

CHAPTER XIV.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

AT this point in our discussion of the housing situation, a word of caution must be uttered on the question of figures. Any student of the housing problem will be struck by the considerable differences that are disclosed even by official figures. All the many reports available are at variance, and the most contradictory conclusions can be drawn from the figures issued by different parties and at different times. It must be remembered that we have had three distinct official policies in connection with building—Mr. Lloyd George and Dr. Addison with the Coalition Government and millions of housing bonds; Mr. Bonar Law, and later Mr. Baldwin, with what is strangely called a Conservative policy; and in between Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Wheatley with a new heaven and a new earth. Each of these parties has to justify its existence by showing the other two to be wrong, and each of them produces figures in pursuance of that amiable object. These figures, when examined, are found to differ in no essential way from the figures which issue in such impressive volume from Moscow. The great majority of them are concerned with the estimates of various committees and so-called authorities as to what is wanted, what should be, or what various innumerable schemes are calculated to produce. I often think that if the public would give up its interest in citizenship and sociology and turn its mind to arithmetic and statistics, the world would be a very great