

How British Cities Manage Public Utilities

[By Frederick Upham Adams.]

(Third Article.)

The first estate outside the county of London purchased by the council was in Norbury. The site is thirty-one acres in extent and is situated a mile and a quarter beyond the county boundary. On this tract the council is erecting 762 cottages with accommodations for 5,800 persons. The rents will range from \$1.50 to \$2.75 a week.

The greatest progress has been made with the Totterdown fields estate, in Tooting. On this tract of thirty-nine acres nearly 800 cottages have been completed and are occupied, and the plans call for a total of 1,244 cottages. In this venture the London county council is investing \$2,000,000.

The cottages are built of brick and stucco, with the roofs and chimneys surmounted with the inevitable English chimney pot—as, of course, you know, there is not a wooden structure in England.

The cottages of Tooting are built to stand for hundreds of years, with little or any external repairs. The streets are paved, and when an Englishman paves a street his grandchildren need not replace it. Let us enter one of these cottages.

We will first inspect one which rents for 12 shillings a week, or \$2.88 in our money. This is a corner house, with light on three sides. In the rear is a yard and garden plot 38 by 55 feet. Garden truck grows all the year around in this climate, and many of the tenants of Tooting have no difficulty in raising the vegetables required for their personal use. The housewife has all of the rooms needed in which to hang and dry clothes, and her husband can indulge his inborn desire to keep a dog. All of this space is their own to do with as they please. The clothes are not covered with soot, and the dog is monarch of all that he surveys.

The cottage is a two story one, with five rooms and a kitchen. The living room is 12 by 13 and the parlor 9 by 11 feet. The kitchen is about 8 by 10, and the three bedrooms average 100 square feet. The floors are of hardwood throughout, and the same is true of the other woodwork. The walls are papered and the ceiling calcimined. The interior work compares with that of a New York or Chicago flat which rents at from \$30 to \$40 a month. All of the rooms have an abundance of light and ventilation.

John Jasper, blacksmith, and his wife, mother and four children live in this cottage. It was a holiday, and most of the men folks were home. The blacksmith came to the door and bade us welcome.

"How do you like it here?" I asked when we had looked through all of the rooms and listened to Mr. Jasper's plans for a combined hothouse and dog kennel.

"I like it," he said, looking out to where his children were playing in the open air. "It's all new to me, but it would be like going to jail to have to go back to the barracks where we lived in Lambeth. Never knew what it was to be clean or to breathe fresh air till we came out here."

"Does it cost you more for rent than it did when you lived in a tenement house?"

"It costs just the same," he said; "but, bless you, look at what we have now and what we had then. I never thought when I was a boy that the time would ever come when I would live in a house all to myself."

The housing work of the London county council is under the direct charge of S. G. Burgess, who has served as manager since 1901. There is no civil service—in the American sense of the word—in England. Therefore when the county council formed a housing department and wished a manager they advertised for him. For twenty years Mr. Burgess had been actively engaged in the construction of middle class dwellings. He had served with distinction as manager of three great private companies. The London county council decided that he was the best man for the place. They therefore offered Mr. Burgess a certain salary, and after due consideration he accepted their offer. He had just completed the construction of five large lodging houses for Lord Rowton, designed for providing better accommodations for 4,500 men. These structures are of the same type as the Mills hotels of New York, which are occupied by about 1,500 male lodgers. Mr. Burgess is an ac-

knowledgeable authority on architecture and construction, a man of decided executive ability and great energy.

He has never been active in politics. He has no political pull. Thousands of men work under him, but he wields no political influence. Millions upon millions of dollars pass through his hands, but there is not the shadow of a suspicion that one penny of it sticks to his fingers. He receives \$4,000 a year in salary. No partisan faction or individual aspires to supersede him. If he chooses, the position is his for life. The great municipal enterprises of London and other cities in Great Britain are filled by men of this type.

In the course of a long interview Mr. Burgess thus epitomized the work and plans under his charge:

"At an expense of about \$5,600,000 we have demolished thirty-six acres of dilapidated and insanitary buildings, which were occupied by 16,555 persons. In the place of these old structures we have erected model ones which accommodate 19,052 persons. Houses and cottages for 7,025 persons have also been completed at an expense exceeding \$2,000,000. In addition to this plans have been prepared and land purchased for 10,430 new tenements and 699 lodging rooms. These will afford accommodation for 71,055 persons, and the total cost, including the land, is estimated at \$16,000,000. It will thus be seen that the London county council has provided and is providing for 15,440 tenements and 1,848 lodging house rooms for 97,132 persons at a total outlay of \$23,694,080. These tenements contain one, two, three, four, five and six room apartments."

All of the fragmentary statements and rumors concerning the extent of the housing scheme planned by the London authorities sink into insignificance compared with the plain facts and figures. It is not a reform; it is a revolution.

Closely allied with the task of housing the working classes of London is the problem of providing cheap and rapid transportation for those who live in these suburban houses built by the municipality. English capitalistic stupidity well nigh reached its limit at the hands of those men who found themselves the owners of street railway franchises and plants.

While private enterprise in the United States and in other countries was eagerly pushing the work of discarding horse traction for mechanical and electrical, the somnolent owners of such properties in Great Britain were blind and deaf to the splendid progress attained by inventors and engineers. Realizing that there was no hope for an awakening from this trance, the London county council was not slow in taking advantage of an act passed by parliament in 1870, which provided that "where the owners of a tramway (street railway) in any district are not the local authority, such local authority within six months after the expiration of a period of twenty-one years from the time when such owners were empowered to construct such tramway and within six months after the expiration of every subsequent period of seven years may, with the approval of the board of trade, require such promoters to sell them their undertaking upon terms of paying the then value (exclusive of any allowance for past or future profits of the undertaking) of the tramway, such value to be in the case of difference determined by a referee appointed by the board of trade on the application of either party."

There were fifteen private street railway companies operating in the county of London. The first one which had its franchise expire was promptly notified by the council that its plant would be purchased. The company made a claim for \$3,000,000. The county scoffed at this price. A referee was appointed and awarded the company \$322,000. The company appealed to the high court, which set aside the award. The council appealed, and the court of appeals affirmed the referee's award, and their decision was confirmed by the house of lords. That settled it. This was in 1894.

The tramways act did not permit the local authorities to operate street railways. It was therefore necessary to lease the line for a short period, which was accordingly done, the lease expiring in 1900. The council then proceeded to purchase other plants as the franchises expired and also introduced a bill giving them power to operate lines.

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Parliament passed such an act in 1896, and on Jan. 1, 1899, the London county council came into formal possession of a large share of the mileage of tramways within its jurisdiction. The last private franchise will not expire until 1910, but the lines are small and of no consequence compared with the stupendous problem of constructing and operating new arteries of transportation.

In no modern utility is London so woefully deficient as in street railways. It has only 115 miles of tracks, of which the county council owns eighty-eight miles. Of these forty-eight are north of the Thames and are leased until 1910 to the British traction trust. The county now considers that it made a mistake in making this lease and is negotiating for its purchase. There

are forty-eight miles south of the Thames, of which the council owns and operates forty miles. The remnant of private lines is purchasable in 1906.

London's lack of progress in street transportation is best evinced by the fact that the first electric tramcar was driven from Westminster bridge to Tooting on May 16, 1903. On that date tens of thousands of miles of electrical railway were in paying operation in the United States, and such municipalities as Manchester and Glasgow were swelling their treasuries from the receipts of publicly owned electrical street railways.

London has only one mile of tramway to every 30,000 population, Glasgow one mile to every 11,900, Liverpool one mile to 8,400 and Manchester one mile to 5,600 people.

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