

REMEDIES FOR OVERCROWDING IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN.

BY WILLIAM LAWSON, ESQ., LL.D.

[Read January 22nd, 1909.]

THIS question is no new one ; it has been discussed in and out of this Society ; much has been done by private and public effort to remedy the overcrowding which admittedly exists in the city of Dublin, but the latest official information which we have, and to which I shall presently refer, shows that the problem is not yet solved, and that much remains to be done to solve the problem, if, indeed, it can be solved at all. As far back as January, 1881, Dr. Mapother, an eminent official authority on Public Health, in an address delivered as President of this Society, dealing with the tenement question, said* :

Suburban cottages for artisans are far safer than tenements. No less remarkable a person than Queen Elizabeth condemned the latter. In 1580 her words were :—

“Great multitudes of poor people inhabiting small rooms, being therein heaped together and in a sort smothered in one house ; if plague or sickness came amongst them it would possibly spread through the whole city and confines.”

Again he says † :

A truly noble Dublin benefactor has given a splendid park for the people on the south side ; on the north and central districts lungs in the form of promenades or playgrounds to take the children from the streets and lanes are sadly wanting.

And again ‡ :

Nine years ago Dr. Hancock attacked one great impediment, which yet is not removed. He said : “The great causes of waste spaces in towns and ruined houses is defective title. Local authorities ought to be enabled to stop this evil, which diminishes the property liable to local taxes, and increases the cost of all town arrangements by lengthening unnecessary streets, street pipes, gas, etc. Let the local authority, after twelve months’ notice, be enabled to sell such premises, take photographs of existing state, and invest money. The complication of title would be transferred to the photographs and invested tenancy, and the unoccupied or ruined premises would be sold with absolute title to a building society for artisans’ and labourers’ dwellings.”

* Journal, vol 8, p. 92. † *Ib.*, p. 92. ‡ *Ib.* p. 93.

In October, 1881, the late Sir Frederick Falkiner, then Recorder of Dublin, read before the Social Science Congress held in Dublin a Report on Homes of the Poor,* which is a very interesting document, and well repays perusal. It emphasises the need of an expression of public opinion on the subject, and refers to the fact that the persons most interested, namely, the occupiers of rooms in tenement houses, not being rated, had no votes, parliamentary or municipal, and therefore could not bring pressure to bear particularly on the Town Council to remedy the existing state of things. It is a striking commentary on these observations that, though most of these occupiers have for some years past enjoyed the parliamentary and municipal franchise, the necessity for personal rating having been abolished, they have not, as far as I know, urged their representatives to action in so vital a matter.

Coming down to a later period, Mr. Charles Eason, one of our Vice-Presidents, who has devoted a great deal of attention to this subject, read a paper on December 13th, 1898, entitled "Tenement Houses of Dublin and their condition and regulation."† In this paper Mr. Eason discusses the bye-laws with regard to tenement houses then proposed to be made by the Corporation of Dublin pursuant to the Public Health Act (Ireland) 1878, in lieu of bye-laws made in 1880. Whether it was owing to the criticism of Mr. Eason or other causes I know not, but the bye-laws in substitution for those of 1880, which are now in force, were not made until the year 1902.

Again, on March 27th, 1901, Mr. Charles Dawson, another of our Vice-Presidents, conversant with the condition of the poor of the city by his long connection with the Corporation as well as by his private efforts to improve their condition, for example, by promoting the Association for the Housing of the Very Poor, read a paper on "The Housing of the People, with special reference to Dublin."‡

He says §:

It has been suggested to adapt the present tenement houses in Dublin, as Miss Octavia Hill has done in London. Once I was an advocate of this. But experience has taught me that most of them, if not all, are not worth restoring. It should have been done over thirty years ago. The walls are almost all that remain. In new buildings the walls represent a third of the entire cost, but here they represent nothing of the kind, and for their interior reconstruction it would mean demolition from the basement to the attic. I fear disease in every crevice. The plan is, build new houses, and, instead of pursuing the policy of buying old houses at fabulous prices, let them be closed by degrees and the areas turned into open spaces.

* Statistical Journal, vol. 8, p. 261.

† Journal, vol. 11, p. 45.

‡ Journal, vol. 10, p. 383.

§ Journal, vol. 11, p. 54.

As regards lodging houses, as well as tenement houses, Mr. Dawson admits that safe and sanitary lodging should be provided by responsible public authority, and that there should be no fear of any financial loss if this was done; and by having dwellings and lodging-houses in the hands of a public authority, the enormous expense of the Public Health Department would be almost wiped out. The expense referred to here is, of course, the expense of inspecting lodging-houses owned by private persons, and instituting prosecutions in respect of the same. He puts holdings erected by public companies or by trustees (such as the Iveagh Trustees) in the same category as those erected by the Corporation. The Rowton Lodging House lately erected in Bride Street by the Iveagh Trustees shows what can be done in this matter.

The powers given to urban sanitary authorities by the Public Health Act (Ireland), 1878, which is modelled (with some alterations) on the English Act of 1875, with reference to insanitary dwellings, were extended by the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, and as to Dublin, by the Dublin Corporation Act, 1890. Section 29 of the last mentioned Act (which is a local and personal Act *) provides for the registration of tenement houses by the Corporation, and imposes a penalty on the owner of any tenement house who wilfully fails to comply with the provisions of the section, viz. : to forward his name and address, and the situation and number of the tenement houses, for the purpose of being registered by the Corporation in a book to be kept for that purpose. "Tenement house" is there defined to mean

Any house (not being a common lodging-house) occupied by members of more than one family, and in which the average rent charged to the occupier shall be less than seven shillings a week, and the lowest rent charged to any occupier shall be not more than five shillings a week.

A common lodging-house is defined by Section 2 of the Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878, as "a house in which, or in any part of which, persons are harboured or lodged for hire for a single night, or for less than a week at a time." Section 30 enables the Corporation to make bye-laws regulating the number of occupants to be permitted, and the provisions of air space (internal and external), and of sanitary accommodation in the case of all buildings originally intended for the occupation of one family and afterwards used or intended to be used as tenement houses. I was under the impression that bye-laws had been made by the Corporation under this section, but that is a mistake. The bye-laws now in force were made under the provisions of the Public Health (Ireland)

Acts, 1878-1896, by the Corporation on August 13th, 1902, and approved by the Local Government Board on September 3rd, 1902.

I refer now to these bye-laws, as I think that Mr. Dawson goes a little too far in his statement, to which I have referred. There are tenement houses at present in this city, some of which are in a sanitary condition and fit for habitation, and many others which can be put into such a condition without undue outlay. I allude to the houses owned by the Alexandra Guild Tenements Company, the Trinity College Social Service (Tenements) Company, and the Association for the Housing of the Very Poor, not to speak of numerous houses in private hands, and I refer to the Report of Surgeon Colonel D. Edgar Flinn, lately presented to the Local Government Board, to which I shall presently call attention.

These bye-laws are prefaced by a recital of the provisions of Section 100 of the Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878, which empowers a sanitary authority to make bye-laws for the following matters:—

- (1) For fixing, and from time to time varying, the number of persons who may occupy a house or part of a house which is let in lodgings or occupied by members of more than one family, and for the separation of the sexes in a house so let or occupied.
- (2) For the registration of houses so let or occupied;
- (3) For the inspection of such houses;
- (4) For enforcing drainage and the provision of privy accommodation for such houses, and for promoting cleanliness and sanitation in such houses;
- (5) For the cleansing and lime-washing, at stated times of the premises, and for the paving of the courts and courtyards thereof;
- (6) For the giving of notices and the taking of precautions in case of any infectious disease.

They are taken in the main from the model bye-laws made by the English Local Government Board under the provisions of the corresponding Section of the English Public Health Act, 1875 (38 & 39 Vict., c. 55., s. 90). They do not apply to common lodging houses as defined by the Irish Act of 1878, to which I have already referred, but only to tenement houses, or houses and parts of houses, other than common lodging-houses, let in lodgings or occupied by members of more than one family, within the city of Dublin.

Bye-laws 2 to 5 deal with (1) the number of persons who may occupy a room. If it is used for sleeping in only, 300 cubic feet of free air space are to be provided for each person over ten years of age, and 150 for each person not exceeding ten years of age; if the room is used for other purposes as well as sleeping, 400 and 200 cubic feet respectively are to be

provided. Both landlord and room-keeper are liable to a penalty not exceeding £5 for knowingly causing or suffering a greater number of persons than will admit of these provisions for free air space to occupy a room at any one time, and in case of a continuing offence to a further penalty of 40s. for each day after receipt of written notice of the offence. No provision is made as to the variation of the number of occupants, or for separation of the sexes, following in this respect the English model bye-laws. The omission of the latter provision is stated to be due to the doubt which the English Local Government Board entertained as to how far this desirable object could be practically attained, in view of the ordinary conditions of life in lodgings of the poorer classes. When, however, the local authority is satisfied that a rule on this subject can be enforced without hardship, as for instance, in cases where it is found that individual holdings in the lodging-houses of a district generally comprise two or more rooms, the English Local Government Board say that they will readily co-operate with the local authority in framing a bye-law to provide for the separation of the sexes.

These standards of air space are the same as in the model bye-laws, but if it were practicable to enforce an increased allowance of free air space, the bye-law could, of course, be altered.

Bye-law 6 deals with (2) registration, and obliges the landlord to supply within seven days after receipt of notice the information necessary to register the house. The following particulars must be given :—

- (a) The total number of rooms in house ;
- (b) The total number of rooms let in lodgings or occupied by members of more than one family ;
- (c) The manner of use of each room ;
- (d) The number, age, and sex of the occupants of each room used for sleeping.
- (e) The Christian name and surname of each room-keeper.
- (f) The amount of rent or charge payable by each room-keeper.

These bye-laws are drawn on the assumption that the sanitary inspector will be instructed by the local authority to ascertain the dimensions of the several rooms in each house, and when the maximum number of inmates have been fixed by the application of the rules, the local authority will supply the landlord and room-keepers with tickets or placards which may be affixed to the walls or doors or in some other suitable position, and which show precisely how many inmates may be received in each sleeping apartment.

Bye-laws 7 to 10 deal with (3) inspection. Both landlord and room-keeper, or other occupier, are bound to afford at all times to any sanitary officer free access to the interior of the premises, and no person is to wilfully obstruct any such officer in his inspection of the premises. Bye-law 11 deals with (4), and imposes on the landlord the obligation of providing privy accommodation by means of water-closets or privies, in the proportion of not less than one water-closet to every twelve persons sleeping in the house.

Bye-laws 12 to 33 deal with (4), cleanliness and ventilation, yards, closets, ashpits, ash bins, and scullery troughs, sweeping and washing windows, floors, and staircases, and ventilation, by having windows made to open, etc., the duty being imposed on the room-keeper, if he has the exclusive use—otherwise upon the landlord; filth and refuse to be removed once a day at least by each room-keeper from his room, and no foul liquids or offensive matter to be thrown or dropped upon any part of the house used in common.

Bye-laws 34 to 35 provide for the cleansing of the premises by the landlord in April and October in every year, washing with hot lime wash, cleaning or renewing paint or paper, &c.

Bye-law 36 provides for opening of windows of sleeping apartments for an hour twice a day, unless a window has to be kept closed on account of bad weather, sickness of any person, or for other sufficient cause.

Bye-law 37 (Notice in cases of infectious disease) provides that where a landlord has been informed or has ascertained or has reasonable grounds for believing that an occupant of any room which has been let is ill of an infectious disease, he shall give written notice to the Medical Officer of Health, and verbal or written notice to every other room-keeper in the house.

Bye-law 38 imposes a similar obligation on a roomkeeper, and to give written notice to the landlord as well.

Bye-law 39 provides that where a magistrate's order has been made for removal to hospital of a person suffering from any dangerous infectious disorder, both landlord and room-keeper shall assist in the removal and adopt such precautions as may be prescribed by the Medical Officer of Health.

Bye-law 40 imposes the penalties above mentioned for any offence against any of these bye-laws.

No bye-law has been made as to drainage, as it was considered that the statutory provisions were sufficient. The enforcement of these bye-laws is, of course, a matter of difficulty, and attended with great expense. A large staff is employed by the Corporation, including four women inspectors. What can be done by women is shown by the account of the management of the tenement houses in Grenville Street and Summer Hill owned by the Alexandra Guild

Company, compiled by Miss Bagley in 1902, to which I shall presently refer.

I come now to the Report of Surgeon Colonel Edgar Flinn, Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board, on the sanitary circumstances and administration of the city of Dublin, with special reference to the causes of the high death-rate, which is dated November 30th, 1906, and printed by Alex. Thom & Co. for His Majesty's Stationery Office. Price Four Shillings.

The report deals with several matters which contribute to the high death-rate; but I only refer briefly to such of them as are germane to the question under consideration. The Inspector points out that the causes of high death-rate were the subject of inquiry both by a Royal Commission in 1880, and by a Committee appointed by the Local Government Board in 1900, and gives the principal recommendations made by this Commission and Committee. I quote a few of these recommendations from pages 9 to 13 of the Report.

He points out (p. 19) that the rate of mortality is highest in the most crowded and poorest districts—*e.g.*, North City No. 2, South City No. 1—and appends a map showing the principal area of poverty. At page 29 he points out that the cleansing of the back yards attached to tenement houses used to be carried out by the Corporation without any charge, but that a fee of one guinea per annum is now charged to owners of tenement houses. He doubts whether the saving effected by this regulation is matter for congratulation, and points out that very few owners have paid the fee required. He speaks out plainly as to tenement dwellings and on overcrowding (13 A). Let me quote a few passages (p. 36-38). He appends two tables taken from the Census of the City of Dublin, 1901, which were compiled under the direction of the Registrar General, Sir Robert Matheson, who has already dealt with this question of tenements of less than five rooms, the enumeration of which formed the special feature of the house accommodation portion of the Census of 1901, in a paper read before this Society on June 5th, 1903, on the Housing of the People of Ireland during the period 1841-1901 (*Journal*, Vol. XI., p. 204), and in his Presidential Address delivered on November 25th, 1904, on the Principal Results of the Census of 1901 (*Journal*, Vol. XI., p. 289). He points out in the former paper (p. 211) the unenviable position which Dublin occupies as regards overcrowding in one-room tenements, as compared with Belfast, London, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Owing to the absence of previous Irish statistics available on the question of overcrowding, he was unable to compare the state of things in the six County Boroughs in 1901 and at an earlier date. Colonel Flinn next gives examples of tenement houses, wages

of occupiers, etc., which are interesting but melancholy reading (pp. 40 and 42); he then (13 B) deals with social and economic causes of poverty, and sets out (14) what has been done to provide Artizans' Dwellings by the Corporation, Dublin Artizans' Dwellings Company, Lord Iveagh, and the Association for the Housing of the Very Poor (p. 45). He gives examples of housing and dieting of the poorer classes, with tables, showing that some tenement houses are much better kept than others (17), (p. 52). He details the duties of the Sub-Sanitary Officers with regard to tenement houses and roomkeepers, and gives particulars of convictions under the Public Health Acts.

Before I come to Colonel Flinn's recommendations let me now refer to what has been done by the personal efforts of individuals acting together to improve existing tenement houses.

ALEXANDRA GUILD TENEMENTS COMPANY, LIMITED.

This Company was started by members of the Alexandra College Guild, was registered on July 4th, 1898, with a capital of £6,000, consisting of 200 Shares of £5 each. It possesses five tenement houses, 7 and 8 Summer Hill, and 26, 27, and 28 Grenville Street. The five houses contain 52 rooms, and in them 47 families are living, numbering about 200 persons. Only two families have two separate rooms, and three others a room with an adjoining closet. The rents range from 1s. to 3s. 6d. a week. These are the rents current in the neighbourhood, the object being not to provide cheap dwellings but to give comfortable rooms in fairly well-kept houses. A dividend at the rate of 2½ per cent. has been paid to the shareholders and a balance carried forward, which proves (says the report compiled by Miss Bagley in 1902) that well-managed tenement houses can be made to yield a small profit, though it must be remembered that the Company is worked altogether by volunteers. This report deserves careful perusal.

The tenth annual report, for the year ending 31st May, 1908, shows that the affairs of the Company continue on the whole on a satisfactory financial basis. The rents received from the Summerhill property (Nos. 6, 7, and 8) amounted to £188 18s. 6d., being an increase of £4 7s. 10d. over those of the preceding year. The rent, rates, repairs and insurance showed no change from the figure for the year ended 31st May, 1907, so that the gross profit was increased by the additional rents received, and amounted to £57 6s. 4d., as compared with £52 18s. 6d. for the previous twelve months. Last year the rents received from Grenville Street (Nos. 26, 27, and 28) showed a decrease of £16 3s. 8d. as compared with those for the year ended 31st May, 1906, but this year they have slightly increased, being £132 12s. 2d., as compared with

£128 6s. 6d. for the previous twelve months. The repairs, however, amounted to £45 6s. as against £32 9s. last year, the result being that there was a loss of £10 16s. 8d. as against £2 2s. 8d. Although there was this slight increase in the rents received, a great many of the rooms were untenanted throughout the year, there having been no demand for them. But for the fact that the amount expended in repairs at Grenville Street was above the average, the Grenville Street rents would have been sufficient to meet the expenditure. The gross profit from the two properties amounted to £46 8s. 8d., as compared with £50 15s. 5d. for the year ended May 31st, 1907. The net profit for the year amounted to £44 4s. 3d., as compared with £46 19s. 7d. for the previous twelve months. No allocation was made of the balance to credit of the general profit and loss account of 1st June, 1907, *viz.*, £59 12s. 5d., and after adding the net profit from the profit and loss account, *viz.*, £44 4s. 3d., there was £103 15s. 11d. available for depreciation, reserve and dividend. The directors recommended that this £103 15s. 11d. should be allocated as follows:—Dividend for the year ended 31st May 1908, on £1,335 (the amount of the issued capital) at 2½ per cent., less income tax 1s. in the £ .. £31 14 0
 Depreciation at 5% on property .. 56 0 0
 Balance forward to next account .. 16 1 11

Total £103 15 11

The report states that the rules for enforcing order and cleanliness had been more carefully observed, and the tenants were learning to pay more attention to sanitation and ventilation. The rents were paid with great regularity as far as the tenants were able, but the lack of employment was a serious problem for the rent collectors. The bonus of one week's rent every six months still worked effectually, fifteen tenants qualified for the bonus during the past year at Summerhill, and eight at Grenville Street. The libraries had been improved and added to, and were more appreciated. The sewing and singing classes were very popular. The clothing sales were flourishing, the money derived from them being used for heating and cleaning, and for paying part of the play-room rent, and sometimes an excursion. Upwards of seventy of the tenants' children were able to enjoy the great benefit of a fortnight's, and in one case a month's, change and rest in the country. The cost of this very large undertaking was defrayed by the "Summer Holiday Fund," a fresh development of the Alexandra Guild's activity. It was a scheme to provide a fund, which it was hoped would be permanent, to enable the company to send away every summer most, if not all, of the tenants' children.

SOCIAL SERVICE (TENEMENTS) COMPANY, LIMITED.

This Company was formed in 1900 by members of Dublin University, and its operations are carried on in connection with the Dublin University Social Service Society. It owns seven tenement houses in Grenville Street, numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 24, and 25. These are large houses, with a good many rooms in each. According to the return which was kindly furnished to me by Rev. R. M. Gwynn, on Feb. 26, 1908, the total number of tenants in these houses was at that time 59 (six rooms being vacant), the total number of persons in them being 256, or an average of 36 in each house. No. 9, which is extra large, contained 57 persons. The majority of the tenants occupied one room, several two rooms, and a few, three rooms. The return shows the number of men, women, and children in each separate tenement, and the total cubic feet of each room or set of rooms so occupied. Mr. Gwynn states that often when tenants have two rooms they use one entirely as a store room and live entirely in the other, being blind to the dangers of this plan. The Directors receive no remuneration for their services, and the dividends are limited to 4 per cent. per annum. The Committee of the Dublin University Social Service Society are responsible to the Directors of the Company for the management of the houses. Members of the Society are appointed rent collectors for each year, who share the administration in turn; they are assisted by a paid resident superintendent and a number of volunteers from the Society, and an annual report is presented. The rents vary from 4s. 6d. to 2s. for a double room, and from 3s. to 1s. 6d. for a single room. There is loss by bad debts and rooms unlet, which amounted in 1906 to 13 per cent. of the rental; the loss used to be less than 10 per cent. This is partly due to want of employment and partly to the model buildings erected by the Dublin Corporation in the neighbourhood.

The Directors in their report for 1907 are of opinion that the result of their past three years working, during which they have been unable to show more than 2½ per cent. dividend, points to the conclusion that until the Public Health Authorities put severe pressure on the bad landlords it will be very difficult for those landlords who endeavour to maintain their houses in a healthy and well-ordered state to obtain a fair profit. This is especially true in respect of the cheaper and less substantial houses. The Company's experience has been that Nos. 8 and 11 Grenville Street, where the rents are higher and the rooms better, are much more profitable than Nos. 24 and 25, where the rooms are at a minimum rent but are of an inferior type, and therefore occupied by the poorest

class of tenant. The profits in 1907 were not large enough to enable the Directors to recommend the payment of a dividend. The amount received in rents was much the same as before, but the expenses of repair and renovation were unusually large.

The Directors are anxious to purchase two houses (with cottages in rear) of the same type and in the same part of the street as those of their houses which have proved most profitable. These houses will accommodate some twenty families. To do this they require to increase the capital of £3,000 (in 11 shares) by the issue of shares to the amount of £500. The Society also, out of funds raised by itself (quite apart from the profits of the Company, which is a separate entity, and whose shareholders are mostly graduates of Trinity College), has obtained and equipped a club building for recreation of various kinds. There is also a library and savings club.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE HOUSING OF THE VERY POOR (LIMITED.)

This Association was incorporated in December, 1898, with a nominal capital of £20,000, of which a sum of over £11,000 has been subscribed. At the inception of the Company only £5,000 was subscribed, and this sum being considered insufficient for the purchase of a site and erection of new dwellings, the Directors acquired some houses in Werburgh Street and Derby Square (which contain about 37 separate single-room tenements) to make practical trial of the policy which had been recommended to them of transferring into single-roomed tenements old houses already built. Although a fair return was obtained for the money expended, the result of the experience so gained was that the Directors decided that in future the proper course was to erect new dwellings specially designed for the purpose they had in view. Accordingly a site was acquired in Summer Street and John Street, lying to the south of Thomas Street near the Coombe, partly held in fee and partly for an unexpired term of about 800 years. A large block of modern self-contained flats, three storeys high, has been erected in Allingham Street, on the west side of Summer Street, 117 in number, the majority of which are single-room tenements, some of two and some of three rooms. These tenements are constructed for families of certain sizes, and vary accordingly. The rents payable vary from 2s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per week. The houses are frequently inspected by the officers of the Corporation. The Superintendent has instructions as to the number to occupy each flat or tenement, and these instructions are, it is stated, strictly carried out. It is intended to proceed with the rest of the scheme, which contemplates about 350 separate tenements, men's reading room, baths and wash house, as soon as funds have been obtained.

An interesting description of these dwellings has been printed in pamphlet form, with illustrations, and well repays perusal. Each tenement is supplied with separate water supply and separate sanitary conveniences. Recesses are formed in every room for the beds, the whole cubic capacity of the living room being thus utilized by night, whilst the beds themselves, being out of the way in the recesses, and, if curtained off, almost out of sight, the whole area of the room, excluding the bed recesses, is left during the day entirely free from the great inconvenience of bedsteads and bedding. In some of the tenements a small but thoroughly ventilated separate sleeping compartment is provided, thus affording a means for the separation of the sexes, if necessary. Stout iron-framed wire-woven mattresses with felted covers are provided in all bed recesses and sleeping compartments. Playgrounds for the children are provided, and a reading and smoking room for men. It appears from the Report for the year ending December 31st, 1906, that the Directors were able to recommend payment of a dividend at the rate of 3 per cent. per annum and to carry forward a substantial balance to the next account; and from the corresponding report for 1907 that a dividend at the same rate was declared.

All that the Association requires is additional capital to enable it to extend its good work.

Much can be done by individual effort. If a landlord, upon the tenant's lease falling in, takes over the house and collects the rents and looks after the house himself he can do much to improve the condition of the occupiers. I have had an opportunity recently of visiting three tenement houses where the landlord does this, with very satisfactory results both to landlord and occupiers, and no doubt there are many more such cases.

Colonel Flinn's recommendations are stated at p. 56 of the Report. I refer to (1), (2), (3), and (9) :—

- (1.) Increased water supply to tenement houses, water be laid on to each floor, and separate sanitary accommodation to be provided for at least every two families.
- (2.) Additional new buildings for the working classes to be erected, and if practicable in some of the areas added to the city which are not too thickly populated.
- (3.) Daily removal of contents of dust bins from tenement houses.
- (9.) Overcrowding in tenement houses. In order to prevent this and to limit the number of persons residing in them, some system of registration to be adopted, whereby the number of rooms in each tenement house and the measurements and cubic capacity of each room could be ascertained, and a register kept recording these details.

This report, which is dated Nov. 30, 1906, it will be noticed, does not refer in express terms to the bye-laws I have mentioned, nor state how many tenement houses have been registered.

I have since obtained from the Secretary of the Public Health Committee of the Corporation the following information:—

About 6,000 tenement houses are registered under the Dublin Corporation Act, 1890.

Sir Charles Cameron, in his Report on the Public Health, of the City for 1906, says at p. 88:—"During the year 1906 the inspection of tenement houses was carried on, and many improvements effected in them. So many of them are in such a decaying state from age and abuse that it is difficult to keep them in repair. In many instances the bad condition of tenement houses is mainly due to the tenants. Thirty-seven insanitary houses were closed during 1906, and two re-opened. The total number of insanitary houses closed by magistrates' orders from 31st August, 1879 to 31st December, 1903, was 3,641. The majority have been repaired, rebuilt or rendered habitable, but about 2,000 are in ruins or have been completely taken down. Whole alleys and courts have been closed permanently."

Four hundred and sixty tenements were erected during the year by the Corporation on the Montgomery Street area, and 60 tenements at Bride Street, portion of Lord Iveagh's scheme. The Report gives a return of sanitary operations for the year, from which it appears that there were 509 summonses for breaches of tenement house bye-laws, and 495 convictions. In 1907 there were 555 summonses and 550 convictions for breaches of tenement house bye-laws. In his Report for 1907 Sir Charles Cameron says at p. 47 that there is a very unusual amount of poverty in Dublin, and that in the poorest sections of the population in every town there is a higher rate of mortality than prevails amongst the population at large. Nearly one-third of the Dublin population, including the whole Metropolitan Registration Area, is composed of labourers, hawkers, porters, etc. In 1907 the death rate in this class was 31.9 per 1,000. Of this class many end their days in workhouses, in which in 1907 there were 6,024 inmates. Of the workhouse inmates nearly one-third die annually. Dublin, he continues, seems to have an undue proportion of the poorest class, as is shown by the very large proportion of deaths—nearly one-half of the population—that occur in charitable institutions, and by the fact that 37 out of every 100 families reside each in one room.

With regard to tenement houses, he says, at p. 72: "By far the greater number of tenement houses in Dublin were originally built for one family; now many of them shelter a dozen families. They have only one advantage, namely, that

their rooms are generally large and lofty. Their disadvantages are numerous. They are in most cases so old that it is difficult to keep them in repair. The sanitary accommodation, being used by more than one family, is rarely perfectly clean. The tenants are often very careless as regards keeping the dwellings in a cleanly condition, and too frequently break the woodwork in the stairs, windows, chimney-pieces, etc. When a tenement house is occupied by decent families who keep their rooms clean and neat and see that the sanitary accommodation is not abused, and when in addition to this there is a landlord desirous of his house being kept in good repair, then the roomy old house, designed originally for one family, is a fairly good residence for half-a-dozen families. I regret to say that the great majority of tenement houses do not correspond to the above description. Many of them have landlords who with the greatest difficulty are obliged to effect necessary repairs, or improve defective drains, and so promote better sanitary accommodation." At p. 68 he enlarges on the sanitary accommodation of tenement houses, and says that there is every year on the whole an improvement in this respect. Some very fine houses (he says) have been converted into tenements, *e.g.*, the magnificent houses in Henrietta street, formerly occupied by peers, bishops, and landowners. In the poorest part of the city, at Ward's Hill, Black Pitts, is a tenement house, formerly the residence of Lord Bangor, whose family name is Ward. An illustration is given of this house, as also of some Queen Anne houses in Sweeny's Lane, New Street, and in Chamber Street, in the Liberties, used as tenements. The inspection of tenement houses is (he says) sedulously carried on, and every effort made to get them into good order. Sometimes it is necessary to get a magistrate's order to detenant and close a house, every attempt to get it into order having failed. The total number of houses closed during 1907 was 66, making a total of 3,707 closed since 31st August, 1879. On 27th August, 1907, the Public Health Committee made a special report as to the condition of an insanitary area comprising the south side of Cook Street to Audoen's Arch, Barr's Court, Schoolhouse Lane and west side of Michael's Lane, which had been declared by Sir Charles Cameron in 1904 to be an unhealthy area which should be dealt with under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, Part I. The Committee urge that this area should be acquired, the sites cleared, and dwellings for the working classes, which are badly wanted in the locality, erected.

This area would no doubt have been cleared ere this, but for the expense which has attended the clearing of such areas. An attempt has very recently been made to deal with this question by legislation. I allude to *The Housing of the Working Classes (Ireland) Act, 1908* (8 Ed. 7, c. 61).

It is entitled "An Act to provide further facilities for the erection of Houses for the Working Classes in Cities and Towns in Ireland." It was introduced by Mr. Clancy in the House of Commons, and taken up and amended by the Attorney-General for Ireland, our President, and, after some amendments in the House of Lords, became law on December 21st, 1908. It first of all increases the powers of the local authority to borrow money for the purpose of the Housing of the Working Classes Acts. S. (1) extends the period for which money may be borrowed from sixty years to eighty years, and provides (S. 1 (2)) that no money need be paid off nor paid into a sinking fund during the first two years after the date of the execution of the mortgage or other instrument securing the loan. S. 2 provides that money borrowed, whether before or after the passing of the Act, shall not be reckoned as part of the debt of the local authority for the purpose of the limitation on borrowing contained in S. 238 of the Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878. This S. 238 (dealing with borrowing powers of Sanitary Authorities) provides: (2) that the sum borrowed shall not at any time exceed, with the balances of all the outstanding loans contracted by the sanitary authority under the Sanitary Acts and that Act, in the whole twice the net annual value of the premises assessable within the district in respect of which such money may be borrowed. S. 3 enables the local authority to re-borrow with the consent of the Local Government Board for the purpose of paying off loans. S. 14 provides that loans shall be made at the minimum rate of interest for the time being allowed out of the Local Loans Fund.

Secondly, the Act provides a Fund for reducing the annual charge to be paid or set apart by the local authority in repayment of the loan and interest, which is called "The Irish Housing Fund," by applying part of the dormant portion of the Irish Suitor's Fund to the purposes of the Housing Acts, as follows: S. (4) (1) provides that the Bank of Ireland is, out of the fund of Suitors in the Supreme Court, upon the order of the Lord Chancellor, to pay to the Local Government Board, for the purposes of the Housing of the Working Classes Acts, the sum of £80,000. S. 4 (2) provides that the Accountant-General shall, on the order of the Lord Chancellor, out of the 2½ per cent Consolidated Stock, forming portion of the Suitors' Fund, and standing to the credit of the general ledger account kept by him for dormant balances, and the unclaimed order and residue account, Land Judge's Court, transfer to the Local Government Board for the like purpose stock to the nominal value of £100,000. This £100,000 stock is to be sold by the Local Government Board, and the proceeds, together with the £80,000 cash, invested in trustee securities authorised by the Irish Land Act, 1903, and the annual

income is to be allocated by the Board amongst the local authorities in reduction of the annual housing charge to which each local authority is liable. Each local authority is to receive a sum that will bear the same proportion to the annual housing charge of that authority as the total amount of the income of the fund will bear to the total amount of the annual housing charges of all local authorities in Ireland, provided that the sum so payable to a local authority is not to exceed the amount of the annual housing charge of the authority. With Consols at its present price, the £100,000 Consols will only produce about £83,000, which, with the £80,000, will make a total of £163,000. Assuming that this sum can be invested at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the annual income of the fund will be about £6,400 only. Until the total amount of the annual housing charges of all local authorities in Ireland is ascertained, it is impossible to say what relief any particular local authority, *e.g.*, the Corporation of Dublin, will get out of the income of this fund, but it cannot be much. The Treasury is to make good out of the Consolidated Fund any loss which the suitors may sustain by reason of the passing of the Act.

Section 6 (1) extends the provisions of Section 6 of the Labourers (Ireland) Act, 1906, to applications to the Local Government Board for an Order confirming an improvement scheme under Part I. of the Act of 1890, or sanctioning a reconstruction scheme under Part II. of that Act, or authorising the acquisition of land for the purposes of Part III. of the Act. The effect of this is to dispense with the necessity of having the Provisional Order confirmed by Act of Parliament, the order of the Local Government Board or of the County Court being final, and having the effect of an Act of Parliament. S. 6 (2) modifies the statutory provisions as to the times for publishing advertisements and serving notices. Section 11 raises the amount of compensation which may be paid to a person entitled to the rents and profits of the property taken from £20 to £60, with the limitation that not more than £300 in all shall be paid to a person not absolutely entitled for any property purchased. The object of this provision is to obviate the necessity of paying sums between £20 and £60 into Court, the cost of getting which out of Court falls on the local authority.

We now come to the more important provisions of the Act. Section 7 enables a local authority to establish or acquire houses for the working classes outside its district, with the consent of the Local Government Board and of the local authority within whose district it is proposed to establish or acquire such houses. This provision should be of service in the case where the area of the local authority is congested, and houses or sites for houses can be acquired cheaper outside

that area. Section 8 enables the local authority, when it has acquired land for the purposes of Part III. of the Act of 1890, instead of building on it, to let it on lease to any company, society, or association for the purpose of constructing or improving dwellings for the working classes, and at such a rent as they may, with the consent of the Local Government Board, determine, with power to accept an abated rent for a period not exceeding five years. This may prove useful, as a company may be able to build dwellings cheaper than the local authority. Section 9 authorises the Court, in addition to or instead of making an order for the closing of a house, to order it to be demolished, unless it is made fit for habitation within a certain time to the satisfaction of the local authority, and if the house is not made fit for habitation within the time named in the demolition order, that order is to be carried out as provided by Section 34 of the Act of 1890, viz., by the local authority taking it down, selling the materials, and paying the balance, if any, over after deducting expenses of taking down and removal, to the owner. Section 10 applies to Ireland Section 9 of the English Act of 1903, and enables the local authority, when the amount realised by the sale of the materials is not enough to cover the expenses of taking down and removal, to recover the deficiency from the owner in a summary manner.

The insanitary conditions under which the poorer classes live, and overcrowding, are, in the opinion of Colonel Flinn, two of the chief causes which contribute to the high death-rate in Dublin. While the clearing of unhealthy areas, and the construction of new dwellings, will do much to remove these causes, the improvement of tenement houses must be taken in hand. Dublin is peculiar in this respect, that it contains so many houses of a superior class, which were built for occupation by one family, but have now been let out in rooms, and occupied by several families. The majority of these houses are to be found on the north side of the city, and in the neighbourhood of squares, which were once fashionable resorts. Fashion, has, however, changed, and there has been a constant migration to the south side of professional and private residents. The houses they have quitted are used, some for business purposes, and others are correctly described in *Thom's Directory* as "tenements." These houses are, for the most part, well built, and only require to be put in repair and kept in repair, with such structural alterations or additions as are necessary to adapt them for use by more than one family. It may seem strange that, notwithstanding all that has been done in the erection of new dwellings for the labouring classes, yet there is always a demand for rooms in these houses, and that rents are obtained out of proportion to the accommodation provided.

I am informed that these rooms are in many cases preferred to the new dwellings; it may be because they are generally larger than those in the new dwellings, or because of the greater freedom from restraint.

Excuse is often made for owners of tenement houses that they are too poor to put them in repair, when so required by the sanitary authority. Mere want of repair is not enough to justify the sanitary authorities to take proceedings, the want of repair must be such as to render the house injurious to health, or unsanitary (to use a single word); but why should poverty, so-called, be an excuse? The owner of the house probably holds it under a lease which obliges him to keep it in repair and give it up at the end of the term in good repair. He derives a profit rent out of it by devoting it to a purpose for which it was never intended. The covenant to keep in repair is not observed, and it is difficult for the lessor to enforce it; unless there is a provision for re-entry for breach of covenant, he can only bring an action for damages against the lessee or assignee, and then the damages will be measured by the injury to his reversion, as it is called, which, if the lease has many years to run, will be measured at a small sum. One has only to walk through the streets where these tenement houses are situate to see what a dilapidated condition the exterior of the premises is often allowed to fall into; the interior is probably as bad, if not worse. Lessors are generally satisfied if they get their rent, and do not trouble about the condition of the premises during the currency of the lease; and when it falls in, they often find that they have to deal with a person who is no mark for the cost of the repairs that are necessary to be done. A laxer view is taken in this country than in England of the obligation of a tenant to give up premises in good repair.

Both Sir F. Falkiner, in the report I have mentioned, and Miss Bagley, in her account of the Alexandra Guild, call attention to the time it takes to eject by magistrate's order an undesirable tenant, and suggest that the law should be altered in this respect.

Miss Bagley says, at page 7:—"As the law stands at present, the only remedy a landlord has in the case of a bad tenant is to eject him by a process, which costs at least 2s. 6d., and takes four weeks to carry out. During this time the worthless tenant lives rent free under the ægis of the law, departing at last to repeat the performance elsewhere, and having also, in some cases, before leaving, injured the superior accommodation which the landlord is now obliged by law to provide for him. This latter offence should be made criminal and punishable; and nine days ought to suffice for the ejection process—three days' notice, three days from the serving of the summons, and three days from its hearing in

Court." I agree in this ; but it would not be so easy to get the law amended in this particular.

Colonel Flinn's report shows the magnitude of the evil to be contended with, but if the remedies he advocates can be effected, it is not insuperable. If one-roomed tenements could be abolished, except, say, for a family of two adults and two children, much would be gained. A limit might also be placed on the number of families in one house. Those who visit tenement houses know the size of the average room, and how many it should hold according to the rules as to air-space referred to. The difficulty, of course, is that a man with a family cannot, in most cases, afford to pay the rent required for two rooms. If, however, new dwellings continue to be built, either inside or outside the city, the rents of tenements must sooner or later be affected.

Why should the labourer in the country be better housed than his brother in the city ? The latter really should be better housed, as he has not the fresh air and outdoor life of his brother in the country, who, if his dwelling sometimes consists of a single room, can live out of it for a longer period of the day. If their poverty can be alleviated by giving them constant employment, they will be in a position to require better accommodation. The Distress Committee may do much in this way. Much can also be done by teaching children habits of cleanliness and neatness, by the personal influence of those who visit these houses (which personal influence, as Miss Bagley well says, is the most potent factor in all schemes of reform), and by establishing playgrounds and open spaces, and playrooms and recreation halls. My object in writing this paper will have been attained if it tends in any way to arouse public opinion on this subject, especially amongst those who are most affected, and to remove the black spots which disfigure the face of our city.