

**WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT: A
MANUAL OF THE LAW AFFECTING THE
HOUSING AND
SANITARY CONDITION OF LONDONERS;
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
DWELLINGS OF THE POOR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649443758

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A MANUAL OF THE LAW
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CONDITION OF LONDONERS

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE DWELLINGS OF THE POOR

ISSUED BY THE

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LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1884

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS MANUAL is intended for the use of persons interested in promoting the proper housing of our London population, and anxious to secure for the inmates of houses all those benefits with regard to drainage, water supply, good air, and other sanitary conditions which the Law aims at providing.

The work is emphatically not intended to be a law book. Our English statute law is proverbial for its confusion and intricacy. The Acts which form the groundwork of the following pages are examples of the law in its present phases. The references, cross references, amendments and qualifications with which the various statutes regulating the welfare of Londoners abound are enough to drive the unprofessional inquirer to despair. It is idle to pretend that there is any short cut to the centre of this labyrinth, and to indulge in amateur interpretations of the law is a useless and costly amusement.

But between commencing an action at law and setting the law itself in motion through the agency of persons and organisations who exist simply for the purpose of carrying it out, there is a very wide difference. The object of the author will have been attained if he has succeeded in pointing out to readers of this Manual the opportunities which are already open to them for undertaking useful action within the limits referred to. There is no intention of discouraging a close study of the details of the Law; only if such a study be attempted, it must

be with the aid of the statutes themselves, and if possible with the aid of professional advice.

It is hoped, however, that the reader will find in the following pages enough to convince him that the Law has probably gone as far as it can with advantage go in furnishing weapons to the hands of those who are engaged or willing to be engaged in the conflict against squalor, dirt, and overcrowding, and that this handbook may be of service in making known to unprofessional readers some of the means within their reach of remedying or mitigating these great evils.

NOTE.—Before taking any action under the various powers referred to in these pages the reader should consult Appendix, where he will find the rules and limitations which are imposed upon persons setting the law in force against vestries and other similar bodies. The important qualifications governing the right to recover penalties from offenders against the statute quoted should also be studied, and where any doubt arises as to the signification of terms used in the actual text of statutes, reference should be made to the table of definitions contained in Appendix, p. 77.

P A R T I.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW

BEFORE proceeding to inquire in detail what are the remedies which the Law provides, it will be useful to show briefly who are the persons and what is the machinery by which these remedies may be applied. The power of initiating, altering, or carrying it into effect is distributed over a large variety of persons and organisations, beginning with a simple individual interested in the removal of nuisances, and ending in the High Court of Parliament.

The following is a list of the persons or organisations entitled to take part in enforcing the law :—

1. Individuals.
2. Charitable Organisations.
3. Local Authorities.
4. Private Companies.
5. The Metropolitan Board of Works.
6. The Metropolitan Police.
7. The Local Government Board.
8. The School Board.
9. The Imperial Parliament.

1. PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS.—There are various methods in which individuals may qualify themselves for insisting upon the

enforcement of the law. Important examples of these statutory rights of interference will be found in the case of the Sanitary Acts referred to on page 14, and of the Elementary Education Amendment Acts (see page 73). In the former enactment the power of setting the law in motion is limited to an inhabitant of the parish or place within which the subject of complaint exists; in the Education Act it is extended to any person.

It must not be supposed that these cases exhaust the occasions where individual interference can produce good results: they are referred to simply because they illustrate the opportunities which the law creates. But there are endless methods by which individuals can create opportunities of useful action for themselves. These will, for the most part, lie in the direction of calling attention to the non-performance or ineffective performance of the duties imposed by law on the paid officers of local authorities.

For instance, the duties of *sanitary inspectors* referred to at page 16 can be rendered much easier, the officers themselves can be encouraged, or if need be, stimulated by the action of friendly but persistent observers. It is necessary to study the extensive powers already conferred upon the vestries in order to put effectual pressure upon those bodies. But it should not be forgotten that those sweeping powers are entrusted to them as the servants of the community by whom they are elected, and that it is the right and the duty of individual members of that community to see that their servants give a good account of their stewardship.

2. CHARITABLE BODIES, according to their respective constitutions and objects.

To attempt to define exhaustively the limits within which voluntary charitable associations can usefully avail themselves of the opportunities conferred by the statute law would be impossible within the limits of this handbook. In the main the work of such societies in the direction named must be an