GARDEN CITY, RURAL HOUSING, AND THE GOVERNMENT.*

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MOTTO.—“And therefore it may seeme that the first founder of the citie minded nothing so much as these gardens. For they saye that King Utopus him selfe, even at the first beginning, appointed and drew furth the platte fourme of the citie into this fashion and figure that it hath nowe, but the gallant garnishinge, and the beautiful settinge furth of it, whereunto he sawe that one manne's age would not suffice: That he left to his posteritie.”—SIR T. MORE's *Utopia*, A.D. 1516.

TOWN PLANNING.

AN industrial city of 30,000 inhabitants is in the making—an experiment in housing and townning on reasoned principles. Go and see it; read of it; watch its growth. It is the first Garden City at Letchworth, near Hitchin, in Herts, the first child of the Garden City Association. Modern industry is being set in ideal surroundings, providing a market for the agricultural industry around it. The country is being repopulated; overcrowding somewhere is being reduced. The commercial and social advantages of the town are here being combined with the physical and moral advantages of the country in a scheme, planned and guided in its growth with a view to its ultimate completion, on land at a natural price, put to its natural use, owned by those who use it. The rentals go to keep the rates down to three shillings. A dozen factories, 47 shops, 58 societies, a population of 6,000, and an increased value of £120,000 on the £250,000 laid out during the last four years, testify to the reality of the experiment.

The idea of town planning dates back at least to Sir T. More's “Utopia,” and to Sir Christopher Wren's elaborate plan for rebuilding the City of London after the great fire. Richard Owen, Pemberton, Buckingham, were but the precursors of Mr. Ebenezer Howard, whose shilling “Garden Cities of To-morrow,” in 1898, started a movement likely to be of epochal importance in the history of civilization. Prevention of ills in new towns, as they grow, is better than patchwork in old. The principle of town planning is obvious in Adelaide and in the Malay States, in Manchurian Dalny, in Washington, in Boston, in Vienna, in Essen. Sweden, in 1874, and most European countries since, have established the

principle on their statute books. The need is advocated by branches of the Garden City Association in France, Germany, Holland, and elsewhere abroad. It is urgently required for Hong Kong and for Winnipeg. It has taken shape in a dozen schemes for garden cities and villages in this country. It is urgent for the new naval base at Rosyth. “*Crede viatori.*”

In what way, then, does the Government Bill, introduced by Mr. Burns, secure this proper townning of our population and extension of existing towns? The Local Government Board are to be enabled to draw up a set of general provisions, which will practically extend the building bye-laws, with a view to the minimum requirements of town planning as to health, traffic, and perhaps æsthetics and freedom from fire, and will prescribe the procedure to be followed. A town planning scheme may, and if so ordered by the Local Government Board, must, be adopted by any borough, urban or rural district council or councils, or in London by the London County Council only, for the whole or part of their districts. Such a scheme has to be approved by the Local Government Board, which may hold a local inquiry for the purpose, and special provisions are to be added in each case to the general provisions according to local needs. The principles of worsement and betterment are adopted, the authority paying the first and recovering the last, the question and the amount being determined by the Local Government Board. For the execution of the scheme the local authority may purchase land by agreement, or be authorised to do so as for Part III of the principal (1890) Act. Finally, where the authority fails to take requisite steps, the Board may step in and order steps to be taken, enforcing their order by mandamus.

It will be seen that the whole force of this measure depends upon the general provisions that are to be drawn up by the Local Government Board to deal with a very wide and definitely prescribed list of subjects; and the carrying out of the Act depends in every clause on the sanction and limitations of the Local Government Board. It is, in fact, a thoroughly bureaucratic measure, cunningly devised to squeeze itself through the mesh of the Parliamentary net, and not in itself going further than the foregoing considerations warrant.

In one essential, however, it fails. It seeks to give effect to a principle which should take effect wherever building may go on, that is,

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throughout the length and breadth of the land ; and yet it does this entirely by the action of the Local Government Board and of the borough and district councils. Are these councils bodies of sufficient standing for the purpose? Are their officers in a position, and have they the experience requisite for advising upon so intricate and so delicate a problem? Does the scheme provide for "linear extension," which is the modern method of urban development and permeation of the country? Have the Local Government Board the necessary staff and opportunity for keeping in such intimate touch with every remote corner of the country as to know the bearing of local conditions on the future extension of every town and village? At the end of this paper we will answer this question in the decided negative and will give reasons, corroborated by the proposals already discussed, for a clear definition of authority, with the county council as the sole link in the chain connecting Whitehall above it with the District Council below, and for the establishment of a medical and subordinate sanitary service on the security of the State and on an adequate footing.

RURAL HOUSING.

Our subject now takes us on to more familiar ground—familiar for the past half century in hygienics, in politics, and in literature alike. It is to the early social reformers and to the noble band of Christian Socialists of half a century ago that we mainly owe the modern campaign on behalf of good houses for the working classes ; and the inspiration of Charles Kingsley's *Sanitary and Social Essays* and his account of the '54 cholera epidemic in a Devonshire village in "Two Years Ago," are still unrivalled in sanitary writings. The following more modern episode illustrates well the inadequacy of rural housing conditions as at present subsisting. It will form a useful peg—or rather hat-stand—on which to hang the several heads of this most complicated and not unimportant problem.

The scene of this episode is the hamlet of Chipperfield, in the parish of King's Langley, in the rural district of Hemel Hempstead, on the western or Bucks border of the county of Hertford. The corporate *dramatis personæ* are the respective Parish, District and County Councils. The period of the episode extends from January, 1904, to May, 1907. The legal

background is the provision in "The Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1900," Section 6, that "if a *Parish* Council shall resolve that a *Rural District* Council ought to have taken steps for the adoption of Part III of the principal Act" that of 1890 "and have failed to do so, the *County* Council may, if satisfied after due inquiry that the District Council have so failed, resolve that the powers of the District Council for the purposes of that part of the Act shall be transferred to the County Council with respect to the parish, and they shall be transferred accordingly." These powers are to erect dwelling or lodging-houses for the working classes where required, at the expense of the District Council.

In January, 1904, the King's Langley Parish Council first, under the Act of 1900, petitioned the District Council to remedy the want of cottages in Chipperfield under the Act of 1890. Inquiry by two independent committees, by the district medical officer of health, and by the newly appointed sanitary inspector, revealed many sanitary conditions, which were set right in 1905, although old cottages could not be brought up to modern standards of construction. All were occupied, but nineteen out of seventy-nine tenants worked out of Chipperfield. Did this constitute a dearth of accommodation, calling for action under Part III of the Act? The Parish Council resolved so ; the District Council disagreed ; and by mutual consent an appeal was made to the County Council on December 6th, 1905.

The County Council appointed a small committee, and a local inquiry was held at King's Langley on November 15th, 1906, and at Chipperfield on November 28th, 1906, at 6 p.m. Between these two dates, the county surveyor and county medical officer of health were requested to investigate and report ; every cottage was examined in detail, and a full account printed. The condition was fairly typical of common rural conditions at their best.

Of eighty cottages scheduled as coming within the category of houses for the working classes, I personally examined fifty-five, omitting many of those known to be satisfactory. The cottages were all habitable according to the legal standard, although several conditions usual to old houses would not be allowed in new, such as defective height of rooms, window area, and absence of damp course. In respect of sanitary provision and condition of backyards, the main defects had been remedied, or