

Homely Talks with Poor Mothers.

HEALTHY HOUSES.

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Houses may be healthy or unhealthy, both from the way in which they are built and also from the way in which they are kept by the people who live in them. A house may be so badly built, or in such a bad situation, that no amount of care can ever make it a really healthy house; while, on the other hand, a house may be built and well situated, and yet be kept in such bad condition that the people who live in it are not likely to have good health. So it is well to know a little about both these ways in which we may have healthy houses, or the reverse.

Sometimes it is not possible to have very much choice about the situation of a house or the way in which it is built. Perhaps it is necessary for a man to move and to go and live nearer his work, and there may not be very many houses to let in the neighbourhood, so then the family have to put up with what they can find. Also houses are often built with very little thought for the comfort and convenience of those who will have to live in them; so then again it is necessary to make the best of a bad business. Still, it is a good thing to know a little about how a house should be built, and what are the most convenient arrangements even if we cannot always have a perfect house to live in.

First, as to the best position for a house. It should not be built to face due north or east, and it is generally agreed that south-west or south is the best aspect. Then the rooms will get more sunshine, and the north and east winds will not blow straight in at the front door and windows. It is always easy to find out which way a house faces if we remember that the shadows at midday point to the north, and that then the east is on the right side and the west on the left. It is not healthy to have a house built in a hole, with the ground sloping down to it on all sides, nor to have it on a slope below a cemetery or a farmyard. This last situation is especially dangerous in the country where the water is, perhaps, got from a well, as the water is likely to be made impure by the drainage from the farmyard. Nor should a house be built on what has been a marsh, unless the marshy ground has been well drained and the house is built on concrete. In towns houses are often built on what is called "made ground," which sometimes means ground

which has been lying waste for several years and has had rubbish of all sorts, often animal and vegetable refuse, deposited on it. If houses are built either on made ground, such as this, or on what has been a marsh, without having a good foundation of concrete, damp and bad smells will probably rise, especially when the house gets warm, and are very likely to cause illness. If there is no cellar under the house there should always be a space under the ground floor, with ventilators, to allow a current of air to pass through.

In order that the walls may be dry, all houses should be built with a "damp course." Ordinary bricks take up a great deal of moisture, and this would creep up from brick to brick until the whole wall was damp. So a layer of damp-proof material, such as slate or blue brick, or some other prepared material, should be laid just where the foundations come above the ground, and below where the floor will be. The damp from the ground will not be able to soak through this damp course, and so the walls above are kept dry. If the house is an old one, it is well to see if the mortar between the bricks is crumbling away, in which case it should be re-pointed, and if the bricks themselves are much worn, a coating of tar is a good thing, especially if a wall is very much exposed to wind and rain. All window-sills should slope downwards a little, and then the rain will run off and not soak in round the window-frames. The roof should have eaves that project slightly, so that the rain does not run down the walls, and there should be a gutter with a rain-water pipe leading, if possible, to a tub which is provided, with a cover, as the soft water is so convenient for washing purposes. The cover of the tub should always be kept on for fear of accidents with the children, and also because the water will then be cleaner, but the tub should be well cleaned out at least once a year.

In going over a house inside it is well to look very carefully for any signs of damp, and to notice if the cellar or cupboards smell damp, and if the wall-paper is stained or peeling off in any places. Also look round the windows to see if the frames are water-tight, and see if the rain has come in at the attic roof—there may be slates off, or a weak place where the chimney and roof join. A really damp house can never be thoroughly healthy, and there is also the annoyance of constantly finding that things which have been put away are spoilt with the damp. Another thing to be noticed in a house is the condition of the woodwork—the floors should be smooth and

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