ART. XVII.—*On the Clearance of an Unhealthy Area, under the Provisions of the Public Health Act.*^a By SIR CHARLES A. CAMERON, Ex-President and Professor of Hygiene and Chemistry, R.C.S.I.; Superintendent Medical and Executive Officer of Public Health for Dublin.

A SURVEY of the houses in the city of Dublin, which I carried out in 1882, showed some startling facts. I found that whilst 54,725 families, comprising the population of the civic districts of the metropolis, occupied 24,211 houses, no fewer than 32,202 of those families resided in only 7,234 of the houses, leaving 16,977 houses to be occupied by 22,523 families. The 7,234 houses contained 48,116 rooms, or an average of $1\frac{1}{2}$ rooms per family. In many of these houses the number of families was from 10 to 12, some of them occupying a single apartment. A large proportion of the houses were originally occupied by single families, and were not, therefore, designed as tenement houses. There is, however, one advantage in connection with houses of this class—namely, the large size of the rooms and their airy stairs and lobbies. On the other hand, they are more or less dilapidated, having cracked walls, worm-eaten floors, rickety stairs, bad roofs, ill-paved yards, and defective sanitary accommodation. Notwithstanding the poor accommodation which those houses afford, the rents extracted from their poverty-stricken tenants are, I am certain, higher than in other large towns. I find that the valuation for taxation purposes of the 175 houses in Jervis-street, North Cumberland-street, Church-street, and Upper Mercer-street, amounts to £2,677 10s., whilst the rent exacted from the 1,074 tenants who occupy the 1,482 rooms of those houses is no less than £8,311 13s. One house, valued at £8 yearly, is rented in tenements at £52! Towards the close of the year 1879 I commenced to take vigorous action in reference to the improvement of the Dublin tenement houses. I found that a large number were placed under such conditions as to be incapable of improvement. Some were situated in very narrow courts, others were blocks of lofty buildings, with no yards, or totally insufficient ones. A large number were semi-ruinous. The owners of those defective dwellings were brought into court, and, with a single exception, orders to have them closed and detenanted were obtained from the magistrates. The larger

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number of those unhealthy dwellings were rebuilt or repaired, and subsequently re-opened, but nearly one-third were permanently closed. As an example of the total demolition of houses, I may mention the case of the houses lying due north of the Synod Hall and old tower of St. Michael's, Christchurch-place. These houses were closed about five years ago, and were subsequently pulled down. The site is now the waste ground at St. Michael's-hill. The total number of houses detenanted and closed from the August 31st, 1879, up to December 31st, 1886, was 2,068, exclusive of more than 650 cellars and kitchens, and several hundred rooms in other houses.

It has been urged that it would have been better had the owners of those houses been compelled to put them into tenantable order. This objection is generally urged by those who have no practical experience in the administration of the Public Health Acts. It is obvious that if the extreme measure of closing a house is insufficient to make its owner improve it, no other measure is likely to be successful.

I do not agree with those who seem to think that an unhealthy population can be made a healthy one by merely providing them with clean and commodious dwellings. If the people of Dublin were well fed and clothed, and did not indulge in an excess of alcoholic liquors, I believe that the city would have a low death-rate, notwithstanding its wretched tenement houses; still it must be admitted that unwholesome dwellings constitute a somewhat serious factor in our urban mortality, and it is incumbent upon the sanitary authorities to effect as great an improvement in the condition of the homes of the people as they possibly can. The question is—How is this improvement to be best effected? The municipal authorities have certain powers conferred upon them in reference to ruinous and unhealthy premises. These powers are derived from the Towns Improvement Act of 1847, the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act of 1868, and the Acts amending the same, passed in 1879; and the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885. Under the last-named Acts the following procedure may be adopted:—Should the Officer of Health find any premises in such a state as to be dangerous to health, and thereby unfit for habitation, he is to report the circumstance to the Local Authority. The latter then submits the report to the Surveyor or Engineer, who examines the premises, in order to ascertain whether or not it can be rendered habitable by structural alterations and improvements, or whether or not they should wholly or

in part be demolished. The Local Authority next submits the two reports to the owner of the premises, and appoints a time and place to consider the reports, and any objections to their recommendations which the owner may offer, by letter or personally. The owner may argue that the work is unnecessary altogether or in part, or that it should be done by some other person, or by the parish or district in which the premises are situated. (The Act is not clear as to the work being done at the expense of the district, and it may be held that the Local Authority should do the work as a public improvement). The Local Authority may then pronounce an order, which is subject to an appeal to the Court of Quarter Sessions, and, should the objections to its order be overruled, the Local Authority may cause a specification of the necessary works to be prepared, and ascertain the cost of same. A notice that this has been done is served upon the owner of the premises, who may inspect the plans, &c., and transcribe them at the office of the Local Authority. He may, within three weeks after receipt of the notice, object in writing to the specification and estimates, &c., and may support his objections personally before the Local Authority. The latter, on hearing the objections, may refuse to entertain them or not, as it thinks fit. For the second time the owner may appeal to the Court of Quarter Sessions, and a further appeal, or a statement of facts to the Court of Queen's Bench is permitted.

When the questions in reference to the necessity of remodelling, &c., the premises has been settled, the owner must be called upon to do the necessary works. If there are several owners, then they are to be called upon in the order of title. If the owner's residence cannot be ascertained, due notice must be served upon the occupier or posted on the premises.

When the owner fails to execute the work, the Local Authority may do it, and obtain from the Court of Quarter Sessions an order charging the premises with all the expenses incidental to the improvements, together with interest at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum on the money expended; the charge upon the premises is to have precedence over all others.

In case the premises are to be demolished and not repaired, the owner is to be called upon to do the work, and should he fail to comply with the order, the Local Authority may do the work, and sell the old materials to reimburse itself for the cost of the operation.

The person who on the order of the Local Authority makes any improvement in premises is entitled to a "charging" order upon them to the extent of £6 per cent. on the sum expended. The expenses of executing the Act may be defrayed out of a local special rate, which is not to exceed 2d. in the pound, and a loan for the purposes of the Act may be procured.

The difficulties in the carrying out of the section of this Act, dealing with ruinous and unhealthy buildings are very great. In the first place, the processes are very slow. The Medical Officer makes a report that a house is unfit for human habitation. The Sanitary Authority considers this report, and directs the Surveyor or Engineer to make an examination of and report upon the premises. This report has next to be considered by the Sanitary Authority. One month at least will be required for all these procedures. A notice is next served on the owner; then he has to attend before the Sanitary Authority to state objections, if he have any, against the opinions of the Medical Officer and Surveyor. The duration of the period of the notice is not mentioned in the Act, but a fortnight's notice would not be too much.

The next step is the preparation of plans and of estimates. Two or three weeks at least would be required for this purpose. A notice is served on the owner that the plans are ready for his inspection, and may be seen during a period of three weeks. He may appeal against the order of the Sanitary Authority, and the appeal may not be heard for months. One month after the decision of the Court of Quarter Sessions, or three after service of the order, the owner is to state whether or not he is willing to execute the works. If he neglect or decline to do the work, a notice that he is to execute them within two months is served upon him, and if he still fail, and that there is another owner secondary in title, a similar notice is served on him; and in this way every person having a beneficiary interest in the premises must get two months' notice. In by far the larger proportion of the houses in Dublin there are as many as from three to six separate vested interests. After all these processes, which probably would occupy from one to three years—depending on the number of interests to be dealt with—the Sanitary Authority might themselves execute the work. The Court of Quarter Sessions must then be applied to for an order charging the costs of the proceedings upon the premises.

Supposing that the Sanitary Authority has rebuilt the defective

premises, then an order must be obtained from the Court of Quarter Sessions charging the expenses incurred upon the premises, together with 4 per cent. interest. This charge is to have priority over all others.

Under the provisions of the amending Act of 1879, the owner of premises which have been rebuilt or repaired by the Sanitary Authority could compel it to purchase the same. He will be sure to do so in all cases where the rent obtainable from them is not sufficient to pay the interest on the money expended by the Sanitary Authority, and the head-rent of, and any other charges that may be on, the premises. On the other hand, if the rent pay fully the cost of rebuilding, the owner will keep possession of them. When the Sanitary Authority acquires possession of premises, instead of being allowed to keep and make the most of them, it is obliged to sell them at once, and pay over to the owner any sum which it may receive in excess of the amount expended by it to the owner; but this defect of the Act has been remedied by the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1885.

The 75th, 76th, 77th, and 78th sections of the Towns Improvement Act of 1847 (10 & 11 Vict., c. 34), enable the Sanitary Authority to deal with ruinous and dangerous houses, walls, &c. These provisions apply only to houses, &c., which are likely to fall and injure persons. I think that the Towns Improvement Act, which is incorporated with the Dublin Improvement Act, 1849, is a better one to apply to ruinous houses than the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act. Supposing that a house, which has been closed as unfit for habitation on the action of the Sanitary Authority, is allowed to become ruinous, then it may be assumed that it is likely to fall. A notice to take down, secure, or repair such premises within three days, is served on the owner, or, if he cannot be found, it is posted on the premises. If the owner fail to comply with the notice, the Police Magistrates may, on application, make an order to have the work done within a specified time. If the owner again fail, then the Sanitary Authority may put the house into repair, or rebuild it. The expenses incurred, if not paid on demand, may be recovered by a warrant of distress issued by the Police Magistrate. Lastly, if the distress cannot be effected, the Sanitary Authority may, after giving 28 days' notice, take possession of the premises, which, being valued, the owner is to be compensated for any interest he may have in them, after the cost of repairs has been deducted. It would, I think, rarely

happen that the owner would get anything in the way of compensation. Whatever he would be entitled to should be determined under the provisions of the Lands' Clauses Consolidation Act of 1845. The Sanitary Authority appears to be unfettered as regards the disposal of the premises, as the Act states that it may "sell or otherwise dispose of said buildings or land." I think, then, that if any action is to be taken in relation to ruinous houses, our own local Act is incomparably superior to the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act. It is quicker in operation, simpler in its provisions, and requires very little law procedure.

The Corporation of Dublin have cleared two unhealthy areas under the provisions of the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act. The first cleared is that known as the "Coombe Area." The ground cleared contained 202 houses, inhabited by 984 persons, and situated on an area of 4 acres and 36 perches. The total cost of the clearance amounted to £24,367 12s. 10d., or at the rate of £5,769 9s. 9d. per acre. The cleared ground was let on lease for ever to the Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company, at a rent of £200 a year. If this rent be capitalised at 25 years' purchase, at 4 per cent., the sum would be £5,000. The net cost of the clearance was, therefore, £19,367 12s., or at the rate of £4,840 1s. 1d. per acre—that is, at the rate of £19 13s. 8d. per head of the population of the area.

The second district cleared is that known as the "Plunket-street Area." It comprised 3 acres 2 roods and 22 perches, upon which there were 159 houses, occupied by 1,619 persons. The gross cost of the clearance amounted to £32,332 14s. 1d. The site has been let (chiefly to the Artisans' Dwellings Co.) at £190. Capitalising this rent at 4 per cent., 25 years' purchase, the cost of the scheme is reduced to £27,582 14s. 1d., or at the rate of £7,582 17s. 6d., being £17 0s. 9d. per head of the population of the area.

Thus it will be seen that the unhealthy areas cleared contained 7 acres 3 roods and 18 perches, and were inhabited by 2,603 persons. The clearance cost at the rate of £5,971 per acre.

I have now to describe a clearance which I have effected, upon a small scale no doubt, but still without cost to the ratepayers. It includes nearly the whole of Wood-street and Arthur's-lane, and a small part of Oliver's-alley. The population in this district was very dense, and the houses were very old and insanitary, and were the constant abode of zymotic diseases. An account of the population of Wood-street, Arthur's-lane (formerly termed Maiden-lane)

and Oliver's-alley, is given in the Rev. James Whitelaw's "Essay on the Population of Dublin," from his own survey made in 1798. The following are his figures:—

HOUSES.		<i>Wood-street.</i>		
Inhabited	Waste (! Vacant)	Males	Females	Total
61	1	198	276	474
<i>Maiden (Arthur's)-lane.</i>				
14	0	70	87	157
<i>Oliver's-alley.</i>				
1	—	8	2	10
<hr/> 76				<hr/> 641

Dr. Grimshaw, Registrar-General, has kindly furnished me with the population returns for these places according to the Census of 1871:—

	Population.			
Wood-street -	-	-	-	- 315
Arthur's-lane	-	-	-	- 119
Oliver's-alley	-	-	-	- 13
				<hr/> 447

These figures show that the locality was not so congested in 1871 as in 1798.

In 1881 I commenced an onslaught upon the houses in Wood-street, Oliver's-alley, and Arthur's-lane. They were all in tenements, and with few exceptions were in possession of middlemen or persons who take by lease or otherwise houses for the purpose of subletting them in weekly tenancies. These middlemen were, as a rule, unable to put the houses into a proper state of repair, and they were too poor to pay their rents to their landlords when the houses were closed by magistrate's order. The owners of the houses would not put them into a proper state either. One after another nearly all the houses were detenanted and closed, and gradually became ruinous, so that ultimately, with two exceptions, they had to be razed. The houses thus disposed of in Wood-street numbered 23; in Arthur's-lane, 11; and in Oliver's-alley, 1—total, 35; or, including 5 houses also demolished in the adjacent Golden-lane, 40 houses.

There are still remaining in Wood-street Nos. 18, 19, 20, 21½, 24, and 32, which at present have a population of 75 persons.

Nos. 1, 2, and 4 Arthur's-lane give shelter to 14 persons; and 1 house in Oliver's-alley to 5 souls—total, 94 persons. The persons now residing in these places number 353 less than in 1871. The ground actually cleared is a little over a statute acre, and is fairly compact for dwelling purposes.

I have now shown that an acre of unhealthy houses, so to speak, has been cleared without cost to the ratepayers, whilst the clearances under the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act have cost £6,000 per acre. This work has been done by making use of that part of the 107th section of the Public Health Act which defines as a nuisance "any premises in such a state as to be a nuisance or injurious to health"—a simple definition which leaves everything to the discretion of the magistrate, for should he consider the evidence satisfactory he can act under the 113th section, which provides that "where the nuisance proved is such as to render a house or building in the judgment of the court unfit for human habitation, the court may prohibit the using thereof until in its judgment the house or building is rendered fit for that purpose."

The lesson which the Wood-street clearance teaches is this:—It is possible, by vigorously enforcing the provisions of the Public Health Act to unhealthy dwellings, to clear with comparatively little cost to the ratepayers unhealthy areas on which the houses are unquestionably unfit for human habitation. No doubt such a procedure must often entail loss—not easily to be borne—on the owners or leaseholders of these unhealthy houses. Still, if a man owns a highly-diseased carcase of a cow, or a quantity of mouldy flour, he must submit to have them destroyed as unfit for human food; so also must those who own unhealthy dwellings submit to have them closed until rendered fit for human habitation.

ART. XVIII.—*Fixed Delusions in Mental Disease.** By JOHN MOLONY, M.K.Q.C.P., L.R.C.S.I.; Medical Superintendent of St. Patrick's Hospital, Dublin.

I WOULD remind the Academy of Medicine that the following are simply clinical notes of cases, which I have grouped as fair types of "fixed delusions" occurring in various forms of mental disease and likely to be found in any lunatic asylum.

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