

**NO ROOM TO LIVE; THE
PLAINT OF
OVERCROWDED LONDON**

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No room to live; the plaint of overcrowded London by George Haw

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GEORGE HAW

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The Plaint of Overcrowded London

BY
GEORGE HAW

With Introduction
BY
SIR WALTER BESANT

LONDON
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO.,
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1900.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is no problem that presses more for a solution than that of the housing and the overcrowding of London, and there is hardly any question of the day which is at the present moment receiving more attention, or is more frequently the subject of discussion and newspaper correspondence and leading articles. Yet there had been no serious attempt to ascertain the plain facts of the case until Mr. George Haw undertook the investigation which has led to the following pages.

The book is not only opportune in its appearance, but it will have to be consulted and quoted by anyone who speaks or writes upon the question. The facts are startling. They go far beyond the current belief and opinion upon the evil. I have no doubt that the book will prove of immense value when legislation is attempted seriously, and with recognition first of the extent of the truth, and next of the certain consequences of neglecting an evil which is daily assuming more formidable proportions, to the lasting injury of the physique, the morals, and the standards of young people numbered by the hundred thousand.

I have found Mr. Haw's work of the greatest value to myself, as one who profits by the researches of others; and I believe that it will be found equally valuable to all those who, like myself, look on and mark to the best of their powers the changes and chances, the dangers and the improvements in our City of London.

WALTER BESANT.

FROGNAL END, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.,
April, 1900.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN these papers my aim has been rather to state the problem than to solve it. No good can come till the truth is known. Knowledge, to quote Carlyle, must ever go before reform.

So I have tried to set out clearly that the great want of this great city is the want of room to live. I have tried to show what the overcrowding is and where it is ; what the things are that bring about overcrowding, and what the things are that overcrowding brings about in its turn. I have been at some pains to learn the truth, and, startling though some of the facts may be, nothing is misstated nor is anything overdrawn. To a large extent the papers represent the accumulated experience of several years, during which I have lived among the Overcrowded in various parts of Inner London, and made the acquaintance of all kinds of workers in the cause of humanity ; while, at the same time, in my daily work as a journalist, I have been cast a good deal among those public men and officials whose special duty it is to deal with health and housing.

The papers have already gained their object by

creating public opinion. Since they appeared originally in the *Daily News*—and I am indebted to the editor of that paper for his permission to present them in their present form—the housing problem has become the chief social question of the hour. Not only in London, where the need for reform is greatest, but in country villages and provincial towns there has been a great awakening to the want of room to live. Public conferences and meetings are being held everywhere on the subject, and housing committees formed; statesmen debate the problem; Churches discuss it; co-operative societies and trade unions pass resolutions upon it; and municipal elections ring with the cry for healthier and more wholesome dwellings. Even an overwrought Government has had to give heed to the plaint by introducing a Bill to amend the Housing Act.

The Government measure is meagre in the extreme. Before it becomes law it is confidently hoped that its scope may be widened to embrace some of the more urgent practicable reforms I have ventured to put forth. At the request of innumerable correspondents, I have added, by way of summary, a final chapter setting out what I regard as the main lines along which reform should run.

GEORGE HAW.

March, 1909.