

clusters of rich crimson, in terminal clusters at least two inches across, are most

striking and form a decided and welcome contrast to the clean green leaves.

REHOUSING IN CANADA

BY W. D. LIGHTHALL, K.C.

I confess myself a little in despair at the subject assigned me, "Rehousing in Canada." If it is to be descriptive, it is like the book on the snakes of Ireland. If I am to deal with the need of re-housing, the titles of the other discourses fixed for to-day stand up in protest—"Slums and Diseases," "Insanitary Housing Conditions," "Municipal Powers." Perhaps I may find proper refuge in the future by the spirit of prophecy. Or am I to put on an air of Delphic wisdom and dispense advice? Surely our audience would remember Job—"who is this that uttereth counsel without wisdom?" The short of it is, that re-housing in Canada is a new, a scarcely tried subject, and we must all put our heads together if we are to make anything out of its discussion.

The need is great—that requires no argument. One has only to go to St. Maurice street, or a number of others here in Montreal, and look well over and into the little ancient wooden shanties, tumbling down of their own rottenness, known to the authorities as "uninhabitable," yet tolerated because of the fear of causing loss to the proprietors; or on many congested streets, the jerry-built rack-rent-ridden tenements of more recent date, surrounding yards, with the filthiest sanitary arrangements; or some of the settlements of foreigners living in cellars or one family in a room without reasonable air or light and subject to horrible forms of tuberculosis and other disease—and then to learn the statistics and stories showing how extensively the population in such conditions is disappearing by the hand of death, and deteriorating morally, intellectually and physically—one has only to come face to face with these ready to hand facts and conditions to arrive at the conclusion that those old dilapidated shanties should be forthwith demolished, and the new ones forced to full amendment by the strictest exertion of authority. Recently a Westmount physician told me how he had been called to a house not far from

the City Hall of Montreal. There he found sixteen Galicians sleeping in two small rooms only large enough for one person. The single window was hermetically sealed. He was told that one set slept there by day and another by night. The floor was filthy. One man with tonsillitis was expectorating freely upon it. The same conditions obtain in the foreign quarter of Winnipeg, and to some extent other cities, including Toronto. In demanding demolition laws, we should bear in mind some of the conclusions of old country experience, which is not now so unlike ours as is often thought. Some of these conclusions might be adapted as follows: 1. Demolition, though absolutely requisite for the dilapidated shanty, is an extreme recourse, and should be limited to the worst types. 2. They should be first purchased, if possible, by the city, under authorization from the Legislature to borrow for the purpose. 3. If a landlord refuses to sell at a reasonable price, he should be held strictly to ameliorate. This is one of the points of the recent English Housing Act. 4. But it must be remembered that demolition and reconstruction by the city are very costly. 5. Consequently the hope of the future is in the proper construction and planning of new districts. Fortunately just now this is favored by our growing conditions in Canada. With every energy and earnestness in our power let us urge that this should be done at once. Where will the class we might call old habits of demolished premises go? What is there for them to go to? And what about the great masses whose conditions are partly bad, where they might and should be wholly good and nothing less? Amelioration of the present housing should, in the latter cases, be the aim: and that is a wide subject.

In Canada I know only of two cases of actual rehousing, omitting such as takes place naturally, by voluntary movement of individuals to the outskirts of the cities. The two cases are the experiments