

## STURGE HOUSE, BOW ROAD

This branch of the Men's Social Work of the Salvation Army is a home for poor and destitute boys. The house, which once belonged to the late Dr. Barnardo, has been recently hired on a short lease. One of the features of the Army work is the reclamation of lads, of whom about 2,400 have passed through its hands in London during the course of the last eight years.

Sturge House has been fitted up for this special purpose, and accommodates about fifty boys. The Officer in charge informed me that some boys apply to them for assistance when they are out of work, while others come from bad homes, and yet others through the Shelters, which pass on suitable lads. Each case is strictly investigated when it arrives, with the result that about one-third of their number are restored to their parents, from whom often enough they have run away, sometimes upon the most flimsy pretexts.

Not unfrequently these boys are bad characters, who tell false tales of their past. Thus, recently, two who arrived at the Headquarters at Whitechapel, alleged that they were farm-labourers from Norfolk. As they did not in the least look the part, inquiries were made, when it was found that they had never been nearer to Norfolk than Hampstead, where both of them had been concerned in the stealing of £10 from a

business firm. The matter was patched up with the intervention of the Army, and the boys were restored to their parents.

Occasionally, too, lads are brought here by kind folk, who find them starving. They are taken in, kept for a while, taught and fed, and when their characters are re-established--for many of them have none left--put out into the world. Some of them, indeed, work daily at various employments in London, and pay 5s. a week for their board and lodging at the Home. A good proportion of these lads also are sent to the collieries in Wales, where, after a few years, they earn good wages.

In these collieries a man and a boy generally work together. A while ago such a man applied to the Army for a boy, and the applicant, proving respectable, the boy was sent, and turned out extremely well. In due course he became a collier himself, and, in his turn, sent for a boy. So the thing spread, till up to the present time the Army has supplied fifty or sixty lads to colliers in South Wales, all of whom seem to be satisfactory and prosperous.

As the Manager explained, it is not difficult to place out a lad as soon as his character can be more or less guaranteed. The difficulty comes with a man who is middle-aged or old. He added that this Home does not in any sense compete with those of Dr. Barnardo; in fact, in certain ways they work hand in hand. The Barnardo Homes will not receive lads who are over sixteen, whereas the Army takes them up to

eighteen. So it comes about that Barnardo's sometimes send on cases which are over their age limit to Sturge House.

I saw the boys at their dinner, and although many of them had a bad record, certainly they looked very respectable, and likely to make good and useful men. The experience of the Army is that most of them are quite capable of reformation, and that, when once their hearts have been changed, they seldom fall back into the ways of dishonesty.

This Home, like all those managed by the Salvation Army, is spotlessly clean, and the dormitories are very pleasant rooms. Also, there is a garden, and in it I saw a number of pots of flowers, which had just been sent as a present by a boy whom the Army helped three years ago, and who is now, I understand, a gardener.

Sturge House struck me as a most useful Institution; and as there is about it none of the depressing air of the adult Shelters, my visit here was a pleasant change. The reclamation or the helping of a lad is a very different business from that of restoring the adult or the old man to a station in life which he seems to have lost for ever.