

THE INEBRIATES' HOME

SPRINGFIELD LODGE, DENMARK HILL.

This house, which has a fine garden attached, was a gentleman's residence purchased by the Salvation Army, to serve as an Inebriates' Home for the better class of patients. With the exception of a few who give their services in connexion with the work of the place as a return for their treatment, it is really a Home for gentlefolk. When I visited it, some of the inmates, of whom there are usually from twenty-five to thirty, were talented ladies who could speak several languages, or paint, or play very well. All these came here to be cured of the drink or drug habit. The fee for the course ranges from a guinea to 10s. per week, according to the ability of the patient to pay, but some who lack this ability pay nothing at all.

The lady in charge remarked drily on this point, that many people seemed to think that as the place belonged to the Salvation Army it did not matter if they paid or not. As is the practice at Hillsborough House, a vegetarian diet is insisted upon as a condition of the patient receiving treatment at the Home. Often this is a cause of much remonstrance, as the inmates, who are mostly persons in middle or advanced life, think that it will kill them. The actual results, however, are found to be most satisfactory, as the percentage of

successes is found to be 50 per cent, after a year in the Home and three years' subsequent supervision. I was told that a while ago, Sir Thomas Barlow, the well-known physician, challenged this statement. He was asked to see for himself, he examined a number of the patients, inspected the books and records, and finally satisfied himself that it was absolutely correct.

The Army attaches much importance to what may be called the after-care of the cases, for the lack of which so many people who pass through Homes and then return to ordinary life, break down, and become, perhaps, worse than they were before. The seven devils of Scripture are always ready to re-occupy the swept and garnished soul, especially if they be the devils of drink.

Moreover, the experience of the Army is that relatives and friends are extraordinarily thoughtless in this matter. Often enough they will, as it were, thrust spirituous liquors down the throat of the newly-reformed drunkard, or at the least will pass them before their eyes and drink them in their presence as usual, with results that may be imagined. One taste and in four cases out of six the thing is done. The old longings awake again and must be satisfied.

For these reasons the highly-skilled Officers of the Salvation Army hold that reclaimed inebriates should be safeguarded, watched, and, so far as the circumstances may allow, kept under the influences that have brought about their partial recovery. They say that they owe much

of their remarkable success in those cases to a strict observance of such preventive methods for a period of three years. After that time patients must stand upon their own feet. These remarks apply also to the victims of the drug habit, who are even more difficult to deal with than common drunkards.

At this Home I had a conversation with a fine young woman, an ex-hospital nurse, who gave me a very interesting account of her experiences of laudanum drinking. She said that in an illness she had gone through while she was a nurse a doctor dosed her with laudanum to deaden her pain and induce sleep. The upshot was that she could not sleep without the help of laudanum or other opiates, and thus the fatal habit was formed. She described the effects of the drug upon her, which appeared to be temporary exhilaration and freedom from all care, coupled with sensations of great vigour. She spoke also of delightful visions; but when I asked her to describe the visions, she went back upon that statement, perhaps because their nature was such as she did not care to set out. She added, however, that the sleep which followed was haunted by terrible dreams.

Another effect of the habit, according to this lady, is forgetfulness, which showed itself in all kinds of mistakes, and in the loss of power of accurate expression, which caused her to say things she did not mean and could not remember when she had said them. She told me that the process of weaning herself from the drug was extremely painful and difficult; but that she now slept well and desired it no more.

To be plain, I was not satisfied with the truth of this last statement, for there was a strange look in her eyes which suggested that she still desired it very much; also she seemed to me to prevaricate upon certain points. Further, those in charge of her allowed that this diagnosis was probably correct, especially as she is now in the Home for the second time, although her first visit there was a very short one. Still they thought that she would be cured in the end. Let us hope that they were right.

The Army has also another Home in this neighbourhood, run on similar lines, for the treatment of middle-class and poor people.