

# Two Pictures

## The Peril of the Slum—The Economy of Good Housing

(By CHARLES C. READE.)

**T**HE banks of the Mersey presents one of the most remarkable contrasts in human habitations that exists in the world to-day. Nowhere are the differences of environment, with all its attendant influences on mankind, more strikingly demonstrated. Here are two pictures.

Down in the valley, wedged in between the walls of great factories, are rows and rows of three and four storied houses, blackened with dirt and smoke, and punctuated by endless chimney pots straggling desperately above the slated roofs. There are neither gardens nor yards—only houses, back to back, gazing gloomily into narrow courtyards, or winding through cramped and crooked streets where washing hangs night and day—drab splashes of colour that mock the dinginess. The courts and streets are filled with children and children's voices revelling round the one tap that probably supplies forty householders. The voices, sometimes shrill, sometimes husky, sound far into the night, for the call of sleep in the slum comes late. There is neither sentiment nor joy in the scene. The night of poverty, the squalor of the surroundings, transfix the thoughts with other things. But where are the parents? Down at the street corner there is a low building conspicuous by its tawdry lights and the voices within. The state of the atmosphere is shown by the moisture that runs down the window pane. All signs are within save for a seedy figure that scrapes outside on a cracked and broken hearted fiddle. You may go in if you choose. It is not wise to do so, not that the people within are not good-hearted and hilarious enough—heaven knows. It is just a question whether you can stand the atmosphere, the hot thick atmosphere that nobody inside seems to mind. But just a moment—there! The swing doors open and a figure lurches out on to the pavement. The scene inside is visible for a few moments. Beneath the dim and smoky lamps, men and women—women with babies wrapt in shawls and children clinging to their dragged skirts—are packed against a counter four or five deep. There is a glister of bottles behind them. Mugs of foaming beer are lifted on high and glasses are landed back to those in rear. The scene is charged with animation. There are shouts, laughter and snatches of song, but there is a note of overpowering disorder, of human madness in that congested mass of men and women drinking—drinking life and soul to the reeling, swaying dark of stupor. That is a picture of a Liverpool slum.

A woodland dell banked with flowers winds into one of the daintiest of open spaces. The foliage seems to float through the trees in the sunlight. On all sides at odd intervals peering into the depths of this sylvan loveliness are houses, quaint early English houses, with picturesque gables and lattice, red tiles and panelled just as Shakespeare knew the charming old town of Stratford-on-Avon. But here we are in a modern village, built but a few years, taking all the best elements out of a picturesque past and applying them with the science of modern town planning to the home beautiful. There are children in white and coloured pinnies romping under the trees and in the sunlight. Each house rises out of a bed of flowers. Nature and architecture go hand in hand, and everywhere is a vista of a glimpse of beauty. Twelve o'clock whistles from a factory somewhere beyond the glade and presently the trees lined road is full of men and women, youths and girls. They troop by to their homes smiling and talking. Everybody is clean and bright faced. There is a vitality in each step that makes its own grace. They roam with the houses through parks and gardens and radiant thoroughfares. Their village is a dream of woodland splendour where life and labour move amid beauty and contentment. That is a picture of Port Sunlight, one of England's model villages planned by Messrs Lever Bros. on the

opposite side of the Mersey a few miles from Liverpool and the blatant reality of its slums.

The Port Sunlight estate, comprising some 200 acres, consists of a series of well planned factories docks, railways, and workers' dwellings, besides a large number of buildings devoted to the religious, educational and social well being of its inhabitants. It is laid out on the best principles of modern town planning. The housing conditions are almost ideal. Each building is well constructed, picturesque, well situated and let at a rent that averages about five shillings a week. In every case there is a garden patch with trees in front of the house, and at the back are extensive allotment gardens. It is the realisation of the back-to-the-land cry in England. Water is laid on and supplied free of charge. Tuition is given by a practical gardener, and for flowers and vegetables grown in the village prizes are awarded annually at the horticultural shows organised by the controlling firm. In the village itself there is a theatre, a public library, technical and elementary schools, a lecture hall, a museum, boys' and girls' institutes, an employees' provident society, scientific, literary and mutual improvement societies, a telephone system, fire brigade, ambulance society, bowling and tennis greens, swimming baths, football grounds, rifle range, gymnasium, hospital and church. In all this there is to be seen nothing of the monotonous and depressing rows of brick and mortar, the hard distressing regularity of design that is so common to so many English and Colonial cities. Port Sunlight, in fact, sets a standard above the modern suburban area as well as providing healthy homes and refining influences in the environment of its four thousand workers. The enterprise is described by Mr. Lever himself as "prosperity-sharing"—the best means he can find of sharing profits with his work people. He has recently stated that the firm gets a return from the money invested in the better health and consequent increased industrial efficiency of the workers. Mr. Lever in short has given practical recognition of the relation of housing to industry.

In order to realise how far a private firm can, side by side with its commercial success, make enlightened provision for its workers, the institutions of Port Sunlight are well worth studying. The village is no Utopian project any more than the other model communities in England like Letchworth, Hampstead,

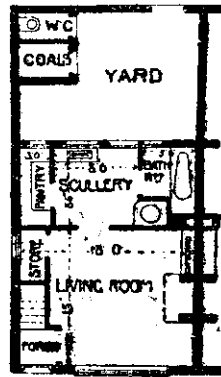
Faling, Bourneville, Leicester and Hull are. It is a commercial project designed to secure and develop industrial efficiency. Port Sunlight proves that men and women working eight hours a day can turn out more and better work than those labouring ten or eleven hours in other concerns and living under poor housing conditions. Prominent among advantages enjoyed is that of the Employees' Benefit Fund, which is provided entirely by the company. To every employee retiring after at least 20 years' service at the age of 65, and 60 if a female, is paid a yearly allowance. The basis is such that, if an employee is receiving 38s. per week, he will on retiring after 40 years' service receive an allowance of £50 per year. Similar provisions are made for those retiring through ill-health or to the widow and children of a deceased worker. A Holiday Club is in operation by which a fund is automatically created for workers when the time for relaxation arrives. Faithful service is acknowledged by the presentation of a gold watch together with a long service badge. The Port Sunlight order of Co-operative Merit is awarded in cases of personal bravery.

of pounds, shillings, and pence—at least not at present. That is what seems to be in the future between labour and capital. The prosperity-sharing scheme as it works at present is no guarantee that the demand of labour, for a full share in the wealth that it creates, is being fulfilled. But compared with what exists for the majority of British workers to-day, Port Sunlight is a guarantee that a considerable share of its prosperity is going into the health, the happiness and surroundings of its workers. It is the half-way house to an absolute scheme of co-operation or co-partnership between the labourer and the employer, which seems to be a debatable alternative to State control, but it has yet to develop and be given practical demonstration. Judging by the opposition of the trade unions and labour generally to Sir Christopher Furness' scheme of co-partnership, that realisation is a long way off.

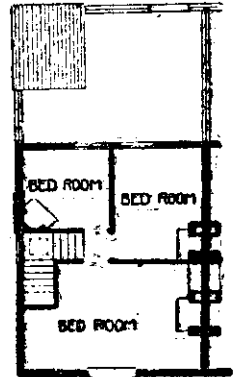
### THE PENGUIN INQUIRY.

We have received from Messrs Craycroft, Wilson and Roberts, of Wellington,

### GROUND PLAN



### 1st FLOOR PLAN



PLANS OF A TWO-STORIED PARLOUR HOUSE AT PORT SUNLIGHT WHICH IS LET TO THE TENANT AT 7/0 PER WEEK.

The male workers labour 48 hours and the female 45 hours per week. Free tram and train tickets are provided to those who come from a distance. Cash prizes are awarded in the soap works itself for the best suggestions for labour saving devices and increased comfort of the workers.

These are a few of the more interesting and suggestive phases of life at Port Sunlight. The spirit of the workers is said to be very appreciative, although there are times when a more restless spirit than the mass is apt to rebel against what has been termed "the benevolent autocracy" of the firm. The drawback to the scheme is that many of its advantages which the workers receive cannot be translated into terms

ton, a copy of an illustrated pamphlet, price 1/, published by them, giving a complete report of the evidence taken at the Marine Court of Inquiry regarding the loss of the steamer Penguin. The evidence has been published in this form on account of the great importance attached to that part of the inquiry relating to tides and currents in Cook Strait.

COULAM.—Information wanted of the relatives of JOB COULAM, native of Wetheron, Lincolnshire, and who was in Auckland about 40 years ago, and also at the Thames district. Send particulars to H. BENNINGTON, Kiwarae, Queensland.

