

The Bulletin



WORKINGMEN'S HOUSES, PORT SUNLIGHT, ENGLAND

JANUARY, 1910.

Issued Nine Times a Year By
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Rochester, N. Y.

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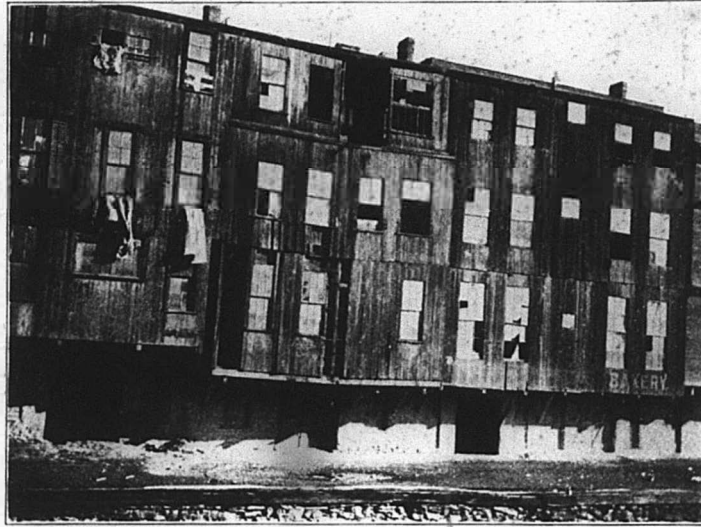
See that you have it in
your overcoat.

The Bulletin

Vol. III.

ROCHESTER, N. Y., JANUARY, 1910.

No. 6.



ONE OF THE BLOTS ON ROCHESTER'S LANDSCAPE

A GARDEN CITY FOR ROCHESTER

People who can choose where they want to live in a city can hardly realize what it means to be compelled to stay in quarters of the town that are unwholesome, unsanitary, uncomfortable and crowded. Weekly wages that average ten, twelve, or fifteen dollars do not allow one much liberty in selection, and one must take what one finds, with little regard to fitness for habitation, except as it affects one's purse. So we have the congested neighborhoods, where land and air, and water, (the three necessary elements for life and health) are scarce; where rents are higher in proportion to what the tenants get, than in better sections of the city; where landlords can ignore every obligation that makes for cleanliness and decency, to say nothing of beauty, without danger of interference, unless it be from a friendly visitor, who protests against intolerable conditions.

What good are all the palliatives she can bring to these children with adenoids, to the tired out mothers, and the broken down fathers, if they must remain herded in dark, damp, disease-breeding dens,

without the possibility of leaving them except perhaps for the occasional change of a bright (?) hospital bed.

With what splendid indifference to this danger our wealthier citizens build their handsome residences, carefully selecting the site—for sun and air—not thinking that these noisome sections are the drains that taint a whole city—that one is not safe in one's own home so long as one allows a hovel to exist. A chain is said to be as strong as its weakest link; a city is as beautiful as its poorest streets show it to be; as healthy as its plague spots allow it to be.

I wish that we might borrow a plan of building homes for people of small incomes which has been most successfully carried out in England. We have heard much of the miserable slums of London; of her unspeakably bad tenements, and it may seem strange to go to her for ideas; but the very degradation she has suffered has given her philanthropists a knowledge of the housing problem that makes it possible for them to handle it intelligently. The highest standard of model homes has been reached by an organization that is co-operative in character, making every householder a share-

holder, interested in the success of the undertaking, receiving a percentage of the profits of the corporation at the end of the year.

This scheme is now about four years old, and thus far it has only a story of profits to tell you, but a lot more to show you.

No prettier sight can you find anywhere in England than the garden homes of Hampstead and Golder's Green, where a family can be comfortably housed for from \$1.50 to \$4.00 a week. Fancy a group of perhaps two hundred cottages, each with a flower garden in the front, and a kitchen garden in the rear; with vines of roses and clematis climbing over windows and walls, to beautify the exterior; each having a toilet and bath-tub of its own, a living room and a kitchen, with bed rooms on the floor above.

Rochester is in its infancy as compared with the largest city in the world; but we have this in common with London and all other cities—the proper housing of laboring people. The problem here is not yet as extreme as in some of the larger places, but it is bad enough to demand our immediate attention, that it may grow no worse.

The Bulletin

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

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Editorial

Changing one's name is usually an important affair attended with much ceremony and excitement; but our change of name has come so naturally and inevitably as the result of a material change in our aims and scope of work that we wish merely to call your attention to it in this unassuming manner. The Bulletin henceforth includes in its realm of interest not only the Social Settlement, its parent, but all other agencies of social betterment in Rochester.

On entering our Settlement House the other day I saw a good woman canning lint, or at least putting fresh cheese cloth for bandages into a sterilized jar and it seemed to me quite characteristic of the institution, a balm to the neighborhood.

This is the season of the year when the happy are happiest and the miserable most miserable, when contrasts are greatest and when a little practice in long division of necessities and greatest common divisor of comforts goes far to subtract some of the sting of crawling misery. And it's these simple processes in living arithmetic that are, being calculated at the Social Settlement.

Every morning the babies trustfully left as charges of the Day Nursery act as animated signs of "Keep Smiling" around our little kindergarten board. Every day away from stuffy kitchens these little tots well washed and nourished learn the first laws of social conduct. They raise their little voices in harmonious chords of glee instead of torturing their vocal cords with baleful wails of woe. They build weak houses but strong characters. They go back to their dull homes like phosphorous glowing with the light they've taken in.

We wish that some sacred clause written in deed would, like Santa himself, ask what we need. We'd try to be modest in answering our friend and ask for such things as he really could send. We tell of the games that used to give fun and how they have met their fate, each one. How checkers and lotto and our baseball game, too, have served their lives well, to the end true. Authors and jack-straws and old fiddle-de-winks so sadly crippled that they look like missing links have all for the Boys' Club done their honest share in giving joy to every boy, revelling in his care. We'd like those trips around the world where you get a board and fly without a thought of where you'll land or even a sad "good-bye." Parcheesi, too, that old-time game is splendid to use up time and when one is well occupied one's conduct is sublime. And books, stories of knights and adventure: we'd much rather read than do lusty deeds which we know would only meet censure.

We do not really like to ask and yet that is our odious task. Show that you forgive the obvious hinting by fulfilling our wishes without any stinting.

This is the Holiday Season at the Social Settlement. That means parties and parties mean ice-cream! And blessings be on the heads of those whose thoughtfulness and generosity provide the ice-cream. What a happy way to celebrate a birthday or a wedding anniversary, putting gratitude with joy into a hundred hearts whose sense of appreciation is so big! How their eyes shine and their faces beam when they see the big, well-known trays coming their way! It's like the joy of receiving an "unbirthday present," a real surprise party.

The Settlement Board thanks all those who have made the children happy and hopes that the pleasure they give the little ones will return to them a thousand fold.

A Chicago commissioner of health, in a recent issue of the Health Department's Bulletin, calls attention to the value of yard-gardens. He says: "The gardens serve to keep the yard clean, to use up the stable manure, to add to the revenue of the family, and to furnish fresh, crisp vegetables for the family table." He adds: "The increase of such gardens has been especially notable in the Eighth ward. Collections of cans and rubbish, and stagnant pools have given place in the last two years to small, neat-looking gardens filled with cabbage, onions, parsley, beets and corn, with here and there a fringe or bed of flowers. Seeing this, we do not wonder at the lowered baby death rate in the Eighth ward."

We do not believe that any plan for the improvement of housing conditions of the working class is complete unless it contains a scheme for the betterment of their surroundings. If it can be made to redound to their material welfare, it is all the more worthy of a place in the general plan.

When the movement for improving the cities touched Rochester, this city was found to be in some ways unusually fortunate, having escaped by some chance several of the evils from which many other localities were suffering. For instance our streets are generally broad and tolerably well lighted, and there are little plots of green around many of the poorest houses, we have several beautiful public parks, we have long been blessed with an excellent Health Department, and we have seldom been cursed with especially grafting public officials.

In our Charities also we have managed to avoid some unfortunate methods, but some we have failed to escape. May we be always as free as we are to-day from the professional collector of charity funds, who in many cities demands 25 per cent. of all he collects, for his own payment. So we have always something upon which to congratulate ourselves.

But the different means of raising funds that are in use in Rochester vary in merit. Some of these are like that of the professional collector in that they make it difficult for the person applied to to refuse aid. There is Tag-day and there is solicitation in both of which methods the supporters of a charity perform the very act of begging above which they are seeking to raise the recipients of their charity. They do it in an unselfish cause but so does the beggar with others dependent upon him, and often they find it necessary to be quite as urgent and persistent as he. Now whether this sort of begging can or cannot be injurious to character in women of the educated class is an open question, but begging of any sort seems

somewhat lowering to the dignity.

A fair or donation is another rather popular way of raising funds the real success of which is still in doubt. It is said that in this way money is received from people who could not be otherwise induced to give, thus distributing the charity burdens more evenly. But actual experience seems to show that the people just mentioned usually confine themselves to buying a few articles, upon each of which a small profit is made, while the bulk of the receipts are made up of large donations from those already deeply interested in the particular charity to be benefited. A great deal of money given in the good cause is directed toward buying the materials for sale, but the more serious waste is that of the strength and time of the real workers.

The simplest means and the only one which gives the contributor the credit of knowing his own mind is that of the subscription slip. That the Social Settlement uses this method should be a matter of pride. The subscription slip is mailed annually to the regular subscribers and to various other possible subscribers stating the different kinds of membership in the association and the dues involved in each. The subscribers return the slip to the treasurer by mail enclosing the proper check. It is often said that you cannot bring in a large amount of funds by such an impersonal method. But surely only the very weak-minded would be often inveigled into giving where they had no real intention to give, while those who are desirous of giving need only a fair opportunity. Those who desire a more personal relation to the recipient of their charity can always state the special object for which they wish their particular funds used, and the new Charity Organization Society in allotting the work more carefully will make this personal relation more and more possible.

HOME TO RENT—NO CHILDREN

Some time ago an advertisement appeared in the Democrat and Chronicle in its "Want" columns, which ran something like this: Six-roomed flat to rent in desirable section of the city. No children. Apply —.

Once there was a landlord who built a modern home,
Part of wood and concrete, part cement
and stone.
He advertised for tenants who'd no parental care,

Saying he could not endure the children's wear and tear.

When hundreds were rejected, two finally did come

Who said they both intended to live there all alone;

But ere the lease was ended, his heart with rage was torn,

For in the house, one summer's day, a baby boy was born.

He tried again but all in vain, the children always came,

Happy, tumbling boys and girls always in a game;

At last he died, and the children love to state,

He found himself hard knocking at the wondrous golden gate.

Anon the latch was lifted; "You can't come in," was said,

"You never could endure the life which in this home is led,

You would be most unhappy with the children everywhere,

You'd better go to the other place, there are no children there."

WORKINGMEN'S HOUSES

The problem of working-men's houses, though so vital, and of such far-reaching importance, has not as yet in this country received much serious, disinterested, and skilled attention. The speculative builder, and the manufacturer with an isolated "plant"—the first actuated by greed, the other by need—have been about the only ones to deal with the housing problem from a truly practical standpoint. It should be added, however, that there are evidences of change: a certain few of the keenest and shrewdest employers of labor are waking up to the fact that other things being equal, the steady and skilled workman will inevitably gravitate to that factory or locality where living conditions are most economical, convenient, and attractive. These men are setting to work to supply the necessary conditions, purely as a matter of business, and thus self-interest may compass what philanthropy might have labored for in vain, namely: beauty, decency, and comfort in the environment of working men and women.

The housing problem has enlisted a superior order of talent in England, France and Germany, where in some cases entire villages have been organically arranged to realize an aesthetic ideal, as well as to satisfy practical needs. Port Sunlight is a typical example of such a well planned industrial community; the houses are not of half a dozen different styles, haphazardly constructed, arranged at hap-hazard, but are all variations of a single style, built of enduring materials, and co-ordinated one harmonious whole. There are no "eyesores," no ugly buildings, no unkempt lawns. The needs of everyone are provided for in the best imaginable manner, and at low cost. Port Sunlight represents perhaps the highest point yet reached in the particular evolution under discussion: for an example of a community in which no such evolution has yet commenced, I might cite East Buffalo, a vast and drear inferno of shabby, featureless, discouraged-looking houses, planted, row on row, in fields of soot and cinders. Unfortunately East Buffalo has its prototype, on a lesser scale, in most of our American cities but even at the worst

* * * * *
God's kindly earth
Is kinder than men know."

and many dreadful looking places need only a little knowledge, a little love, a little attention to be reclaimed from the ugliness into which they have fallen to the beauty which should be theirs by rights.

The housing problem demands a different solution in different localities—it would not, of course, be wise to build in the same manner where land is dear and where it is cheap. Nevertheless there are certain governing conditions which ought to be understood and as far as possible fulfilled. The maximum of space, light, air, obtained with the minimum of cost puts the whole matter in a nutshell. The maximum of space with the minimum of cost is obtained by making the bounding walls of the dwelling straight, and approximating a square, since a square has a larger area in proportion to its perimeter than any other rectangular plane figure, and the outside walls, which correspond to the perimeter are the expensive item in a house. The maximum of light and air are obtained by arranging the windows so that they adjoin broad, unobstructed spaces, rather

than courts or narrow defiles between houses.

Now note the superiority in cheapness, beauty, comfort and privacy of the plan which fulfills these conditions, to the plan which violates them.

Assume that a street is to be laid out, by some manufacturer or corporation, and workingmen's houses of the cheapest class erected. The usual method—the East Buffalo method—would be to divide the land up into the narrowest possible lots, but of sufficient depth, and build independent houses of frame, small, and narrow to the street, entirely lacking in character, crowding one another, looking into one another's windows, depriving one another of the light of the sun.

The alternative arrangement, gives similar conditions, and the one adopted with success at Port Sunlight, Bourneville, and other model industrial villages, would be to make a continuous row of houses, separated by fireproof party walls, sufficiently diversified in exterior treatment to give the needed note of individuality, set well back from the street, and separated from it by a well kept lawn, planted with shrubbery and undivided by any fences. The advantages of this arrangement over the other are apparent at a glance; each house, while occupying a narrower lot, has a greater frontage, since the width of the house is coequal with the width of the lot. There is more air and light and privacy of view, since the windows overlook the broad spaces at front and rear instead of the adjacent houses. Moreover, there is a great gain in architectural effect, the group plan being susceptible of a varied, interesting, and attractive treatment, but the point upon which I would particularly insist, since these matters are not controlled as a rule by artists and philanthropists, but by business men—is the greater economy of the last described arrangement. The saving effected—in the cost of the land as well as in the cost of the building—should not only give better accommodation at a lower rent, but should cover the difference between frame and masonry construction, and the chimneys, being an integral part of the party walls, there could be a fireplace in the living room of every house at only a small additional expense.

At Port Sunlight, in houses of a slightly better class, the semi-detached idea is charmingly carried out; that is, two houses have a party-wall in common. This is different from the ordinary type of a double house, in that the party wall is short, the houses presenting a broad, instead of a narrow front to the street.

Of course, local conditions govern architecture, and these English workingmen's cottages might not satisfy the American workingman's needs, yet they are full of suggestion, and show clearly that a higher order of talent has been employed on the problem than is customary in our country. That is a reproach to our civilization which should not be suffered to endure. The very best obtainable talent should be enlisted to devise cheap, convenient and beautiful dwellings for the wage-earning class.

THE CITY'S WELFARE

The Pinnacle Hill situation is progressing. A bill is being drawn up to extend the city boundaries to include these hills, and thus bring them within reach of condemnation proceedings.

Part of the civic renaissance of Rochester has shown itself in the formation of

a City Lunch Club which meets at the Hotel Rochester every Saturday at one. There are now over a hundred members who meet for lunch and discuss for two hours vital city problems. The club is open to every man who will pay for his lunch.

The Association of Practical House-keeping Centers of this city is welcoming a new worker to take up the work of Miss Florence Cross on Davis Street. Mrs. Margaret Manning has had much experience among our Italian friends, and has held the charge of settlements in Cleveland and Denver. We extend to her a warm welcome to this difficult work.

The Third Presbyterian Church on East Avenue has planned an interesting series of Sunday afternoon lectures on "Religion and the Social Order" for this winter. Among the speakers we find Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Prof. Graham Taylor, Dr. Edward T. Devine, Raymond Robins, Lincoln Steffens and Samuel P. Comptons.

Rochester is beginning to realize that there will surely be a fiftieth century and that we should prepare for it. A city plan of beauty and utility is being drawn and some ten thousand dollars is already subscribed. Every year new effort will be made to bring some of these castles of the air to the earth.

THE OCTAVIA HILL ASSOCIATION

Some ten years ago, a company of philanthropic citizens of Philadelphia formed the Octavia Hill Association for the purpose of converting evil tenements and neglected houses into sanitary, comfortable homes for the common people of the poorest sections of our cities. It sold its shares for \$25.00 each, and now has a capital of \$100,000.00. "It believes that the need for large tenement houses does not exist, and that social evils are enormously increased and intensified in tenement-house life." The Association limits its work to the poorer parts of Philadelphia, where masses of foreigners are grouped in old houses, made to serve many families. The problem arises often through inadequate and defective municipal regulation and control, through bad sanitary conditions, because a house has been "converted" into a place for many families, when it is only built and adapted to one family, and also because of bad landlordism.

The Association buys up such houses, provides them with proper sanitary conditions, repairs the ruins, turns the "converted" house, into a building properly adapted to more than one family and relets to the same tenants at a small rent. As a business proposition it is a complete success, for it pays a reasonable dividend of four per cent.

Houses and streets have been thus reformed, and plague spots have been wiped out. Here is the story of one such reform. "In 1903 the Association bought as agent two four-story brick houses, each lot 16.5 x 60, and each containing eight square well-lighted rooms, the fanlights and carved wooden mantels showing their former high estate. The conditions when bought were, the stairways dark, the plaster broken, the roofs leaking, the water supply consisting of only one hydrant in each yard, the drains stopped, the plumbing indescribable, the areaways broken down and the cellars and yards piled with accumulations of filth and rubbish; there

was no fire protection, about half the rooms were occupied by a low, shiftless class of negroes, living without supervision or control. The houses received no sort of oversight from the city authorities. No note was taken of the fact that they had been changed from private residences into tenements.

"At present, the stairways are lighted by skylights, and dull glass windows in the walls of the rooms, the walls are plastered and limewashed, the wood work repaired and painted, the roofs and rain conductors are tight, there are sinks on the first, second and third floors of each house, besides a hydrant and hopper water closets in each yard, the areas are rebuilt, the cellars are clean, and contain a coal bin for each tenant and there are large fire escapes. The rooms are occupied by the poorest class of negroes, eleven families in all. The weekly rents average 78 cents per room and are paid to a rent collector, who makes frequent visits and acts as their friend. A monthly bonus in saving stamps is given for regular advance payment of rent, there are barrels for ashes and cans for garbage provided in the yards, and oil is supplied for the lamps which are kept lighted at night in the halls. The cleaning is done in turn by the tenants."

This little story of plain facts means that while there is a great need to build model houses for the poor, this humanitarian businesslike Association has found a way of making good homes out of the best of the bad ones. It has demonstrated that many—not all—of our housing problems can be overcome by good landlordism. Needless to say it is unpopular among the local agents, because it has raised the standards of requirements, and other tenants are beginning to call for more efficient landlordism.

The President of the Association is Mr. Theodore J. Lewis, a brother of one of the directors of the Social Settlement, and he has signified his willingness to come and start such an association here, by explaining the work of Philadelphia, if Rochester people desire to do this thing for their city. Illustrated booklets describing the work can be had by applying to the Editors of the Bulletin.

GOOD WILL OR GOOD BARGAIN?

Yuletide is gone once more, its festive joy has passed into the land of memory, its problems and sighs remain with us. We are forgetting the quaint, happy beliefs of childhood, when Christmas brought its ocean of joy, with Santa Clans, or some old northern being, kindly and good. We have forgotten the old European customs, the elfs and fairies of the German woods; the English forests and the Norway rocks no longer weave about us that true Yule atmosphere. We no longer make presents to the cattle in the stall, and the sparrows in the eaves. One of the great romances of the centuries is dying, dying to the tune of the American dollar. Instead of the old-time "waits" with their midnight carols we have the chanting antiphonal service, "what did you get?" "What did it cost?" and good will is spoken of in the terms of a good bargain.

Our stores reflect and also aid the degeneration of the Yuletide spirit. It becomes a crime in some instances to take the happy, longing children into the toylands of our large stores, to look at the things that papa cannot afford to buy. The power of the children's longing often

overrules the judgment of the parents, and necessities for the home are forgotten, while the child's longing is satisfied. Christmas is commercialized. Enormous sums of money are gathered in from the sentiments of little children. The child is sacrificed to the dollar. It is a pitiful valuation we are putting upon life, when we are willing to barter away the romance and sentiment which has fed so many generations. Let us save the children from thinking of this happy season in the terms of dollars.

But the evil hurts more than the children, it aims a blow at our homes. One of the greatest known hindrances to the formation and preservation of a home is unemployment. And the seasonal trades are one of the chief factors of unemployment. Employment to-day and none to-morrow because the season is over, and the "rush" is past, helps to destroy many of the homes which we call the foundations of our national life. Would our enthusiasm for a home not wane if we had work to-day, but did not know of work for to-morrow? Christmas comes but once a year, did you ever ask yourself what becomes of the "extra hands" when the rush season is past? Let it at least shame us once a year, for thereby we contribute to the unemployment and degeneration of the people.

Let us educate the people and practice ourselves, the wonder of the joys which dollars cannot buy, let us remember that we help to create the unemployed, and that we also are morally obliged to work for the day when a man's right to work will be universally recognized.

A PART OF THE ROCHESTER HOUSING PROBLEM

"And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,

And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food."

—Wordsworth.

While Rochester is a city of homes in the sense that it is largely a city in which its people live in detached or semi-detached small houses, it is rapidly becoming a city of double houses, blocks and tenements.

Men and women with families of children would prefer to live in houses with open spaces all about them, with yards and gardens so that sunlight and air might easily find their way into the house, and with room where the children might play upon the grass among the flowers. Said a little girl: "Wish I lived in a house where the other houses weren't so near, so I might run all around the house." Why do not all the people live in houses with space all around them? Space for light and air, room in which to live and to grow, physically, mentally, morally, room to sit in the garden in summer, to watch the trees, flowers and vegetables flourish and grow, and in winter to sit within the house, to see the snow and rain, to watch the leaves blow by, and easily to see the passers on the street.

In a few decades Rochester has grown from a village to a city of more than two hundred thousand people. As a town it needed no building law providing for open space, prohibiting dark rooms and hallways; as a city it has no such law. In the early days small houses with wide lots and deep yards were built around what is now the business center because land was

comparatively cheap and transit an easy matter. But as the city grew, as life became more complicated, as old time luxuries became necessities, the middle city became congested, blocks, tenements and flats began to spring up, the city extended, and again extended its borders, and transit became more expensive.

As these things came to pass the price of living became more and more costly, rents increased, coal almost doubled in price, clothing and food both became dearer, and the wage earner found himself in a condition in which living had become from thirty to fifty per cent. dearer while his wage had increased but ten to twenty per cent.

New York City authorities on the standard of living place the minimum income on which a man may support a wife and three children as \$850.00 per annum, of which he is to pay 21 per cent. for rent. The highest paid artisans in Rochester receive on an average but \$50.00 a year in excess of New York's minimum standard and pay 26 per cent. for rent.

Of fifty block dwelling families living in various tenements the average income computed from recently collected data was less than fifty dollars per month, of which 25 per cent. went for rent. This income did not only represent the wages of the man or of children above sixteen years of age; it also included the additional sums gained by the wife's labor, by child labor and board paid by lodgers.

Most of the blocks in which these people dwell are ill-kept, dirty and without baths; fifteen per cent. of the rooms are dark. Does it profit a municipality to give many tuberculosis sanatoria, if it houses its people in dark tenements?

The block dwellers live thus because there is no law in Rochester prohibiting a property owner from building on all the land he owns, from making dark rooms, from building up against other blocks, darkening their rooms and halls, while he builds dark rooms in his own block. There is no law providing that air and light shall enter the rooms which the owner is to rent to the men, women and children of the city. There is no provision for yard and open space for air and light, no provision for gardens, or for play. Under the law the owner now has the right to sell air and light, and he has the right to provide patients for hospitals, for tuberculosis sanatoria, for has he not vested interests in property, poverty and dirt, and the right to make the dependent, the sick, the criminal and the insane?

Rochester needs a law by which no owner of land outside the business zones shall be permitted to build tenements; a law by which structures called houses with dark rooms and halls and without toilets and baths shall no longer be built nor used for human habitation; a law that shall provide for light and air space for each occupant, and for cleanliness; a law that can be enforced on the spot, without slowly dragging itself through the courts.

Rochester ought to wipe out its tenements, and in their places provide for suburban detached dwellings within the ability of the wage earner to pay for, and within reach of the wage earner, at a working man's fare, with a seat for every man, woman and child in a strapless car. It is not just that the rights of humanity should longer be sacrificed to the rights of property in the tenements.

WANTED—A Building Law for Rochester.

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Because thou buildest
clay.

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sure

With stones that shall
endure”

—*Henry VanDyke*