

HOUSES FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

On the Importance of a Society formed for the Purpose of Constructing Houses for the Occupation of the Working Classes.

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The interest shown in Britain by many benevolent persons, in the establishment of baths and wash-houses for the operatives, has led to the inquiry how far such institutions are needed in Canada; but, in making the inquiry, and looking into the mode of life of those classes here, our attention is forcibly called to a still more important subject, namely, the dwellings they reside in, the localities of such dwellings, and the charge for rent.

Upon investigating the matter it will be found, that their dwellings are cold in winter and warm in summer, very liable to accidents from fire, situated in swamps and other dangerous localities, occasioning a fearful loss of life, especially among infants; without water or other accommodation; and for these miserable tenements double the rent is exacted, in proportion to the cost, that is obtained for the best residences in the city. Without comfort or the means of cleanliness at his home, the public-house is often resorted to, at first as a means of enjoying, even in a slight degree, what is denied at his fireside, and the temptation leads to destruction.

Now, the question arises, how shall this evil be removed? The answer is plain: by combination, by those possessed of means and activity associating themselves together for the purpose of erecting buildings which will afford the accommodation called for at a moderate rate, having many apartments under one roof warmed by a common fire, thus economising fuel, and preventing the poor from having to pay for that article twice as much as the rich; by having a common summer kitchen, bath-house, and wash-house, for many families, with water in abundance, and by having such located in healthy quarters of the city.

And all this could be done, affording the full rate of interest for the money expended, with sufficient reserved for repairs.

Charities where nothing is given, but where money is merely lent, have been always found to be the most beneficial; being merely a loan, industry, instead of being deadened, as is too often the case where donations are made, becomes quickened; the party feels the obligation, and is desirous of getting rid of it; whilst the money, instead of helping a single individual, will help many. Now, the charity I propose will extend in effect to all, without conferring oppressive obligations on any. Nay, more, the entire system of building would be improved, not only from a good example being shown, but from the mere effect of competition. People build showy houses to prove their taste or their wealth. The houses for the poor are built either by the needy, at great cost compared to those erected by men of means, or are put up by the avaricious—the main object being to make money, regardless of the comfort of the inmates.

Even as a profitable investment I believe it would answer, and that six per cent. might be obtained for money thus laid out. There would be no want of tenants, and the pay is, generally speaking, more certain than that of persons of higher rank.

I would propose buildings of brick on a stone foundation, to be constructed 82 feet long by 36 deep; having three stories, attic, and cellar, with a kitchen in rear. To accommodate twelve families in the body of the building, and two more in the attics, using only the centres of the roof, and two rooms besides for the keeper of the house, who should have them rent free, in consequence of his keeping up the fires, and collecting the rents weekly. I would have the whole house warmed by one fire, in a Russian stove in the hall; such stove having a boiler for the purpose of heating water, two ovens for cooking in, and a set of pipes for the purpose of heating water in the back kitchen for bathing and washing. The back kitchen, or wash-house, to have provision made in it for cooking and warming water, independent of the hall stove; so that no fire need be made in the dwelling during the warm weather. Water to be laid on, and accommodation in the back kitchen both for bathing and washing. The fuel to be furnished by the proprietors; the fires kept up by the man in charge; the rent being in proportion.

By this arrangement, although the baths, wash-troughs, and boilers, are in the back building, in winter the whole fuel is consumed alone in the main edifice; in summer, there is in the principal building no fire at all.

I propose each family to have three rooms, 12 by 18, opening the one into the other. The attics to contain rooms of the same dimensions, which, as they would be taken out of the centre of the roof only, would be nearly square. Each inmate to have a portion of the cellar divided off, for the purpose of holding provisions and other goods, and the use of an airy yard.

The superintendent would take care that cleanliness should be enforced, and would report any injury done, or any irregularity of conduct, on the part of the inmates, derogatory to the character of the neighbourhood.

Can any one doubt the utility of such a measure? If so, let him only for a few hours look at the houses inhabited by even the more respectable of the operatives; let him imagine then what the hovels of the day labourer must be; let him observe whole families crowded

into a single room, and consider how injurious to morals all this must prove, and I feel certain he will think that few things are more deserving of public attention.

THE OLD, OLD, VERY OLD MAN.

There is a curious poem, with the above title, by John Taylor, the Water Poet, printed at London in 1635, giving a metrical account of the celebrated Thomas Parr, who died in that year, at the extraordinary age of 152 years, 9 months and odd days. It is dedicated to the high and mighty Prince Charles, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. As a piece of composition it is beneath criticism, but it contains some very interesting facts, and a valuable appendix, detailing the most remarkable events that happened in England during Parr's lifetime. One curious circumstance mentioned in the Poem is, that Parr underwent a public rebuke in Alderbury Church, when he was 105 years old. In regard to his diet the poet says:—

"This man ne'er fed on dear compounded dishes,
Of metamorphosed beasts, fruits, fowls, and fishes,
The earth, the air, the boundless ocean
Were never raked nor foraged for this man;
In all his lifetime, he was never known,
In drinking other's healths, to lose his own;
The Dutch, the French, the Greek, and Spanish grape
Upon his reason never made a rape."

"Good wholesome labour was his exercise,—
Down with the lamb and with the lark would rise,
In mire and toiling sweat he spent the day,
And to his team he whistled time away;
The cock his night-clock, and till day was done,
His watch and chief sun dial was the sun.
He was of old Pythagoras' opinion,
That green cheese was most wholesome, with an onion
Coarse Meslin bread, and for his daily swig,
Milk, buttermilk, and water, whey, and whig;
His physic was good butter, which the soil
Of Salop yields, more sweet than cundy oil:
And garlic he esteemed more than the rate
Of Venice treacle, or best mithridate.
He entertained no goat, no aerie he felt,
The air was good and temperate where he dwelt;
While mavissey, and sweet tongued nightingales
Did chant him round-lays and madrigals.
Thus living within bound of Nature's laws,
Of his long lasting life may be some cause,
For though the Almighty all men's days do measure,
And doth dispose of life and death at pleasure,
Yet Nature being wronged, man's days and date
May be abridged."

In the Appendix, Taylor first gives an account of the different political and religious revolutions which England had undergone during Parr's life. He lived under seven Sovereigns—Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, James, and Charles.

"He hath outlived six great plagues. He was born long before we had much use of printing; for it was brought into this kingdom in 1472, and it was long after that ere it was in use.

"He was above 50 years old before any guns were made in England, 1535.

"The vintners sold no Sacks, Muscadels Malmseys, Bastards, Allegants, nor any other wines, but white and claret, till the 33d year of Henry VIII. (1543), and then was old Parr 60 years of age; all these sweet wines were sold till that time at the apothecaries, for no other use but for medicines.

"There was no starch used in England till a Flanders woman, one Mrs. Dinghen Vanden Plasse, brought in the use of it, 1564, and then was this man near 80 years old.

"There were no bands worn till King Henry VIII.'s time, for he was the first king that ever wore a band in England, 1513.

"Women's masques, busks, muffs, fans, periwigs, and bodkins were invented by Italian courtezans, and transported through France into England, in the ninth of Queen Elizabeth.

"Tobacco was first brought into England by Sir John Hawkins, 1565, but it was first brought into use by Sir Walter Raleigh many years after.

"He was eighty-one years old before there was any coach in England; for the first that was ever seen here was brought out of the Netherlands, by one William Boomen, a dutchman, who gave a coach to Queen Elizabeth; (for she had been seven years a Queen before she had any coach) since when they have increased (with a mischief) and ruined all the best house-