

Act, which is, I believe, "The Smoke Act," is hardly sufficiently comprehensible as to the declaration of the nuisance. It is necessary to swear that a chimney is a nuisance personally to the complainant, and this is a mode of engendering offensive feelings, and not sufficiently broad to abate the evil without considerable expense to the prosecutor if the party were litigious; again, "that which is everybody's business is nobody's," and although at this time public attention in Leeds is actively aroused to the smoke nuisance, the population is indebted to the zeal, personal labour, and the expense of the town-clerk for an inquiry which, if successful, will certainly lead to one of the greatest improvements of recent times. But a remedy for an evil so crying should not be left to the zealous service of individuals. It should be part of the powers of the Board of Civil Control to regulate the smoke nuisance along with all other nuisances, by whom the applicability of a general Act to various localities would be better understood.

The last important remedial measure to which attention is directed, is the means by which the provisions of a sanitary law are to be carried into effect. The obvious authorities to whom only the great powers with which any such Act must be clothed can be delegated, are those whom the legislature has already called into operation and entrusted with civil government, viz., the Town Councils of boroughs in the first instance; secondly, where there are no Town Councils, but there are Commissioners under local Acts, then to such Commission; and thirdly, where there are neither Town Councils nor Commissioners, then to the Magistracy, or to Committees nominated by the Magistracy in the divisions under their jurisdiction; but in all cases there should be the paid co-operation of medical men in whom the board could have confidence. Such boards I would denominate Boards of Civil Control, or give to them some name by which they might be understood as distinct from existing authorities. The number composing it might be regulated by the population; for the sake of argument, say 12 in number to every 100,000 of the population, and in that ratio, either under or over, to any population whatever. Of these 12, two should be the senior medical officers of public institutions, where they can be obtained, and where not, then the best and most competent practitioners in the neighbourhood in whom the board might have confidence. These officers should be paid at the rate of two guineas each for every sitting, and not more; and whatever might be the number of sittings of the General Board, which never ought to be less than once in every four weeks, the sittings of the medical officers need in no case exceed one half of the number. The whole expenses of such a board, and the application of its powers, will of course have to be levied by a rate which ought not to exceed 5*d.* in the pound on the annual value of the district under its control. The present rateable value of the borough of Leeds is 295,582*l.* 2*s.* 10*d.*, and a rate of a penny in the pound would raise therefore

annually more than 1200*l.* for the purposes of the board, which, with 5*d.* in the pound as its maximum, would give ample provision for all the sanitary improvements which time and circumstances might suggest.

In the consideration of the foregoing Report, and in the facts which are presented, I have endeavoured to exhibit the town of Leeds (certainly one of the most unhealthy towns in England) in its true condition, a condition which equally characterizes most of the manufacturing towns of England which have risen from existence into importance during the last half century, with the most amazing rapidity. It is to be sincerely regretted that, with the growth of manufacture, and thereby with the means of improvement, that so little attention has been generally directed to the social and moral welfare of those whose physical strength has contributed so much to the capital of the districts in which they dwell. But it is the fact, that the great interests of the country have flourished on the moral and physical strength of the labouring population, which have suffered on the one hand by all the local influences without, which are consequent upon neglected congregations, and within, by neglect of moral discipline and restrictions, which, had they been employed, might have made mills, manufactories, and workshops, blessings wherever they were erected; and it is a matter of sincere congratulation, and will be, to every well-wisher of his country, that the Poor Law Commissioners of England have instituted an inquiry fraught with such immense benefit to the population of the empire.

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#### No. 24.

#### FIRST REPORT

ON THE STATE OF THE DWELLINGS OF THE LABOURING CLASSES  
IN CUMBERLAND, DURHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND,  
AND WESTMORELAND.

By SIR JOHN WALSHAM, BART.

*Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 16th April, 1840.*

GENTLEMEN,—I. As the earliest instalment of the information due from me in reply to your circular of the 11th of last November, that severe personal illness, and the undiminished pressure of general business in a district of great extent and complicated interests have allowed of my presenting,—I now proceed to offer to your notice three tables, in which I have been anxious to arrange the voluminous data I have succeeded in collecting during the last three months, after such fashion that the leading points

of your sanitary inquiry, in its bearings upon what may be termed the habitation statistics of the four counties under my superintendence, may be seized at once and without trouble. Of these tables—

Enclosure A. comprises both an abstract and an analysis of the replies to 15 queries (which I circulated in every part of my district) relative to the state of the dwellings of the labouring classes in respect of the cost of building and repairs; the amount of rent paid and accommodation afforded; the state of drainage, &c.

Enclosure B. comprises an abstract of the replies to 13 queries (which I circulated in the urban Unions of my district) relative to the rating of small tenements and the operation of building societies.

Enclosure C. comprises a few plans of cottages recently erected on different estates in my district upon improved principles.

II. Under the head of Enclosure A., I have given the substance of a great many interesting returns from the chief towns and seaports of Northumberland, Durham, and Cumberland, as well as from the agricultural, manufacturing, and mining districts of these very remarkable counties; and with a view to the readiest development of results, I have classed such returns into three divisions, and again into 30 subdivisions.

*The first, or Northern Division*, refers principally to Northumberland, of which the cottages and tenements are treated of in eight subdivisions, viz. :—

Newcastle . . .	Chief town of the division.
Alnwick . . .	} Agricultural market towns.
Hexham . . .	
Tynemouth . . .	} Seaport towns.
Berwick . . .	
Long Benton, Walls- end, &c. . .	} Coal districts.
Rothbury . . .	
Castleward . . .	} Rural districts.

*The second, or Southern Division*, refers exclusively to the county of Durham, of which the cottages and tenements are treated of in 14 subdivisions, viz. :—

Sunderland . . .	Chief town of the division.
Darlington . . .	} Agricultural market towns.
Durham . . .	
South Shields . . .	} Seaport towns.
Stockton* . . .	

\* Stockton and Gateshead are respectively, the one as a seaport, the other as a manufacturing town, classed with reference rather to purposes of analytical comparison than to strictness of definition.

Auckland . . .	} Coal districts.
Houghton-le-Spring . . .	
Heworth, &c. . .	
Yarm . . .	} Rural districts.
Whickham . . .	
Teesdale . . .	} Lead-mining districts.
Weardale . . .	
Barnard Castle . . .	} Manufacturing towns.
Gateshead* . . .	

*The third, or Western Division*, refers collectedly to Cumberland and Westmoreland, of which counties the cottages and tenements are treated of in eight subdivisions, viz. :—

Carlisle . . .	Chief town of the division.
Penrith . . .	Agricultural market town.
Whitehaven . . .	Seaport town.
Workington . . .	Coal district.
East Ward . . .	} Rural districts.
Allonby . . .	
Cockermouth . . .	} Manufacturing towns.
Wigton . . .	

III. In addition to the above returns, I have also annexed to Enclosure A. an analysis of the results observable on perusal of its contents, from which analysis it may be collected—

1st. That privies are much rather the exception than the rule; and that drainage is quite ineffectual in the urban, but relatively good in the rural districts; whilst cottages and tenements are, generally speaking, in a fair state of repair, as well indeed they may be, having regard to the abundance of building materials in these parts.

2ndly. That there are rarely, if ever, more than two rooms in any cottage or tenement, the second room (except in pit rows) being merely a pantry; that eight persons constitute a not uncommon average of the inhabitants of a single room; but that none hereabouts live in cellars; though in the lodging-houses eight or ten families, numbering from 20 to 40 individuals, are sometimes to be found (*e.g.*, in Carlisle, Gateshead, and Stockton) heaped together in one apartment.

3rdly. That the maximum of rent for a cottage or tenement is 6*l.*, and the minimum 2*l.*; 3*l.* being, however, the average; that the cost of building such cottages or tenements varies from 70*l.* to 30*l.*; the average being, however, about 40*l.*; and that no perceptible difference as to the amount of rent has here followed on the introduction of the Union system of Poor Laws; partly, no

\* See Note, page 349.

doubt, because the payment of rent by the parish had obtained much less extensively than in the south.

4thly. That the average cost of annual repairs may be stated at about 7s., and the average portion of earnings required to pay rent at about—

$\frac{1}{10}$ th in large towns.

$\frac{1}{12}$ th in market towns and seaport towns.

$\frac{1}{13}$ th in coal districts.

$\frac{1}{13}$ th in rural districts.

$\frac{1}{9}$ th in lead-mining districts and manufacturing towns.

With reference to the 14th query\* (certainly the most important of the whole in a practical sense), as well as to the replies, which it has elicited, and which will be found in Enclosure A., I propose in a future report to consider in detail how far we have evidence that cases of fever or other disease are attributable to a want of drainage and cleanliness in the cottages or tenements of my district; and I will therefore confine myself for the present to observing, that in towns the connexion of fever with the want of drainage and cleanliness is undeniable and undenied, while in rural districts such connexion appears to be but rarely traceable, owing no doubt partly to some little superiority of accommodation, but principally to the modifying effect which free ventilation of air cannot fail to produce on the unhealthful influences of accumulating filth.

IV. Under the head of Enclosure B., and arranged (as to the classification of the queries and replies) in manner similar to Enclosure A., I have placed the opinions which are held on the various points incidental to the rating of cottages and small tenements, both by influential and by practical persons, having local experience of the following populous districts, viz.:—

Tynemouth . . . . .	} Northern division.
Berwick-upon-Tweed . . . . .	
Castle Ward . . . . .	
South Shields . . . . .	} Southern division.
Sunderland . . . . .	
Gateshead . . . . .	
Carlisle . . . . .	} Western division.
Penrith and West Ward . . . . .	
Whitehaven . . . . .	
Cockermouth . . . . .	

The replies to the first eight queries in this enclosure are hardly susceptible of analysis or abbreviation, and I do not think that I could usefully place their substance before your Board in any more condensed shape than that in which they are within pre-

\* "Do you know of any cases of fever or other diseases to be properly attributed to the bad state of repairs or want of drainage in the cottages of the persons so attacked?"

sented, and I beg therefore to refer you to the document itself for detailed information respecting the standard of value with regard to which rates are deemed collectible from cottage property; as also respecting the exemption of the occupiers of a certain description of these tenements from payment of rates, the direct or indirect interference to that end of the owners of such property, &c.

Respecting the last query (the 13th),\* it is curious and instructive to observe that all *my witnesses* (most of them, be it remarked, being themselves extensive owners of cottage or tenement property) concur emphatically as to the expediency of rating the landlords instead of the occupiers of small tenements: they differ, indeed, as to the amount at which the liability of the landlord should cease, some being for 5*l.*, and some for 9*l.*, but on the principle they are all agreed.

V. The queries numbered 9, 10, 11, and 12 relate to *building societies*, which are extremely popular and rapidly increasing in various parts of my district, and upon which, as having an indirect but not, I think, an unimportant bearing on the question before me, you will not perhaps be displeased that I should take this opportunity of briefly commenting.

The various building societies in the three divisions (into which for the purposes of this report I have apportioned my district) present some few unimportant differences in matters of detail, but are nearly all based upon the following plan:—

Each member subscribes for so many shares as he may think fit, subject to such limitation of the total number to be held by one person as may be fixed by the rules. A subscription of 10*s.* per month entitles him to a share of 120*l.*; and a subscription of 5*s.* per month to a half share of 60*l.* From time to time, as the money raised by means of subscriptions, premiums, &c. amounts to a sufficient sum, the privilege of receiving in advance the amount of a share is sold to the highest bidder, and the premium which he gives (frequently, in Newcastle, amounting to 30*l.* or 35*l.*) goes to increase the society's funds. The purchaser of this priority is allowed to take, at the same rate of premium, as many sums of 120*l.* each as he holds shares, provided they do not exceed three or four. He is allowed a few weeks to provide a security. If he has determined to build, he receives the amount of the shares by instalments as the building advances, and according to the report of the society's inspecting officers, mortgaging, however, the ground and buildings to the society; if, on the other hand, he makes a purchase of ready-built property, the whole of the money is at once advanced on mortgage of it, upon the officer's report that the security is satisfactory. The amount advanced is generally nearly equal to the value of the property. The person

\* "What is your opinion generally as to the expediency of exempting the occupiers of small tenements from the payment of rates, and of collecting them from the landlord?"

who thus "buys out" his share or shares pays 10s. per month per share by way of interest, in addition to his monthly subscriptions of the same amount; and if the subscriptions and interest be regularly paid, he will hold his property at the termination of the society, discharged from the mortgage, which will have been liquidated by the monthly subscriptions. If at any time no member should bid for the priority of buying out, lots are drawn, and the person on whom the lot falls is compelled to take the money, or at least to pay interest for it from the expiration of the time allowed by the rules for providing a security. At the end of 20 years, had there been no premiums, no interest, and no expenses or losses, the society would terminate, and each member having paid 120l. would be entitled to receive that sum; but as considerable premiums are generally obtained, as interest is regularly charged, as the expenses of management are inconsiderable, and as losses by the inadequacy of the security seldom occur, the societies are expected to terminate at a much earlier period; and consequently, the subscriptions actually paid for a share of 120l. will be considerably less than that sum. The members buy out *chiefly* for the purpose of *building* property; not unfrequently, however, they do so for the purpose of purchasing house property already built, either new or old. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Gateshead, the societies consist chiefly of tradesmen, journeymen, &c., but many of the workmen in the large factories are also members. The sums raised in these towns are very considerable. The receipts of one society in Newcastle are about 300l. a-month.

There are occasionally societies to be found in my district conducted on a different plan (such as the Carlisle and Stockton Building Societies) in which houses are built by the society and are allotted to the different subscribers; but these societies have been almost wholly superseded by the more modern system, as above described. The one great object, however, of all similar associations is to enable their respective members to build a dwelling-house, to purchase a dwelling-house, or to buy land whereon to erect a dwelling-house, *by means of a small monthly subscription*; and as these building societies have proved equally profitable and attractive to the industrious classes of most of the great towns of the northern counties—as their avowed purpose is to ensure domestic and personal comfort to those classes—and as Parliament has already taken a protecting cognizance of their constitution—I am disposed to persuade myself that building societies offer the fairest mark upon which to essay the practicability and efficacy of a Building Act. On the difficult question of a Building Act, nevertheless, my ideas are not sufficiently matured to allow of my further following out the subject I have thus started; I may perhaps, with your permission, resume it in another report; but I must now solicit that same permission to conclude the present report with the trifling explanation necessary

to a right appreciation of the contents of the third and last enclosure.

VI. Under the head of Enclosure C., I have annexed five plans of cottages; to each plan I have also annexed a descriptive memorandum, and to those memoranda I have only to add that the instances to be met with in my district of cottages and tenements of superior arrangement and accommodation are singularly few and unremarkable. In the rural districts, the cottages on the estates of the greatest proprietors have rarely more than one single room for every purpose. In the pit-rows and in towns they have nominally two rooms, but even there the inhabitants are accustomed to live and sleep (irrespective of sexes) in the same room; and of conveniences for cleanliness, to say nothing of improvements for the more economical management of fuel and household resources, there are scarce any instances, properly so called, to be seen, except perchance in ornamental cottages adjoining the residences of such powerful noblemen as the Duke of Northumberland, Earl Grey, the Earl of Lonsdale, &c.: discouraging facts these, which I attribute chiefly to the local practice of letting cottages, with the farm on which they stand, to the great farmers, who can naturally care but little (so that they have house-room for their hinds and labourers, rent free and weather proof) for the details of cottage reform, and of whom many would probably look upon pantries, separate bed-rooms, and clear drainage as superfluous luxuries unknown to the late and unnecessary to the present generation—and upon the use of privies, *vice* the adjacent dunghill, as uselessly calculated to deteriorate the manure.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your very obedient servant, J. W.

The Poor Law Commissioners,  
 &c.    &c.    &c.

NOTE.—The enclosures referred to in the foregoing paper could not be inserted (regard being had to their volume) consistently with the purpose and arrangement of this Report; the subject matter, however, of such enclosures is otherwise sufficiently developed and illustrated in the two next-following communications. J. W.