ordinary labourers, I don't believe in it." "As to education, where there are good schools accessible . . . I believe there is every disposition on the part of the parents to avail themselves of them."* And Mr. Elihu Burritt† (near Shaftesbury, June, 1865): "stopped frequently on the way to talk with farmers and labourers, especially on the condition of the latter. There is an impression abroad that the farm-servants in Dorset are reduced to the lowest state of depression, receiving the smallest wages and living on the hardest fare. Several conversations with different persons this day led me to believe that this impression comes from a misapprehension, or rather exclusion, of one important element in the estimate. The labouring men in this county, as in Wiltshire, receive generally only 8s. per week; but there is this very considerable difference. Here every man with a family not only has a cottage and garden rent-free, but frequently an additional patch of land for growing potatoes; and sometimes he is gratuitously supplied with the fuel he needs, in the wood grubbed up in removing or trimming hedges; and sometimes in coal itself. There is also a very general agreement that the farm labourers shall have the small or imperfect

* STANHOPE, *Evidence* II., p. 7.

† *Walk from London to the Land's End.*

wheat, called grysons, at 5s. a bushel, whatever the market price of good wheat may be. Thus, by these little perquisites and gratuities, their condition seems to be equalised with that of the same class in the northern counties of England." A country magistrate, who had paid much attention to the subject of the Dorsetshire labourer (his name is not given) is quoted in the "Royal Agricultural Society's Journal" for 1854, to the following effect:—"A more civil, obliging, and well-conducted peasantry does not exist in England. They are, indeed, terribly addicted to beer, but intoxication is not very prevalent, though a mower will often drink two gallons of beer a day."

Again, as to the dwellings:—"There has been," says Lord S. G. Osborne,* "in the twenty-seven years I have known Dorset, the greatest improvement. I see it in my own parish; I can travel nowhere and not see it. It is true I could point to a few notorious localities where the state of the dwellings of the poor is a disgrace to humanity, but these are now exceptional, the fact very often arising from the embarrassment of the proprietors absolutely preventing them from laying out one farthing on their estates which they can avoid." The same gentleman gave similar testimony as far back as the year 1851, at the annual meeting of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes:—"I can speak to the fact that I can

* STANHOPE, *Evidence* II., p. 7.

scarcely travel a mile about the country now, without seeing evidence in every direction of fresh cottages springing up, nay, where they have not been built for years, I know they now abound ; and, as was said to me lately, by a friend of mine, the first thing you hear after breakfast, on paying a visit to a country neighbour, is, '*Come and see my new cottages.*'"

A long account is given in the Royal Agricultural Society's Journal for 1854* of the farming of Dorsetshire, of which the following is an extract:—"Connected materially with the improvements to be noticed, is the state of the dwellings of the labouring poor. For some years the cottages of Dorset (whether justly or not, it is not the writer's province to determine) were a bye-word and reproach. In 1843, the subject was brought under the notice of a very influential meeting at Blandford, and a most animated debate on the whole question arose. It is pleasant to look back upon the serious charges then advanced against the cottages of Dorset, because it places in strong and gratifying contrast their present condition. The merit of the good example set in this matter belongs chiefly to Henry Charles Sturt, Esq., of Critchell, who, even at the period alluded to, was declared by Lord Ashley 'to have set an example which ought to be followed.' This gentleman commenced cottage-building, not with reference to existing numbers, but with reference to

* Vol. XV., p. 441.

the increasing demands of the poorer population, many years before the question interested, or was taken up by, the public. He rebuilt the village of Tincleton, placing two cottages, with three bedrooms in each, in the middle of an acre of land, dividing it equally between the two tenants, *neither of whom trespasses on the land of his neighbour.* The cottages have a south aspect, and are protected from the north wind by a row of apple-trees in the rear. Mr. Sturt's property is scattered over the country, but his cottages are easily recognised by their comfortable and uniform appearance. Aspect and dryness of position are always regarded as absolutely essential. Where necessary, the picturesque is very properly sacrificed to actual convenience. The results are, that in the villages thus favoured there is not now a single poacher, and that the labourers resident in these improved dwellings take pride in the cultivation of the land, and carry off the best prizes for vegetables from the Labourers' Friend Society. * * * The occupiers are never disturbed on any pretext, as long as their rents are paid, in order to encourage, as far as may be, a feeling of ownership. Objection has been raised to the expense of these buildings, though constructed without ornament, excepting a stone dressing over the windows. The cost certainly exceeds the ability of a labourer to pay fair interest for the outlay; but Mr. Sturt's defence is, that the property at large is increased in value by increasing the comforts of the cultivators; that the cottages contain nothing but what is requisite; and

that he had taken the requisites, and not the cost, into consideration when directing the erection of these dwellings. One considerate provision deserves notice: in each village houses are built on a ground-floor, for aged people. Mr. Sturt's example has been largely followed, and the old mud-walled and thatched cottages are rapidly disappearing before neat, and often handsome erections of brick and stone. Lord Portman has built good cottages at Pimperne and Durweston. The Earl of Ilchester has built much at Evershot, Abbotsbury, &c.; E. St. Vincent Digby, Esq., at Minterne; and the Duke of Bedford has entirely rebuilt Swyre. Mr. Williams, of Bridehead, Lord Shaftesbury, Sir R. P. Glynn and others, may be ranked amongst cottage improvers."

Further testimony to the improved condition of the Dorsetshire peasant could be adduced, if space would allow; but enough has been said to prove that he is not now the neglected and demoralised being that he has been painted. Even the dwellers upon the heath, in their lonely "mud" cottages, have an aspect of comfort and well-being; and if you could see these people in "their Sunday best," in cases where they are within the influence of a resident proprietor—although not actually upon his estate—you would soon confess that their lot is, by no means, altogether unenviable.

Not but that there are grave exceptions to the growing improvement. These exceptions exist almost entirely in the "open" parishes, in the midst of each of which is to be found an over-crowded, ill-drained

village, the houses of which belong to all sorts and classes of owners, and the inhabitants of which have to walk long distances to their work, and then return in the evening to the village beer-shop: here no improvement is possible but through strong legislation; and it is idle to blame anybody or anything but the country at large. Public opinion, based upon an enlightened sanitary education, is the only lever sufficiently powerful to work reform.

Much that has been said of this county applies also to Wiltshire; and, although there are still some frightful instances of neglect, there are also evidences of gradual improvement. A paper on the "Wiltshire Labourer," which appeared in the *Times* newspaper in November, 1872, says, "The cottages now are infinitely better than they were. There is scarcely room for further improvements in the cottages now erected upon estates. They have three bedrooms, and every appliance and comfort compatible with their necessarily small size. It is only the cottages erected by the labourers themselves which are open to objection . . . These squatters are the curse of the community. It is among them that fever and kindred infectious diseases break out; it is among them that wretched couples are seen bent double with rheumatism and affections of the joints caused by damp. They have often been known to remain so long, generation after generation, in these wretched hovels, that at last, the lord of the manor having neglected to claim quit rent, they can defy him,

and claim them as their own property, and there they stick, eyesores and blots, the fungi of the land. The cottages erected by farmers or by landlords are now, one and all, fit and proper habitations for human beings; and I very believe it would be impossible throughout the length and breadth of Wiltshire to find a single bad cottage on any large estate, so well and so thoroughly have the landed proprietors done their work." This seems a highly-coloured picture, but I have no reason to doubt that it is fairly true. Mr. Norman's report to the Commission of 1867, with reference to Wiltshire, is a perfect cyclopædia of the art of cottage management; and contains plenty of proof that the subject is a matter of thoughtful study amongst the principal landowners in that county. It may be invidious to mention names amongst so much general effort at improvement; but the estates of Lord Ailesbury, the Earl of Pembroke, Mr. Sotheron-Estcourt, and Earl Nelson seem to have given especial pleasure to the Assistant Commissioner, whilst many smaller proprietors had within the last twenty or thirty years spent a good deal of money and time on improved cottages.

As we get nearer the metropolis, in our view of the dwellings of the rural poor, it is not surprising that we find their appearance more favourable, and the condition of the inhabitants (with some exceptions) more comfortable. And it would appear, from Mr. Vancouver's report to the Board of Agriculture,* seventy

* *Agricultural Survey of Hampshire*, 1810, p. 70 *et seq.*

years ago, that at that date the county of Hampshire presented a contrast with respect to those farther west, as the following extract will show:—"This county seems generally to be much better supplied with comfortable dwellings for the peasantry than many others in the kingdom, much attention being paid by most of the country gentlemen to this important point of accommodation and improvement on their respective estates; but those whose exertions were most particularly noticed in the progress of the tour, were those of Mr. Bramston, of Hall Place; Mr. Wade, of Pucknell; Colonel Mitford, of Exbury; and Mr. Wakefield, of Andover." The writer gives plans and descriptions, which we have not space, at present, to reproduce; and he proceeds to describe the improved appearance of the country in consequence. Of the Isle of Wight, he says, there are but few farms "that have not cottages attached to them. . . . . These cottages, as well as the farm-houses, are built with brick, and the different sorts of building stones, with flints, as before mentioned; the latter materials being often rough-cast, and the brick-work whitewashed, not only contribute to tighten them against the force of the south-westerly storms, but also to give an air of much neatness, and greatly to diversify and increase the natural beauties of the country. Tile, but most frequently thatch, is the covering of these cottages. They are all neatly plastered and whitewashed in the inside. Their construction, in respect to the disposition of their apartments, is various; their floors are either of brick, old ship-plank,

or lime ashes mixed with pounded chalk; and are generally so numerous as seldom to become double-tenanted. . . . . Upon the whole, the peasantry of the Isle of Wight seem to enjoy as much real comfort as can well be expected to comport with their station in life, and the duties necessarily connected with it."

Later accounts are similar in character. A Report on the farming of Hampshire, in the year 1861, speaks* of general improvement in labourers' dwellings; and mentions Mr. Chute, of Vyne Farm, in South Hants, who had built new farm-houses and cottages over the whole of his property. "He keeps the cottages in his own hands, though he may consult the tenant of the farm as to the occupiers of the cottages on it." At Hursley, cottages are built "whenever required. They always have three bed-rooms each, though the labouring poor are hardly as yet educated up to this additional accommodation, which is often abused, and a lodger taken in without leave, against rules. A few cottages are handed over to the farmer for the use of his yearly servants; but all the rest are under Sir Wm. Heathcote's own control, although the convenience of the farmer is often considered by the landlord." Mr. Portman† (1869) specially mentions (of those which he visited) the estates of Lord Eversley, at Heckfield, and Lord Henry Scott, at Beaulieu, as presenting most pleasing instances of progress; on the latter of these,

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* *Royal Agricultural Society's Journal*, XXII., p. 267.

† *Report*, p. 42.

the cottages have "living-room, scullery and pantry, and three bed-roons; 20 perches of garden, pigstye, privy, etc., at a rent of *one shilling per week!*" But, indeed, nearly all the well-to-do proprietors in this county have taken part in the general improvement of the rural districts.

In the counties of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, the principal obstacle to the proper housing of the labourer would seem to be overcrowding. The outskirts of large towns like Maidstone, Horsham, Hastings, &c., are largely inhabited by rural labourers, who consequently have to walk long distances to work; and it is in these suburbs that so many houses are found filled with an overflowing population, whose chief difficulty, so to speak, after earning the money for the rent, is to find a place to live in. The Commissioners of 1867 give very bad accounts on this score; and Mr. Stanhope seems to look very unfavourably upon the cottages generally in the larger villages of Kent. It is certain that the lower-class dwellings in the rural parts of these counties have generally been built of fairly durable materials; but the inevitable result of a deficiency in number is, that the villages become tainted with immorality. The remedy for much of this would appear to lie at present with the establishment of Cottage Building Societies; and it is probable that, even in the few years that have elapsed since Mr. Stanhope wrote, great amelioration has resulted. The Central Cottage Improvement Society of London alone has furnished its models and plans to upwards of forty places in Kent

and Surrey. With respect to the more strictly rural parts of these counties, the chief proprietors have built numbers of model dwellings: the Duke of Richmond, Lord Leconfield, and Mrs. Vernon Harcourt, in Sussex, are mentioned by Dr. Fraser with special approval.*

There are some secluded parts of Hertfordshire which present an aspect that can only be considered as very discreditable to the county; at the same time that laudable steps are being taken towards reformation. It is not uncommon to see two contiguous villages, one of which betrays tokens of serious neglect while the other is a picture of comfort. The Hertford Cottage Building Society† has been the means of improving the dwellings, not only in the neighbourhood of that town, but also in the more rural parts of the county; and Mr. Culley (1869) ‡ bears testimony to many improvements which appeared on his visit. In Watton district, "the best cottages are in the parishes which belong to Mr. Abel Smith;" on Earl Cowper's estates they were, "generally speaking, good." At Stapleford, the cottages "are first-class. No lodgers are allowed, unless by special permission." At Sandridge, "they are improving." In Hitchin Union, "the worst are in the back lanes of towns such as Baldock and

* *Report*, p. 39.

† *Reports* quoted in *Labourer's Friend Journal*, passim.

‡ *Report* II., p. 120.

Hitchin. . . . . In Codicote the cottages are very good; and Mr. Hancock is building very good ones at Willian."

The counties of Oxford, Bucks, Berks, and Bedfordshire remain to be noticed. To Mr. George Culley, as Assistant Commissioner of 1867, we are indebted for very full and careful notices of the cottage accommodation in these counties; and he reports a most deplorable state of things in some districts. Some of the evidence upon which his Report is founded is simply revolting [*e.g.*, at Kidlington, Oxfordshire,* in one of the small thatched cottages "there sleep in the small bed-room father and mother, two grown-up sons, two grown-up daughters, three little children;" at Steventon, Berkshire,† "eleven old thatched cottages of the very worst description, near the railway station, by the side of the brook, which drains any filth washed into it, and sewers, to make the tea of the inhabitants"]. Mr. Culley's general remarks bear out the view which this paper has taken, that, as a rule, small freeholders and speculators are to blame; although there are some instances where "as bad specimens as any" are to be found, which belong to (non-resident) landowners. He sums up with the following: ‡—"It is a great misfortune for the agricultural labourers in these counties, that so small a proportion of their cottages belong to the chief landowners; when they do, there is somebody

* *Evidence* II., p. 342. † *Ibid*, p. 398.

‡ *Report* I., p. 132.

to care for the manner in which the poor are housed—somebody to be ashamed of a bad state of things—somebody upon whom the pressure of public opinion may be brought to bear. When they do not, the labourer has either to rickle up a miserable hut for himself, or pay an exorbitant rent for a house in which the ordinary decencies of life become a dead letter."

Of Oxfordshire, Mr. Culley says:—"The cottages and their surroundings are best cared for in Stanton Harcourt, Kirtlington, Nuneham, Sherburn, and Swyncombe, all of them close parishes, and lying under the eye of a resident landowner.*

Of Berkshire "the cottages are good, and provided with all necessary conveniences, in Ardington, West Challow, Farnborough, Lockinge, Buckland, Coleshill, Pusey, Englefield, Sulhampstead, Shaw, and Bearwood. In all of these the cottages belong to the landowners; and, except in West Challow and Farnborough, are immediately under the eye of the owner."†

Of Bedfordshire:—those villages "in which the cottages are best, and the poor most cared for, are Husborne Crawley, Tingrith, Biddenham, Cardington, Cople, Melchbourne, Oakley, Turvey, Silsoe, and Southill." In Buckinghamshire, they are Aston, Clinton, Halton, Chilton, Botolph and Middle Claydon, Shalstone, Great Brickhill, and Chenies—all of them

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* *Report* II., p. 93. † *Report* II., p. 94.

villages in which the cottages belong to the landowners ; and all of them, except three, lying as it were at the door of the owner."*

Now, all this agreeable state of things is not entirely the work of our own days. On the contrary, much of it is the growth of a century of care and thoughtful attention on the part of successive holders of the land. Take, for example, the last three Dukes of Bedford, and the work they accomplished in agricultural improvement. Wherever they had the opportunity upon their estates in various parts of England, of improving those estates, a principal item was the providing good accommodation for the labourer. And the same may be said of numerous others. The Agricultural Survey of the Board of Agriculture † records several important efforts which were made, towards the close of the last century, to remove the reproach which existed upon these counties with respect to the housing of the poor. And, in our own days, very great improvements have been made. Lord Radnor, in Berkshire, has rebuilt the village of Coleshill, erecting "houses replete with comforts, of most tasteful elevations, and surrounded with adequate garden-ground." Elihu Burritt speaks of the cottages in this village as exceeding "in size, comfort, elegance, and in every other requisite for a dwelling, anything I have yet seen, for an annual rent

* *Report* I., p. 132.

† *Agricultural Society of Berks*, 1809, p. 73.

of £5." The same gentleman speaks in a similar strain of some cottages at Woburn, built by the last Duke of Bedford, "for £6 a year, such as would rent in our New England manufacturing villages at from fifty to sixty dollars."* Sir Harry Verney, Lady Cowper, Mr. John Walter, Colonel Lindsay, and others mentioned by Mr. Culley, not only build superior dwellings for their labourers, but carefully study the conditions of their letting, and the relations between the labourer and his immediate employer, besides the provision of suitable allotments, where sufficient garden ground is not available.† One of the most remarkable and praiseworthy instances of devotion to this good cause, which I have myself observed, occurs at the village of Turvey, in Bedfordshire, on the north-western border of the county. This village has, within the last twenty-five years, been entirely rebuilt by the landowner there, Mr. C. L. Higgins, and a more delightful picture of neatness, comfort, and solidity in the appearance of the houses, or of the decency, happiness and cheerfulness of its inhabitants, it would be impossible to conceive. Bishop Fraser says‡ there is ground for hoping that, twenty-five years hence, the villages of England will present a more pleasing picture to the eye of the traveller than they do now. I would recommend any gentleman who wishes to try the effect of a strong contrast upon his mind, as to what is and what ought

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* "*Walk from London to the Land's End*," London, 1865.

† *Report* I., p. 133. ‡ *Report*, p. 39.

to be, and what ought not to be, to run down to Turvey and inspect it for himself, and having done so, pass through the fields to Newton Blossomville. Its situation on the banks of the Ouse will attract him; the venerable church will arrest him for a minute, but the village street will appear to him the most depressing and revolting sight, all the more so that the force of good example close by has failed to produce its legitimate fruits. The cottages huddled up together, with pigstyes, privies (what there are of them), and back-yards in one intricate mass of confusion; the children dirty, the people sordid and hungry-looking; a great mass of filth and neglect, in one of the most fertile spots of a GREAT and PROSPEROUS COUNTRY. If Dr. Fraser's hope is to be realised, it is clear that there must be outside compulsion in some quarters, or we shall still have, generation after generation, squalid Blossomvilles at our doors that would do discredit to countries like Turkey or Persia.

A suitable illustration, of the permanent benefit which results from well-founded plans for adding to the comforts of the poor, is to be found in this county, and a short reference to it may fitly conclude our sketch of the gradual reformation which now appears upon the face of English rural life; I allude to Cardington, a village lying about three miles south-east from Bedford, with which the names of JOHN HOWARD and Samuel Whitbread are inseparably connected. Mr. Culley visited this place,* and reports one bad cottage; other-

* *Evidence* I., p. 501.

wise there is "good accommodation in every respect, with a rood of land" attached to each dwelling, the cottages being mostly the property of the landowner, who is careful in the management of them. The visitor to Cardington, whether brought there by interest or by curiosity, will have his attention arrested long before he reaches the village, by the aspect of neatness and durability presented by the cottages which he passes; indeed, for several miles southward it is rare to come across any deficiency in this respect. Many of these dwellings will be noticed bearing the initials S.W., with a date somewhere between 1789 and 1806, and are the fitting memorials of Mr. Samuel Whitbread's enlightened efforts to improve his estate, and the condition of the people living upon it. But, some twenty years before this, John Howard had come to reside upon his small patrimonial estate at Cardington, and the inhabitants of the village soon had reason to perceive the advantage of his coming to dwell in their midst. He rebuilt many of the cottages, and insisted that they should be kept clean; and they were kept clean and neat, because they were capable of being so. He discouraged idleness, and provided facilities for education; visited the poor in their homes, and gave them that personal sympathy and advice without which much of his work would have been unavailing. The village, at this day, has the aspect of having been, at some time or other, "improved" by a careful and resolute hand; for there are few places in this part of England which look so neat and orderly, although more than a century

has elapsed since the improvement began. It is true that years are leaving their mark upon the structure of the houses, and even their plans and arrangement would now be considered obsolete; but the effect of having replaced the abodes of poverty and wretchedness by new and wholesome dwellings, and of instructing their inhabitants in the art of being "clean, comfortable, and happy," has been of the most lasting character. I should have been glad to append to these remarks some notice of the actual construction, the cost, etc., but at this distance of time it is impossible to obtain such particulars; those were not the days when people cared much about model cottages. There is one natural, and very cheering, reflection which we can make, however: If a village and its people can be so permanently altered for the better, by the conscientious and resolute mind of one man, what will be the effect upon England after the lapse of another century —at the commencement of which we see it to be the rule and not the exception, that "property" is awake to its urgent responsibilities, and to its manifest duties?

III.—THE RURAL LABOURER IN HIS MODEL HOME.

It has not escaped the notice of writers upon the condition and prospects of the poorer classes, that there is a great difference between the peasantry of the north and of the west and south-west of England.

Canon Girdlestone goes so far as to say that the contrast is "almost inconceivable: nothing less than the difference between plenty and starvation, between life and bare existence."* The accuracy of this view is pretty well guaranteed by the unanimous voice of all who, by personal inspection or the study of official reports, are in a position to judge. The rural labourer in Lincolnshire, in Kent, and in Surrey, knows little (comparatively speaking) of the privations which beset his brother in Dorset and Somerset: and the sturdy, abstemious peasant of Northumberland has a general character for sobriety and physical power of endurance, which, placed beside that of the beer- or cider-drinking labourer of the south, tells immeasurably in his favour.

Now, I do not think that the causes of this great disparity are far to seek: they appear to me to be bound up, in great measure, with GARDEN ALLOTMENTS and DRINK; and it will be perfectly useless, in any part of England, to attempt to raise the peasant—either through improved dwellings or higher wages—without at the same time, 1st, restoring him to the and (as it is now-a-days called) by making him the holder of an allotment, or adding a garden to his cottage; 2ndly, teaching him the proper position of Beer in relation to his animal economy.

Every rural labourer should be provided with sufficient garden-ground, on which at least the whole of

* *Macmillan's Magazine*, July, 1872, p. 258.

his year's supply of vegetables can be grown. The evidence is overwhelming, in proof of the benefits derivable from the extension of the allotment system; and it is highly probable that its increase (not only in rural, but also in suburban districts) has more to do with attaching the poorer classes to their homes than any other outside influence whatever. A cottage-garden not only gives to the labourer a *profitable* resource for the employment of his leisure time, but his family, to the youngest member, has a share and an interest in its cultivation—"there, under father's eye, the children make their first rude essays." In the garden are objects constantly presented which remind its co-operative possessors of the little plans and notions which they have formed together; objects upon which they can look with the pride of ownership, and with the natural pleasure derivable from the results of honest labour. The garden is a great school of nature to the children of the poor; there they first learn the secrets of sowing and gathering; there they first appreciate the obvious and unerring connection between toil and profit; there they learn the innumerable lessons to be derived from watching the patient hand of Nature, in her work of watering the earth, and making it bring forth plant and fruit. The value of order, of patience, of industry, of watchfulness, are taught within the limits of the cottager's garden; and in short, the possession or non-possession of a garden frequently makes all the difference between a peasant whose mind "oscillates between dulness and low joys," and another whose mind is im-

proved, whose intelligence is sharpened, whose soul is elevated, and whose heart can learn the first principles of contentment. As Mr. Cowper-Temple said on one occasion*—"The feelings of possession which are given to labouring men have sometimes produced most remarkable changes in their whole character; the sense of their responsibility, and the delight that arises from being able to speak of a bit of land as belonging to themselves—when they can talk of 'my potatoes,' and 'my peas,' and 'my beans'—it gives a new current to their thoughts, and is often the commencement of that self-respect which one likes to see in their character, and particularly in those who are likely to be degraded and lowered by the circumstances in which they are placed."

One great means, then, of ameliorating the condition of the rural labourer, is to be found in the simple occupation of tending the garden that adjoins his home. The beer and ale-house question is one that we are all too sadly familiar with. From the judge to the street-preacher, all voices unite in deploring the abuse of beer, and in execrating a system which permits the prodigal establishment of beer-shops. It seems as if it were impossible to say anything new about this subject, and as if we must still sit down, with arms a-kimbo, and murmur something about "the curse of the country," and the public houses bringing more ruin and disgrace upon the lower classes than all other causes of mischief whatever.

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* *Seventh Annual Meeting of the Labourers' Friend Society.*

Yet, if we can say nothing new, I wish to put upon record my firm opinion that, in rural districts, the most antagonistic element in relation to the beer-shop is the cottage garden. All persons who are intimately associated with the poor, give unqualified testimony to this fact; and in those places where the most improved moral tone is displayed, in the character and daily conduct of its inhabitants, it is almost invariable that the hours of leisure devoted to the garden have proved the most valuable ally both to the clergyman and to the schoolmaster.

It is, perhaps, worth while stating here that Bishop Fraser considers that drunkenness is decreasing rather than increasing, in almost every part of the country which he traversed while in the execution of his duties as Assistant Commissioner in 1868. "Young men," he says, "are observed to care less about beer and more about dress. They like to have a suit of cloth clothes for Sunday, a watch, a well-bound Church service, and so forth: . . . . of course money spent on these objects is so much drawn from the capacity and the inclination to spend money on beer.*

Mr. Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith and agriculturist, who has made long tours in England, when visiting this country, is unable to suppress his frequent astonishment at the absurd place which beer holds in the estimation of the British artizan and labourer; and

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* *Report*, p. 43.

I cannot forbear quoting the following passage from one of his books:*—

"The preponderance of drink, especially among the agricultural labourers in England, is very striking and sad. As a whole, beer must still stand before bread, even before meat, and before both, in many cases, in their expenditures. The man who sat next me, in muddy leggings and smoking coat, was mildly-spoken, quiet, and seemingly thoughtful. He had come for his harvest allowance of 20s. worth of beer. If he abstained from its use on Sundays, he would have a ration of about tenpence worth daily. That would buy him a large loaf of bread, two good cuts of mutton or beef, and all the potatoes and other vegetables he could eat in a day. But he put it all into the jug instead of the basket. Jug is the Juggernaut that crushes his hard earnings in the dust, or (without the figure) distils them into drink. Jug swallows up the first-fruits of his industry, and leaves basket to glean among the sharpest thorns of his poverty. Jug is capricious as well as capacious. It clamours for quality as well as quantity; it is greedy of foaming and beaded liquors. Basket does well if it can bring to the reaper the food of well-kept days. In visiting different farms, I have noticed men and women at their luncheons and dinners in the field. A hot mutton-chop, or a cut of roast-beef, and a hot potato, seem to be a luxury they never think of in the hardest toil of

* "*Walk from London to John o'Groat's.*"

harvest. Both the meals I have mentioned consist, so far as I have seen, of only two articles of food, bread and bacon, or bread and cheese, and this bacon is never warm, but laid upon a slice of bread in a thin cold layer, instead of butter, both being cut down through with a jack-knife into morsels when eaten. Such is a habit that devours a lion's share of the English labourer's earnings, and leaves food, raiment, and housing to shift for themselves. If he works by the piece and finds his own beer, it costs him more than he pays for house rent, or for bread, or for meat, or for clothes for himself and family. If his employer furnishes it or pays him commutation money, it amounts, for all his men, to a tax of half-a-crown to the acre for his whole farm."

This eloquent passage ought to be printed in large type, and distributed broadcast throughout the land. It tells vividly a true tale, and might, at least, set some of our friends thinking, when there are such sober times as will give opportunity for reflections.

It has been too much the fashion, for many years past, to represent the rural labourer as of inferior mental capacity to other classes in society: that he is almost invariably possessed of the lowest tastes; and that his connection with the soil naturally debases him. It is thoughtlessly considered at the same time, as though it were a compensatory law of things, that the pursuit of agriculture requires the smallest intelligence in the peasant, while it demands a wiry, sinewy frame.

The slow, and often stammering speech of the peasant is often compared with the glib tongue of the town artizan, to the discredit of the former (even philologists have been at the pains to compute that the average vocabulary of the agricultural labourer contains only 500 words!), and he is habitually underrated, as though his lot, of the hardiest toil and the most monotonous livelihood, must necessarily quench his humanity; and his comparative exclusion from social advantages bring him nearer to the condition of the cattle which he tends.

Now, in such views and similar ones, I cannot give the smallest acquiescence. The darker shades of human character are oftener to be found in people removed many degrees above the peasant in the social scale, who have had the advantages of education and of good example, all their lives long. The stolid exterior usually manifested in the rural labourer, which has misled his urban critics, is only the work of nature's gracious hand, sufficiently hardening his sensibilities, and enabling him to meet the severities of his lot. We do not call the sailor deficient in intelligence, because his landward manners are ungraceful, because his speech is strange, because his weather-beaten frame betokens a special calling in life; then, why sneer at the rural labourer's speech and manners, because they do not come up to our standard? Why should we suppose that there can be no law of progress for him? Is it fair to imagine that a workman at a lathe, or at a spinning-jenny, in a shoe-warehouse, or even at a

printing-press, has better scope for his intellectual powers (merely because he has a newspaper and an Institute close at hand) than the rural labourer? The comparison seems to me altogether unjust; and when once we see Education fairly within the reach of the rural peasant, once again we shall see a race of men upon whom we may rely for the renewal of England's youth. The main vices of the English peasantry are — drunkenness among the men, and unchastity with the women; and when the simple-minded, at last, generally discover that an unnecessary pint of beer means a yard of land swallowed and wasted, and that purity is the jewel of life to either sex, not only to be praised by parsons and extolled by poets, but because its possessor's "strength is as the strength of ten," then may we hope for a development of his natural qualities, to which his present conditions are, it must be admitted, very often extremely unfavourable. For, what are those conditions? I will describe them, as they are in many cases, by quoting the following graphic picture, drawn by Sir A. H. Elton, of Clevedon, Somerset, which appeared in the "Agricultural Gazette" for the year 1853: — "Home has no attractions for the young labourer. When he goes there, tired and chilly, he is in the way amidst domestic discomforts; the cottage is small, the children are troublesome, the fire is diminished, the solitary candle is lighted late, and extinguished early; he treads on the children amidst an explosion of screams, is perpetually taking his father's chair by the chimney corner, and frequently leaving

dirty thumb-marks on the linen his mother is getting up for the squire's lady. If he goes to bed early, his elder brother, who sleeps with him, awakes him an hour after, with a kick; if late, he is scolded by his mother for disturbing the four children who sleep in the next bed to his own. He naturally, then, goes to the public-house, where a cheerful fire and jovial society are found, and becomes a loose character, and in a short time is ashamed to meet his clergyman, and then becomes discontented with him and all his real friends, breaks from all teaching, and falls into habits of coarse self-indulgence."

This description is severe, while it bears the stamp of truth. Let us hope that it is by no means universal, even in backward Somersetshire. The picture is easily reversed, if the temptation of the beer-shop be removed, and if the fruits of elementary education are shown in the possession of books and other sources of recreation.

The real conditions of rural life among the peasantry depend so much upon the surroundings of their life—such as proximity to the school and the church (where these two influences are faithfully ministered), the absence of the beershop, and a comfortable home, that our ground of hope for the rural labourer undoubtedly consists in placing these influences within his reach. These are the things in which he cannot help himself. These are the outside influences by which he must be taught to be "clean, comfortable, and happy." And without these we cannot expect him either to be sober,

chaste, or thrifty. The great towns are constantly recruited in numbers by immigration from the rural districts, and if this immigration did not steadily go on, the towns would experience a dearth of labour which would tell vitally upon their progress; so, if the conditions of rural life are not improved, and are to become as precarious as we know the conditions of life are among the poor in towns, the prospect of national decay is clearly in view.

But, what are the natural advantages on the side of the rural labourer?

In the first place, his very occupation provides a mental stimulus. The work of sowing, and reaping, and garnering, year after year, has in it so much need of observation and of patience, that his earliest years bring him into contact with the silent processes of nature. His daily exposure to the changing seasons gives him an insight into their action upon the produce of the field. He tends the domestic animals, and knows their habits and instincts by heart. The soils of different parts of his native district, and often of adjacent fields, are necessary objects of concern to his mind. His cottage-garden is his solace and his pride.

Then, secondly, his daily life in the open air—other things being granted—renders him the healthiest man in the community.* His frequently-overcrowded dwelling, the ofttimes unwholesome locality in which that dwelling is situated, and his own ignorance of sanitary

* Neison's *Vital Statistics*, pp. 46 *et seq.*

matters, still leave him with a far more favourable expectation of life than any dweller in the towns.

Again, to the younger labourers especially, the very pleasures of the poor are in their favour. In Sussex and Hampshire, particularly, almost every peasant is a born cricketer; and this, or some other sport, throughout England, furnishes means of healthy and rational recreation.

Now, these advantages can be enjoyed only to the most limited extent by the mechanics in towns. And if we admit a comparison between the possible conditions of the rural peasant and the urban labourer, so much in favour of the former, how greatly superior will it become, when we have given him everywhere a comfortable home, the means of intellectual improvement as the result of a better education, schools for his children, and the art of providing against the rainy day! THEN, we shall have servants that can be trusted, and who are proof against the first breath of temptation: then, we shall have a new generation of mothers, in which a large proportion are not slatterns and gossips: then, we shall have recruits for our army who are not the offscouring of society: then, we shall have a prudent, provident, and moral race of Englishmen. Prudent, because they have begun to learn that vice is incipient ruin; provident, because they have discovered that low wages and poverty are not always convertible terms; moral, because not only that the lessons of morality are within their reach, but that the effect of those lessons is visible in a Home from

which insobriety and unchastity have been banished for ever.

Let us now consider, shortly, the constitution of the reformed home of the rural labourer—a home in which morality will be practised, because possible; a home in which the decencies of life may be observable, even with the poorest peasant; a home that shall cast a ray of promise upon the future of our country. Wherever it has been attempted to work reformation in our rural districts by means of improved dwellings, it has almost invariably had the desired effect. Bishop Fraser says* "all bear witness to the benefits being direct, rapid, general. The drunkard begins to find a better way of spending his time and his money; the slattern becomes a notable housewife; the habits and dress of the children indicate the difference that has taken place in the tone and circumstances of the home. The greatest arrears of civilisation are where the domiciles of the people are squalid and neglected. . . . . Vain, say the clergy, are churches and schools, till the people are provided with better homes." And all the evidence adduced by this gentleman and his colleagues is to the same effect: that a dwelling constructed upon sound and regular principles, with proper accommodation for the conveniences of life, with the conditions of health and sanitation carefully studied, and with a garden added, produces an immediate change in the habits and tastes of the occupiers, with very rare exceptions.

* *Report*, p. 41.

Where there are exceptions, as in the case of persons who have too long led a debauched and semi-idle life, it is generally found that at least the children of such parents show an indication of the benefits arising from improved dwellings. Slovenly and dirty habits, contracted in a low hovel, are not easily eradicated, even if the disposition to improve is manifest. Yet, even with this admission, the effect of a reformed home is very perceptible upon the rising generation. To give separate sleeping accommodation for the sexes, and to prevent the indiscriminate reception of lodgers, have an incalculable effect upon the moral tone of a family; and to attain these ends is the first aim to be pursued in giving the peasant a better home. This is a point which we must keep constantly in view, in the consideration of our subject: all the ideas of model *cottages* which may be in our minds must be dismissed unless they offer the conditions possible for a model *home*. The author of "Healthy Moral Homes" * describes an *improved* Scotch cottage of the year 1806, which he justly calls "a hot-bed of disease and immorality," for it cannot possibly fulfil the conditions we require.

What, then, ought we to consider deserves the name of a model cottage?

There are numerous shades of meaning in the word *model;* we shall, perhaps, be pretty near the mark if we take it to mean (for our present purpose) something

* London, Longmans, 1863.

to be copied, or imitated, on account of its intrinsic value. Not to be copied or imitated because it is easier to copy than to invent, nor to be copied because the rest of the world copies it, according to some current fashion; but because, as in the case of a dwelling-house, it has—(1) been designed to contain within itself all the requisites of a suitable habitation for man; and (2) because it has stood the test of experience. Let us, then, look at the subject in this light, and consider what are the requisites of a model cottage, now that we have concluded our review of some of the endeavours which have been made in various parts of the country to provide better houses for the rural poor.

In the first place, it is possible, with the exercise of a little ingenuity, to reproduce, *upon a small scale*, all the accommodation necessary for a decent bringing-up of a family, which is to be found in most houses belonging to the lower middle classes. A living-room; a cooking-room, or bake-house; a pantry and three bedrooms; an outhouse, under the roof of which are a privy, a dusthole and a piggery: are indispensable for the comfort of every family (in rural districts), rich or poor, and it is only a question of the size of the house and the materials of which it is constructed (involving, of course, its cost), as to what kind of occupier it is to have.

Secondly, a dwelling must be dry. For this object a ground-floor must be at least a foot above the surface of the ground, and, if the soil beneath is retentive of

moisture, artificial means must be adopted by the application of concrete or asphalte, to secure dryness in the foundation. Numerous plans are in use to prevent the rising of damp in the walls, and there is therefore no excuse, in our days, for neglecting proper precautions on this important detail. Rheumatism and ague are among the greatest enemies to the welfare of the rural labourer, and the importance of a dry habitation to the preservation of health and strength is universally admitted. Yet, how habitually are these considerations neglected! Cottages are frequently built in wet and damp situations, on the edges of bogs and marshes, without a thought of the danger to their future occupiers; such dwellings are simply furnished refrigerators. Let us bring the matter home to ourselves, once more, by this illustration: Mr. Edwin Chadwick once stated,* before a party of members of the Society of Arts, that common bricks would absorb as much as a pound (a pint) of water; "consequently, a cottage of one-brick thickness in the walls was capable of holding 1.500 gallons of water when fully saturated." Why, "a fully-saturated" cottage would draw the natural heat out of a dozen successive families inhabiting it, before its deadly work of evaporation had ceased.

Thirdly, as to Warmth.—This point is allied to the last, but besides evaporation, there are other well-known means of producing a chill. Smoky chimneys, which necessitate a frequent draught of air, ill-fitting windows

* *Journal of the Society of Arts*, July 30th, 1869.

and doors, badly-arranged staircases, all contribute their share of this form of discomfort. And yet the causes of such defects are often mere thoughtlessness, and their remedies would add little to the expense of construction. For one thing, I would have no rural cottage built without either a porch (or a double door) in the front, and a screen to the back-door (unless sheltered by an out-house). Doors, fire-places, and staircases, all require suitable positions with respect to the rooms; and it costs very little to add a rotatory chimney-top, where such contrivance is necessary through the imperfections of the shaft. Then, how negligently is often the roofing completed: or if fairly done in the first instance, the first steps of decay omitted to be arrested! In a thatch roof, which is admitted to be the least heat-conducting one, and therefore the warmest in winter and the coolest in summer, the birds soon build their nests, and play insidious havoc with the material, until the helpless inmates find at last that there is almost as little shelter beneath as would be provided by a well-branched tree; so easily are comfortable conditions rendered uncomfortable by small neglects. The same omission to repair incipient defects in slate or tile roofs produces similar effects upon the comfort of a household.

Tiles give a more equable temperature to the interior of a house than slates, although they are not equal to thatch; but I suppose that slates, from their smaller cost, and the greater facility that there is for

obtaining and for working them, will continue as our staple roofing-material. The use of asphalted felt, however, is now so generally understood, in minimising the heat-conducting qualities of slate, that there is no excuse for disregarding the question of warmth through the roof, except on the score of expense. It is as well to observe, however, that this material is a dangerous element in case of fire.

Fourthly, as to Ventilation. One great source of exposure to attacks of sickness, and to the premature debility so common among the rural poor, is their ignorance upon this subject. They have an undying hatred of fresh air. Leave them to build their own cottages, and they are certain to construct closed windows; and, where they are provided with proper facilities for opening and shutting them, such provision is generally nullified by their total disuse. And, as to the use of the nose as a sanitary agent, that useful organ might as well be a wooden one to thousands of persons (even among those who, by education, may be supposed to know better), for all practical purposes. And, besides such an obvious error as leaving the windows hermetically sealed, plans of houses are often so faulty that in one or more rooms is to be found a kind of cell of stagnant air, which can neither be removed by opening the doors and windows or by lighting the fire.

Now, there are numerous schemes of ventilation, and new notions are frequently made public. But with two or three leading principles kept in mind, most small

houses can be kept with a wholesome current of fresh air. That unexpected obstacles to proper ventilation occur even in well-designed houses, everybody knows. Not everybody, however—nor even many persons, seem to know that the air which one has breathed cannot be breathed again; or that, as Miss Nightingale says,* "once insure that the air in a house is stagnant, and sickness is sure to follow." So sickness DOES follow, because the poor unfortunate inmates will have six, eight, or ten persons daily confined in a space which is only sufficient for the occupation of one.

Fifthly. Not less important than the foregoing, but still less understood, is the question of Light. Few persons in any station of life seem to be fully aware of the beneficent functions performed by sunshine. An Italian proverb says: "Where the sun shines the physician never comes." A dark room, or a dingy room, is both unhealthy and dispiriting; and the frequent deformity, and deficiency in intellect, which is apparent with the inhabitants of some secluded mountain-valleys, can have only one leading cause, viz.,the partial or total absence of sunshine. We all know the delight of a convalescent upon his being allowed to see once again the sunlight upon the fields. We know the effect of sunshine upon the vegetation of the opening year, and upon the ripening fruits of summer. Is it not upon record, even, that potatoes placed in a partially dark cellar have been found after a time moved towards a

* "*Notes on Nursing.*"

corner upon which the sunlight streamed? The value of a good light upon and in a dwelling is incalculable; yet it is frequently disregarded. As a rule, the front door should open *southerly*—not necessarily due south, but south-east or south-west; in fact, by adopting one of the latter positions, the sun may shine upon every side of a cottage during some portion of the day.

Besides these five leading considerations, there are numerous matters which are of hardly less importance. Take, for example, a proper supply of water. I am quite sure that the poor suffer horribly, and far more frequently than we are aware of, from a scanty supply of water. To a mother with the smallest idea of what is decent and proper in the matter of cleanliness, it must be peculiarly distressing to have to use the water of a polluted stream, or of a stagnant pond, for culinary and drinking purposes. But they *have* to use it. All over England—for want of a general system of storing rain-water, or because somebody's pocket has been against providing wells—a large majority of the poorer classes are dependent upon ponds and brooks. And it makes one's heart ache to hear rich and pompous mill-owners say (as one did only the other day), that rivers were made to carry away refuse and sewage. If there is anything that lies at the door of this country on the score of the death and disease of her sons and daughters, it is the reckless, wicked way in which water is wasted. All our great towns are crying out against river-pollution (most of which has

grown within the last quarter of a century), as a new source of infection and disease; but those great towns have, at least, their water-companies, and can obtain something like pure water to drink; but who is to listen to the poor villagers upon the river-bank, who have no other source from which to obtain water, either for washing or drinking?

No "model" cottage can be fitly called so, that does not possess a tank for rain-water, and ready access to an adjacent well; perhaps it would not be too much to say that every back-kitchen ought to be supplied with a pump; water is one of the things that the poor seldom or never waste. The trouble and difficulty, and, often the impossibility, of procuring it, no doubt accounts for that. On the chalk-hills of Kent, during seasons of drought, water is a very expensive article; whilst beneath the surface lies a never-failing store of the purest and the wholesomest water known—a store, however, which might as well be in the moon for all the use it is to its possessors. Only, because it would cost too much to bring it up from the bowels of the earth; and the ratepayer *must* be considered.

Then another matter, very inadequately understood, not only by poor and ignorant persons, but by the presumably well educated, is the proper destiny of refuse. People often say, with a light mind, that dirt is only "matter in its wrong place;" but very, very few are the efforts made to *re*place it. And then many, who do know a little better than their neighbours, are so terribly delicate. The sight of a dust-

heap or the aroma of a manure-heap are too much for their nerves. Only get it out of sight, they say.

Well, get it out of sight, but put it where it will serve its purpose; return it to that soil whence it came. And, in the cottage, nothing is easier, if there are suitable means of doing it provided for the purpose, than to guide every atom of refuse to its proper destiny, viz., restoring it to the soil.

For this purpose, the privy and the ash-heap should be so combined, that, while at a sufficient distance from the dwelling, they may be so handy that there can be no excuse for neglecting their use; while they are so contrived, that the occasional operations of cleansing and removal may be performed with despatch. The best plan is, to place the ash-heap immediately over a manure-tank, just behind the privy—so that sufficient ashes may be let into the tank from time to time. The combination of the ashes and the manure will be far less offensive to remove; and, what is quite as important, provide a rich deposit for the garden crops.

We cannot expect the poor to appreciate earth-closets, while the general public so tardily acknowledge their value; but I believe the day will come when nobody will endure a water-closet any longer. I hope the day will soon come, when there is no foolish town left that pollutes a river with its sewage, instead of depositing it upon the exhausted ground. It is on record of one large and very populous town, that it was tired, or ashamed, of seeing its sewage emptied in

dribblets into the noble river which runs through its midst, and committed the astounding folly of collecting it into one or two large streams at a tremendous expense, so that it might run away in a lump; and all because the said town was not clever enough, or not bold enough, to turn its refuse off to some hungry soil, where it could be properly utilised!

In addition to these requirements, the rural labourer must have a tool-house and a piggery attached to his dwelling. The pig is of supreme importance to a cottager, and often enables him to pay the rent, besides (if he is tolerably fortunate, and manages well) providing bacon for a large portion of the year's consumption. But a piggery must be properly constructed, and placed in a suitable part of the premises, or it becomes a nuisance, and is unhealthy, and the stock is far less profitable to its owner.

Lastly, a garden is indispensable to the comfort, the happiness, and the general welfare of the rural labourer, and of his family. His dwelling cannot be said to be complete without it—for the garden is part and parcel of his HOME. I have already dwelt upon the direct and indirect benefits to the peasant of a piece of garden-ground; and I will only add here, that it is cruel and selfish to deny it him; and it is even an open question as to whether it is not altogether unjust.

The interior arrangements of modern cottages are often very defective, and sometimes show an absence of practical experience in the designer, which renders them uncomfortable, although they may have all the

requisites of light, ventilation, and warmth. The poor are notoriously unwilling, as a general rule, to exchange their old roomy dwellings for these new ones. They have been accustomed, perhaps, to one spacious living-room in which stood one or two beds, which, however, did not greatly diminish the ample space remaining. They often care very little for up-stairs bedrooms, involving as they do a narrow staircase, which is especially troublesome to the aged; and, as a shepherd of Northumberland said to Mr. Henley,* "How is the mother to cook the dinner, and look after a sick bairn when it is up-stairs? She is always on the stairs. Some people would say that the upstairs rooms are more healthy. They would nae say so if they would try them in the cold of the winter." Then the old big room was so comfortable, from its having everything handy; the people have a habit of keeping almost the entire stock of household utensils and furniture in the living room, as the traditional picture of the cottage fireside tells us so plainly.

When a family has to move into a decent home, constructed on modern principles, all their little traditions and superstitions are thrown overboard; they have to learn the lessons of decency, and of order, in the proper disposal of their children at bed-time, &c., &c.; they have to learn why there is a scullery, and why there is a tool-house; and, in Scotland, most of the peasantry have even to learn the use of a privy. So, in the pro-

* *Commission* (1867) *Report* I., p. 66.

viding a new cottage for an ignorant and obstinate labourer, whose wife has been bred up in the notions of her grandmother, it is perhaps as well to endeavour to arrange rooms and fixtures in such a way that the habits of half a lifetime may not be rudely broken in upon. One thing that is often omitted, for example, is a proper supply of cupboards and shelves in the living room (or large kitchen) of the new house; another is the absurdly small size of the living-room, as though the new occupants only wanted a parlour or "best room." I have dozens of plans in my possession procured from many sources, and there is scarcely one, I believe, that is not deficient in this respect.* The principal room should be, at the least, fifteen feet square; and I would rather see it used as a bed-room for the husband and wife than diminish its size for the sake of giving them a small separate room. The most generally appreciated arrangement is one large sitting-room, a back-kitchen or scullery, and two bed-rooms. Most persons who furnished evidence to the Assistant-Commissioners of 1867, concur in this difficulty of satisfying the taste and predilections of a family removed into a new house; and it would be as well if those predilections were a little more considered than they are.

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* Excepting as regards Northumberland, where the living room is sometimes sixteen feet square, and even more. *Vide* Henley, *Evidence* I., pp. 221, 261.

Having got so far, we must not forget that our Model Cottage is incomplete unless the inmates have some practical acquaintance with the art of keeping their dwelling clean and tidy. It will happen, in some cases, that the new occupants have been kept from tidiness by the wretched character of their previous home, but that the change of condition has worked an immediate improvement in daily habits, as though by magic. An instance is given by Mr. Culley, in his Report on Wigtonshire, of an *Irish* drainer, who "had long occupied a mere hovel, which he kept in a filthy condition," having no sooner been made occupant of a respectable two-roomed cottage than "a marked change took place in his habits and appearance; not only was his new abode kept scrupulously clean, but the man himself was transformed from the lowest type of an Irish cotter into a decent and well-conducted agricultural labourer."

Now it is here that the personal help and sympathy of his so-called betters may be exercised on behalf of the rural labourer. Having obtained his new cottage, his capacities for self-improvement are immeasurably increased. His social education may be said then to commence. He learns, for the first time in his life, that self-respect is the foundation of any respect which he may wish to obtain from others. He sees that a ragged and slovenly interior is not compatible with the neat exterior of his house; that his slatternly wife and unkempt children must now partake of the character of his dwelling, or become a reproach to his

fellows. But he sees it in most cases, probably, because it is pointed out to him. It will sometimes happen that all the fruits of example, and all the efforts of benevolence, are thrown away upon the incorrigible, and that a radically bad family will continue to poison its social atmosphere; but that bad example, unfortunate in itself, will prove a beacon to the careless; and when a man finds that the effect of spending his wages properly, avoiding the public-house parlour, sending his children to school, taking a pride in his garden, not only increases his comfort, but raises his importance and his credit with his neighbours, he will naturally be led to see that the thoughtful kindness of the hand that has given him a better home is worthy of some regard, for the sake of the advantages and the comforts which he may now give to himself and to his family.

I think, therefore, that the benefit of personal sympathy between a landlord or a farmer and his peasantry cannot be over-rated; and that the improvement resulting from better dwellings can be, without it, only partial. The education which we are now trying to give to the agricultural labourer will be only one-sided if it is to be confined to the three R's. The traditions of rural life must still be maintained, and nothing ought to be allowed to destroy the sense of mutual relationship by which each class in turn has to rely upon the others for counsel and assistance.

CONCLUSION.

It will scarcely be denied by any thoughtful person, that upon a numerous and contented peasantry rests, to a very great extent, the future welfare of this country.

> "A bold peasantry—their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd, can never be supplied!"

We cannot, therefore, afford to remain ignorant of, or indifferent to, the fate of that class of society. The drain of the rural population by emigration, and by their absorption into towns, has been going on with a steady course for the last half-century; and, were it not for the greater powers of reproduction which would seem to belong to the peasantry above the dwellers in towns, it is possible that we should ere now have seen a considerable diminution in the number of persons available for the labours of agriculture.

With all her greatness, and glory, and ostentation of factory and iron-clad, it is not safe to assume that England's existing civilization is altogether a condition of present or future stability. For what is that condition from the social stand-point? At one end of the scale, society is represented (by the daily press) as increasing in wealth to an extent and with a rapidity unknown in times gone by: wealth (usually qualified

by the epithets *prodigious, boundless,* &c., &c.,) which simply implies the means of scandalous rivalry in extravagance amongst its possessors; at the other end, a draggle-tailed section of humanity, whose life is represented (also by the daily press, so that there is no excuse for ignorance upon the subject,) as a constant effort to keep body and soul together, whose home is such only in name, and whose earthly prospects are supposed to be bounded by the workhouse.

Now, we might go very deeply into the question,—since the taint of communistic ideas has spread so extensively amongst some sections of the lower classes of the people,—as to whether the poor are ever to "cease out of the land," or whether (on the other hand) a gradual absorption and assimilation of class with class is some day or other to take place, and to blot out all possible social distinctions. We might calculate, time after time, how far it is likely that every rood of ground would maintain its man. We might discover serious portents for our future prosperity in the increasing antagonism of class with class. (In point of fact, there are many alarmists on this score, as we all know.) But, at any rate, the discontent which is too often apparent in persons who are, or think they are, in a subordinate position in life, cannot be considered as a wholesome condition of things; and now that trades-unionism has touched the agricultural interest, it would be vain to say that the case is not fraught with peril.

The only proper way of interpreting these things is

to go back to first causes. We are reaping the fruits of two centuries of indifference, as well as of a good deal of blundering. The revival of liberty during the past hundred years has been accompanied by too many fearsome, stop-gap notions. It is either your Radical, with his drastic aims, or your half-hearted Reformer, who must have his *catspaw*. People have either given political privileges to the ignorant and venal, or have withheld from the labourer both education and assistance, from fear of the inevitable results, viz., the knowledge of good and evil, and of the means of raising himself,* or else have held aloof until other braver spirits have proved that this or that was safe—that this or that would be applauded, and *would pay*.

We are accustomed to smile at the rabid outcry of some public agitators (although it would be worth while occasionally to consider how much there is that justifies hard words); but it is probable that the professional demagogue has far less power over the British labourer than alarmists would suppose. When some little-minded fellow gets up in his wrath, and rails against the squire and the parson, his ignorance is often palpably evident to his chuckling listeners, however they may applaud him. The habitual reverence for the law which exists amongst all classes in this country,

* Like Dr. Rudge, who prepared the *Agricultural Survey of Gloucester* (London, 1807). He would not give a cow to the agricultural labourer, and strongly objected to any such schemes for making him independent, as TENDING TO DESTROY THE INDISPENSABLE GRADATIONS OF SOCIETY!

along with the remnant of respect towards superiors which lingers (at least outside the towns), form solid obstacles to any great revolution in the relations between the squire and the peasant, and their intermediary—the farmer. The career of the Agricultural Labourers' Union furnishes signal proof of this. No one will now regret that the experiment was tried, because not only are the interdependence and the mutual interests of farmer and labourer more firmly established in men's minds, but the labourers themselves have been aroused "from a state of apathy and torpor, almost amounting to insensibility."* At the same time few will regret that the strike turned out a failure. It was not the strike in itself that caused a rise in wages, it was the being roused from "apathy and torpor"—the enlargement of the mind consequent upon combination and discussion, and the discovery of the close connection between inefficient labour and low pay, that added a shilling or two to the wages of the rural labourer in the Eastern counties.

Canon Girdlestone justly says that "the agricultural interest is the backbone of old England;" and that "whatever benefits the labourer must benefit the landowner and the farmer." † One great means of benefiting the labourer has been detailed in the foregoing pages; and there is plenty of evidence that the landowner has done a good deal towards this end according to his

* Canon Girdlestone, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, December, 1874.

† *Ibid*, July, 1872.

ability; and that the farmer is generally desirous of having his labourer comfortable, and well-housed. The writer of this paper is not, in the most remote degree, connected with the agricultural interest, pecuniarily; but he believes, with the worthy gentleman just quoted, that it is the backbone of old England; and that the interdependence of the three classes into which it is commonly divided, is so manifest, and at the same time so necessary, that whatever helps to strengthen the hand, and improve the condition and prospects of either one, is of vital importance to the welfare of the others.

Now there some quarters in which these close natural relations are imperfectly, or not at all, understood; and there are many persons who imagine that the sole bond left, in our days, between master and servant is: Wages. I think the notion is imaginary; and although a sordid and mean disposition is sometimes visible, both in master and man, there is not a day passes (particularly as to rural labour) upon which the contrary could not be proved. And in such cases where sordidness and selfishness are unmistakeably absent, and the interdependence of master and man is tacitly known,

"Eloquent, though unexpress'd,"

there is always a definite result in the shape of mutual confidence, kindly attention of the strong towards the weak, good example of the enlightened towards the ignorant, active benevolence of the rich, and grateful

service of the poor. The want of frequent personal intercourse between a great proprietor and his tenants is the source of continual loss, both to his estate and to the dwellers upon it: and there is no greater curse to the landed interest of this (or, indeed, of any) country, than the man who fancies that the lands he calls his own are his, and not also for the benefit of the inhabitants.

We must, however, also remember that the poor themselves sometimes display the greatest unwillingness in response to offers of sympathy and help, and are inclined to regard a disinterested desire to serve them as evidence of weakness rather than benevolence.

Still, generally speaking, the early steps in the improvement of the condition of the rural labourer must come from those above him. They must be undertaken from a principle of duty; and any view of general improvement which one may have in his mind, which is based upon a desire, first of all, *to make it pay*, is pretty certain to prove fallacious. That it will pay in the end is not to be doubted; not directly at so much per cent.; not on a principle of eye-service, either on the part of the benefactor or of the benefited; but in the resulting moral elevation of both parties, producing, eventually, better work, better feelings, better worldly prospects, and better hopes for their native land.

APPENDIX.

THE COST OF BUILDING LABOURERS' COTTAGES.

The greatest obstacle to the extensive improvement of the dwellings of the rural poor is, naturally, that presented by £. *s.* *d.*; and it is a difficulty that is yearly increasing. And as it is universally admitted by practical minds that cottage-building is almost wholly unremunerative in a pecuniary sense, we can easily understand the anxiety with which landowners approach the subject. It would appear that a first-class labourer's dwelling, *i.e.*, a brick, slated, building, with three bedrooms, and containing all the conveniences for rural home-life on a small scale, cannot be built for much under £200; so that any great steps in improvement can only be undertaken at vast expense. At the same time, it is possible, by studying the requirements of the various classes and conditions of the labouring poor, to provide accommodation sufficient for their wants at a considerably lower estimate. There will always be persons (chiefly old couples) to whom a two-roomed cottage is a necessity, because a large one of four rooms would be a useless burden to them; and there will be cases in which a small cottage is far preferable for a young labourer and his wife, because unnecessary house-room would expose them to the temptation of bidding for lodgers. There is a very general wish, however, that the model dwelling should contain three bedrooms,

and there is little doubt that the cottage of the future will be generally upon this basis.

The cost of building cottages is subject to several leading variations, occasioned by the varying quality of materials, distance, and cost of cartage, wages, and locality. A distance of two or three miles will sometimes cause an increase of ten to fifteen per cent. in the cost. I have been told by a practical builder that he could not give me an estimate without first knowing something of the proposed locality in which the cottages were to be erected. Mr. John Birch, architect, (on an occasion to which we shall presently refer) mentions a pair of cottages which cost, in Surrey, £400, but a builder in Hampshire undertook the same for £320. Perhaps the most curious illustration of this difficult matter of cost is furnished by some correspondence which appeared in the *Builder* newspaper, in the year 1865, shortly after the Society of Arts had awarded a prize for the best plans. The stipulated price was £100 per cottage; but Mr. Birch, who took the prize, was actually unable to get them built for the money; one tender which he received reaching the sum of £312 per pair. Mr. Robert Sinclair, engineer-in-chief to the Great Eastern Railway, who required some cottages built near Bishop Stortford, obtained six tenders (from three London and three country builders) ranging from £397 to £527 per pair!

A great deal of valuable information upon this subject was obtained in the year 1873 by a Select Committee of the House of Lords upon the Improvement of Land. As all the world knows, the cost of building reached a very high figure two years ago; and most of the witnesses examined before that Committee deposed to the serious increase which had

recently become evident. Since 1873, however, prices have somewhat receded, and it is probable that the estimates of to-day would not exceed those of eight or ten years back.

The following notes are taken from the evidence of some of the gentlemen who appeared before the Committee alluded to.

Mr. George Ridley (an Inclosure Commissioner), said that cottages cost £300 a pair; that £10 a-piece might be saved by building a row of them; at the same time, £300 would not always cover the labour, carting, etc.; and (at the period of his examination) prices had so advanced, that a pair would nearly cost £400. The cost of building cottages was somewhat lower in Scotland, because it is often the case that stone is near at hand. Applications to the Commissioners had not diminished on account of the increase in cost.

Mr. Bailey Denton, C.E., and Mr. J. Chalmers Morton, submitted that the cost had risen from £300 to £330 and £350 a-pair.

Mr. H. W. Keary (land-agent at Bridgenorth), considered that the high prices were exceptional, but thought that a pair could still be built "with judgment and economy," for £300, but "*with his own artificers.*" In these cottages Mr. Keary put three bed-rooms and two bed-rooms, "with a contrivance that the fifth bed-room can be added either to the one or the other," a contrivance that would save about £25; hollow walls would increase the cost £10 or £20; and there would be included an earth-closet, or privy, and a shallow well. A very deep well would cost £50. Such cottages would cost only £250 four years previous to that date (1873).

Mr. James Girdwood (agent for improvements), had found the cost in Buckinghamshire £350 to £375 a pair.

Mr. John Henry Turner (agent for Lord Bristol), had recently built two pairs of cottages, one costing £315 and the other £267.

Mr. James Sanderson (land agent), had built some single cottages (with 14-inch walls, stone or brick), in Northamptonshire, for £130, "exclusive of carting;" but they would be "a little more expensive now."

Mr. John Birch deposed that cottages, under the requirements of the Inclosure Commissioners, would cost £380 to £400 a pair. This amount might be reduced £20 or £30 "by operating on small items throughout." The accommodation would consist of three bed-rooms, one living-room, and a scullery; coal and wood-house, privy, and piggery; oven, washing-copper, and drainage; a tank, a well, a linen-closet, shelving, and cupboards.

Mr. James M'Lean (land-agent, Wigtonshire), had built double cottages for £150, exclusive of carting of materials.

Mr. George Hope (farmer, East Lothian), said it would cost at least £150 to build a substantial cottage, with two bed-rooms.

The most recent testimony, however, which has been published concerning the cost of cottage building, is contained in Mr. Wilkinson's book on English Country Houses (Parker and Co., London and Oxford, 1875); and it would appear, from his experience, that this kind of improvement cannot be given within such limits of cost, as to give any expectation of its becoming remunerative, in a pecuniary sense. Mr. Wilkinson says that "a pair of good cottages, each with living-room, scullery, pantry, three bed-rooms, and out-building for coals, wood, oven, etc., and water supply; and where all materials, labour, and carriage have to be provided, will not cost less, under favourable circumstances, than from £300 to £350; and the same pair

may cost £400 to £450. Cottages with two bed-rooms each will cost from £240 to £300 per pair; and cottages with one bed-room from £80 to £120 each. . . . . These estimates are based on the assumption of good materials being used, and good workmen employed in building them." And where there are reported cases of anything being done much cheaper, he says that it is generally found, upon enquiry, that either the cartage of the material was done by the landlord, and the lime, or sand, found upon the estate; or else that proper outbuildings and offices were not provided, and, perhaps, a pump and sink not embraced in the cost.

From all this it is clear that enormous difficulties lie in the way of the very best-disposed owners of property, in endeavouring to reform the dwellings of the peasantry, unless they possess ample resources; especially when we hear of a case (mentioned by Mr. Charles Randell, before the Lords' Committee), in which £8,000 had been spent upon one estate,* in additions to, and repairs of cottages, with a result of an increase in the rental of only £8 17s.

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* In Suffolk, see *Edinburgh Review*, Jan., 1875.

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