

take place in the poor-rates, and the improvement in the physical condition of the inhabitants which would ensue, cannot be esteemed matters of slight importance in promoting the general happiness and prosperity of the kingdom.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
RICHARD BARON HOWARD.

No. 21.

AN IMPROVED DESCRIPTION OF COTTAGE TENEMENTS FOR THE
LABOURING CLASSES.

By EDMUND ASHWORTH, Esq.

Respected Friend,
EDWIN CHADWICK, *Egerton, 12 Mo. 30, 1839.*

I HAVE to acknowledge the receipt of copies of the Instructions issued by the Poor Law Commissioners "for promoting an inquiry into the residences of the labouring classes."

This is a subject which has interested us (my family) for many years, and I rejoice to see that public attention is likely to be drawn to it, believing, that if it leads to increased provision for the domestic comfort of the labouring population, it is calculated to elevate and improve their condition above most others.

I fully concur in the sentiment contained in the instructions issued by the Commissioners, "that the state of the dwellings occupied by the labouring classes exercised an important influence upon the health and indirectly upon the moral state of themselves and families." In any remarks I may make, our particular circumstances must be borne in mind; situated in a country district, surrounded by a population mainly dependent upon us for employment, and therefore in some degree under our control, we have had from necessity to provide dwellings for a considerable portion of them, and therefore had the opportunity of marking their improvement and the causes which have conduced to it.

On the occasion of building cottages we have of late years consulted the opinions and wants of those who were likely to occupy them; and consequently the various points enumerated in your inquiry as "to comfort and accommodation, cost, and rent paid, as well as the moral effects arising from improved domestic habits," have each been brought under our notice and consideration.

It must be confessed that the manufacturing population generally have a much less knowledge of domestic comforts and happiness than might be expected from the amount of income which most of them enjoy.

Many causes have operated to produce this lamentable state of things.

On the early introduction of the cotton manufacture, the parties who entered into it were often men of limited capital, and anxious to invest the whole of it in mills and machinery, and therefore too much absorbed with the doubtful success of their own affairs to look after the necessities of their workpeople.

Families were attracted from all parts for the benefit of employment, and obliged as a temporary resort to crowd together into such dwellings as the neighbourhood afforded: often two families into one house; others into cellars or very small dwellings: eventually, as the works became established, either the proprietor or some neighbour would probably see it advantageous to build a few cottages: these were often of the worst description: in such case the prevailing consideration was not how to promote the health and comfort of the occupants, but how many cottages would be built upon the smallest space of ground and at the least possible cost. We find many built back to back—a most objectionable form, as precluding the possibility of any outlet behind.

People brought together as these were for a living had no alternative but to occupy such dwellings. Whatever the weekly income, the wife could never make such a house comfortable; she had only one room in which to do all her work: it may be readily supposed the husband would not always find the comfort he wished in such a home. The public-house would then be his only resort. But here the evil does not end; the children brought up in such dwellings knew no better accommodation than such afforded, nor had they any opportunities of seeing better domestic management. Few of the parents in these parts have ever lived as domestic servants, so that it becomes no matter of surprise that the major part should have so little knowledge of improving their social condition even when the pecuniary means are within their reach. It must be allowed that the introduction of manufactures is not justly chargeable with producing the whole of this evil. About this time the old Poor Law was exercising a very pernicious influence upon the labouring classes, by means of inducing both the landowners and farmers to discourage cottage property for fear the inmates should gain parish settlements.

Cottages were forbidden to be built; some pulled down when empty, and others fell to decay for want of repair; poor people were banished as much as possible from the agricultural districts on account of the burden of parish settlements: even in this county I saw the ruins of two cottages which I was informed were the two last cottages in the parish.

Under such depressing causes it is not to be wondered at that we frequently received families into our employ who did not know how to conduct (with propriety) a decent cottage in such

a manner as to conduce either to the health or comfort of the inmates.

About twelve years ago we had occasion to introduce a considerable number of families into some new houses; in the course of a few months a most malignant fever broke out amongst them, and went from house to house, till we became seriously alarmed for the safety of the whole establishment. We instituted an inquiry into the state of the houses where the fever first appeared, and found that from the low habits of the occupants, and their ignorance of the proper decencies of life, the cottages were in so filthy a state that it was apparent we should not long be free from a recurrence of the same evil unless we took some active means to effect a change in the habits of these people.

Although we felt very unwilling to do anything which appeared to interfere with the domestic management of our workpeople, still the urgency of the case at the time seemed to warrant such a step. We therefore ordered an examination of every cottage in our possession, both as regarded cleanliness and ventilation, as well as bedding and furniture.

The striking difference exhibited in the state of these cottages, the neatness and cleanness of some, the gross neglect of others, appearing to have no relation to the amount of income, convinced us that an occasional repetition of these visits would be essential in order to effect any permanent improvement amongst them.

These periodical visits have now been continued through a series of years; and as no invidious distinction or selection was ever made, do not appear to have been viewed in the light of an intrusion; a week or two of notice being mostly given, a laudable degree of emulation has been excited as to whose house, bedding and furniture should be found in the best order; my brother or myself have occasionally joined in these visits. By these means we were made acquainted with the wants and necessities of the various families in our employ. Having had such opportunity of observing the great inconvenience arising from small dwellings where the families were large, both as regards bed-rooms and living-rooms, few cottages having more than two bed-rooms; and where there were children or young persons of both sexes, the indelicacy of this arrangement was apparent: we therefore concluded to build larger cottages, and make them with three bed-rooms in each. These houses were sought after with the greatest avidity, and families allowed to remove to them as an especial favour; the increase of rent of 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* per week was a small consideration in regard to the additional comfort afforded to a family where the income was from 24*s.* to 50*s.* or 60*s.* per week, as is frequently the case with families employed in manufactories.

We have therefore continued to enlarge the size of our cottages till we have almost every rent-charge from 3*l.* to 13*l.* a-year.

Plans and estimates of four different sizes I send herewith. The one most approved for general use appears to me to be the one marked on the plan No. 2, capable of being built for 103*l.* 2*s.* 9*d.*; it contains a living-room of 15 feet by 13 feet, and back kitchen of 15 feet by 9 feet, with oven, boiler, and grate, as fixtures, and three bed-rooms over, with a back-yard 24 feet by 13 feet.

From my own observation, I am fully confirmed in the opinion that comfortable dwellings exercise a powerful influence in producing and confirming habits of sobriety and virtue. The husband has more inducement to stay at home; the wife has less temptation to become idle and negligent; and the children brought up in such houses are more likely to rise than descend in the scale of society. Many are the cases I have witnessed of an improved moral and religious feeling apparently consequent upon an improved physical condition. When once a steady family get into a larger house they soon begin to require more furniture; this, where their means will afford, is often of a better quality: from that time they rise in the scale of respectability. They dress better on the Sabbath, they associate with others of an improved class; they often see it important to attach themselves to some body of religious professors, and, in fact, are raised to a station in society to which a few years before they were strangers. I am happy to say that during the last ten years a visible improvement has taken place in the building of cottages attached to large manufacturing establishments in this country. We instituted the practice of a periodical inspection of our cottages in consequence of fever. Fevers frequently prevail to a frightful extent in districts where, if there had been a timely assistance from the parish authorities on the representation of the relieving officer or surgeon of the district, much suffering would have been spared.

It is very important that the domestic comforts of the labouring classes should be more attended to; and the cheapening of building materials would greatly contribute towards this. The duties on bricks and timber operate very prejudicially in this respect.

Cottage property is always regarded as a disadvantageous investment on account of the uncertainty of collecting the rents, as well as the more rapid dilapidation; they are therefore charged a higher rate of interest upon the outlay for rent than most other property.

It is not the duty of 5*s.* 10*d.* per thousand alone which is added to the cost of making bricks; but the vexatious regulations attendant upon the Excise create a sort of monopoly which limits competition, and enhances the value; bricks are sold in the neighbourhood of Bolton at about 25*s.* per thousand, which, if there were no duty, I think would be sold at half the price.

The whole amount of duty collected from bricks in 1835,

when there was more building going forward than on an average of years, was 479,925*l.* I have not any returns of a later period.

Another and a serious obstacle to the extension of cottage building by the labouring classes, as well as the purchase of them out of their savings, is the cost of legal conveyance, which frequently amounts to one or two years' rent. This is often the hindering cause to many a working man's investment, even where the property is freehold or leasehold; but where copyholds prevail, the hardship becomes a very considerable evil; the transfer expenses of property in case of death often fall heavy and unexpectedly upon the owners of small copyholds.

If the Bill for the Enfranchisement of Copyholds, which was lost in the House of Lords last year, had passed, it would have been a great boon in cases where cottages are built upon copyhold: many are now abandoned rather than pay the fees of court.

I shall greatly rejoice to see anything done to improve the condition of the labouring classes, either mentally or bodily.

The man who has a well-furnished house, is a more trustworthy servant than one who lives in a cellar or single room with almost no furniture; but the workman who lives in his own house is better than either.

I remain thine respectfully,
EDMUND ASHWORTH.

SPECIFICATION of the Works in four descriptions of Cottages erected at Egerton for Messrs. Henry and Edmund Ashworth.

Masonry.—The front and back walls and the chimney shafts are set in regular courses, well hammer-dressed. The insidewalls, gables, and chimney flues are of parpoints six inches thick. The door-jambs, tops and thresholds, and the window-sills and tops, also the labels over the front doors and windows, are all hewn and tooled; there is square cornice at the back, and moulded cornice at front; both are well hewn, tooled, guttered, and the joints corked water-tight. The yard walls are of random stone, eighteen inches thick, finished with semicircular coping stones on the top. The privies are of parpoints, and the ash-pits are made off from the yards with flags set on edge. The ground floors are laid with good self-faced flags, and there are flags at the front and back doors, averaging about three yards to each house, and a hearth to each bed-room chimney-piece. The foot-path, five feet wide at front, is paved with river stones, and side stones set at the edge. There is a cellar to each of the houses No. 1 and 2 under the stairs; it goes down about four steps, and holes are formed under the ground-floor for keeping provisions in, and there is a slop-stone in each kitchen.

Slating.—The roofs are covered with Welsh slate and stone ridging.

Plastering.—All the walls are plastered two coats; and the ceilings and stoothing lathed and plastered two coats, and the slates well pointed.

Fire-fixtures.—The living-rooms have each a boiler, oven, and fire-grates, and the parlours and all other places where fire-places are shown, are fitted up with sham stove-grates.

Carpentry, Joinery, and Glazing.—The timber is American pine throughout, (except the roofs and windows of No. 1 and 2, which are of Baltic deal.) The floors have beams and joints, and are covered with inch boards. The stairs are as per plan, made of inch boards, and are two feet six inches wide. The partition at the side of the stairs is of three-quarter inch boards, and the partitions which divide the bed-rooms are of stoothing. There are ceiling joists fixed over all the bedrooms. The roofs have two ribs on each side, and spars fixed fifteen inches betwixt their centres. The outside doors, both front and back, are framed batten doors, hung to stone jambs, with bands and gudgeons, and have a Lancashire handle set on each; the front doors have each a plate lock, and back doors a flat iron bolt. The inside doors, the privy doors, and yard doors, are all batten doors with four cross bars to each. They are all hung to wood casings, (except the back yard doors, which are hung to stone,) and have each a Lancashire latch set on. The front windows, and the back bed-room windows of No. 1, are all frames and sheets single hung, and the remainder of the back windows are fast sheets with a casement in each; they are all primed and glazed with good white glass. There is about twenty feet of shelving fixed in each house, and there is skirting fixed in both rooms on the ground-story, and surbase or chair-rail round each living room, and casings and single moulds round doors and windows on ground-story. There is a wood drop-sput to each house.

ESTIMATES.

	No. 1.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.
Masonry, &c.	£52 17 0	£48 11 2	£37 8 0	£33 10 0
Slating, &c.	8 6 0	7 10 0	6 6 9	5 12 0
Plastering, &c.	8 17 6	7 12 0	6 2 6	5 10 0
Fire-fixtures, &c.	5 4 10	4 19 3	2 18 9	2 18 9
Joinery, Glazing.	37 7 8	34 10 4	27 2 6	24 0 0
	<u>£113 13 0</u>	<u>£103 2 9</u>	<u>£79 18 6</u>	<u>£71 10 9</u>

No. 22.

SANITARY CONDITION OF THE TOWN OF LANCASTER.

BY DR. EDWARD DE VITRE'.

Lancaster, April 20, 1840.

GENTLEMEN,—In reply to a communication made to me, through your Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Mr. Power, requesting my opinion regarding some of the physical causes of sickness and mortality to which the poor in this neighbourhood are particularly exposed, and which are capable of being removed by proper sanitary police regulations, I have great pleasure in rendering my feeble aid in furtherance of your benevolent purpose, and beg to submit for your consideration the following statement:—