

## THE MEN'S SOCIAL WORK

### GLASGOW

I saw the Brigadier in charge of the Men's Social Work in Glasgow at a great central Institution where hundreds of poor people sleep every night. The inscriptions painted on the windows give a good idea of its character. Here are some of them: 'Cheap beds.' 'Cheap food.' 'Waste paper collected.' 'Missing friends found.' 'Salvation for all.'

In addition to this Refuge there is an 'Elevator' of the usual type, in which about eighty men were at work, and an establishment called the Dale House Home, a very beautiful Adams' house, let to the Army at a small rent by an Eye Hospital that no longer requires it. This house accommodates ninety-seven of the men who work in the Elevator.

The Brigadier informed me that the distress at Glasgow was very great last year. Indeed, during that year of 1909 the Army fed about 35,000 men at the docks, and 65,000 at the Refuge, a charity which caused them to be officially recognized for the first time by the Corporation, that sent them a cheque in aid of their work. Now, however, things have much improved, owing to the building of men-of-war and the forging of great guns for the Navy. At Parkhead Forge alone 8,000 men are being employed upon a vessel of the

Dreadnought class, which will occupy them for a year and a half. So it would seem that these monsters of destruction have their peaceful uses.

Glasgow, he said, 'is a terrible place for drink, especially of methylated spirits and whisky.' Drink at the beginning, I need hardly remark, means destitution at the end, so doubtless this failing accounts for a large proportion of its poverty.

The Men's Social Work of the Army in Glasgow, which is its Headquarters in Scotland, is spreading in every direction, not only in that city itself, but beyond it to Paisley, Greenock, and Edinburgh. Indeed, the Brigadier has orders 'to get into Dundee and Aberdeen as soon as possible.' I asked him how he would provide the money. He answered, 'Well, by trusting in God and keeping our powder dry.'

As regards the Army's local finance the trouble is that owing to the national thriftiness it is harder to make commercial ventures pay in Scotland than in England. Thus I was informed that in Glasgow the Corporation collects and sells its own waste paper, which means that there is less of that material left for the Salvation Army to deal with. In England, so far as I am aware, the waste-paper business is not a form of municipal trading that the Corporations of great cities undertake.

Another leading branch of the Salvation Army effort in Scotland is its

Prison work. It is registered in that country as a Prisoners' Aid Society, and the doors of every jail in the land are open to its Officers. I saw the Army's prison book, in which are entered the details of each prison case with which it is dealing. Awful enough some of them were.

I remember two that caught my eye as I turned its pages. The first was that of a man who had gone for a walk with his wife, from whom he was separated, cut her head off, and thrown it into a field. The second was that of another man, or brute beast, who had taken his child by the heels and dashed out its brains against the fireplace. It may be wondered why these gentle creatures still adorn the world. The explanation seems to be that in Scotland there is a great horror of capital punishment, which is but rarely inflicted.

My recollection is that the Officer who visited them had hopes of the permanent reformation of both these men; or, at any rate, that there were notes in his book to this effect.

I saw many extraordinary cases in this Glasgow Refuge, some of whom had come there through sheer misfortune. One had been a medical man who, unfortunately, was left money and took to speculating on the Stock Exchange. He was a very large holder of shares in a South African mine, which he bought at 1s. 6d. These shares now stand at £7; but, unhappily for him, his brokers dissolved partnership, and neither of them would carry over his account. So it was closed down just at

the wrong time, with the result that he lost everything, and finally came to the streets. He never drank or did anything wrong; it was, as he said, 'simply a matter of sheer bad luck.'

Another was a Glasgow silk merchant, who made a bad debt of £3,000 that swamped him. Afterwards he became paralysed, but recovered. He had been three years cashier of this Shelter.

Another arrived at the Shelter in such a state that the Officer in charge told me he was obliged to throw his macintosh round him to hide his nakedness. He was an engineer who took a public-house, and helped himself freely to his stock-in-trade, with the result that he became a frightful drunkard, and lost £1,700. He informed me that he used to consume no less than four bottles of whisky a day, and suffered from delirium tremens several times. In the Shelter--I quote his own words--'I gave my heart to God, and after that all desire for drink and wrongdoing' (he had not been immaculate in other ways) 'gradually left me. From 1892 I had been a drunkard. After my conversion, in less than three weeks I ceased to have any desire for drink.'

This man became night-watchman in the Shelter, a position which he held for twelve months. He said: 'I was promoted to be Sergeant; when I put on my uniform and stripes, I reckoned myself a man again. Then I was made foreman of the works at Greendyke Street. Then I was sent to pioneer our work in Paisley, and when that was nicely started, I was sent on to Greenock, where I am now trying to work up a (Salvation

Army) business.'

Here, for a reason to be explained presently, I will quote a very similar case which I saw at the Army Colony at Hadleigh, in Essex. This man, also a Scotsman (no Englishman, I think, could have survived such experiences), is a person of fine and imposing appearance, great bodily strength, and good address. He is about fifty years of age, and has been a soldier, and after leaving the Service, a gardener. Indeed, he is now, or was recently, foreman market-gardener at Hadleigh. He married a hospital nurse, and found out some years after marriage that she was in the habit of using drugs. This habit he contracted also, either during her life or after her death, and with it that of drink.

His custom was to drink till he was a wreck, and then take drugs, either by the mouth or subcutaneously, to steady himself. Chloroform and ether he mixed together and drank, strychnine he injected. At the beginning of this course, threepennyworth of laudanum would suffice him for three doses. At the end, three years later (not to mention ether, chloroform, and strychnine), he took of laudanum alone nearly a tablespoonful ten or twelve times a day, a quantity, I understand, which is enough to kill five or six horses. One of the results was that when he had to be operated on for some malady, it was found impossible to bring him under the influence of the anaesthetic. All that could be done was to deprive him of his power of movement, in which state he had to bear the dreadful pain of the operation.

Afterwards the surgeon asked him if he were a drug-taker, and he told

me that he answered:--

'Why, sir, I could have drunk all the lot you have been trying to give me, without ever knowing the difference.'

In this condition, when he was such a wreck that he trembled from head to foot and was contemplating suicide, he came into the hands of the Army, and was sent down to the Hadleigh Farm.

Now comes the point of the story. At Hadleigh he 'got converted,' and from that hour has never touched either drink or drugs. Moreover, he assured me solemnly that he could go into a chemist's shop or a bar with money in his pocket without feeling the slightest desire to indulge in such stimulants. He said that after his conversion, he had a 'terrible fight' with his old habits, the physical results of their discontinuance being most painful. Subsequently, however, and by degrees, the craving left him entirely, I asked him to what he attributed this extraordinary cure. He replied:--

'To the power of God. If I trusted in my own strength I should certainly fail, but the power of God keeps me from being overcome.'

Now these are only two out of a number of cases that I have seen myself, in which a similar explanation of his cure has been given to me by the person cured, and I would like to ask the unprejudiced and open-minded reader how he explains them. Personally I cannot explain

them except upon an hypothesis which, as a practical person, I confess I hesitate to adopt. I mean that of a direct interposition from above, or of the working of something so unrecognized or so undefined in the nature of man (which it will be remembered the old Egyptians, a very wise people, divided into many component parts, whereof we have now lost count), that it may be designated an innate superior power or principle, brought into action by faith or 'suggestion.'

That these people who have been the slaves of, or possessed by certain gross and palpable vices, of which drink is only one, are truly and totally changed, there can be no question. To that I am able to bear witness. The demoniacs of New Testament history cannot have been more transformed; and I know of no stranger experience than to listen to such men, as I have times and again, speaking of their past selves as entities cast off and gone, and of their present selves as new creatures. It is, indeed, one that throws a fresh light upon certain difficult passages in the Epistles of St. Paul, and even upon the darker sayings of the Master of mankind Himself. They do, in truth, seem to have been 'born again.' But this is a line of thought that I will not attempt to follow; it lies outside my sphere and the scope of these pages.

After the Officer who used to consume four bottles of whisky a day, and is now in charge of the Salvation Army work in Greenock, had left the room, I propounded these problems to Lieut.-Colonel Jolliffe and the Brigadier, as I had done previously to Commissioner Sturgess. I

pointed out that religious conversion seemed to me to be a spiritual process, whereas the craving for drink or any other carnal satisfaction was, or appeared to be, a physical weakness of the body. Therefore, I did not understand how the spiritual conversion could suddenly and permanently affect or remove the physical desire, unless it were by the action of the phenomenon called miracle, which mankind admits doubtfully to have been possible in the dim period of the birth of a religion, but for the most part denies to be possible in these latter days.

'Quite so,' answered the Colonel, calmly, in almost the same words that Commissioner Sturgess had used, 'it is miracle; that is our belief. These men cannot change and purify themselves, their vices are instantaneously, permanently, and miraculously removed by the power and the Grace of God. This is the truth, and nothing more wonderful can be conceived.'

Here, without further comment, I leave this deeply interesting matter to the consideration of abler and better instructed persons than myself.

To come to something more mundane, which also deserves consideration, I was informed that in Glasgow, with a population of about 900,000, there exists a floating class of 80,000 people, who live in lodging-houses of the same sort as, and mostly inferior to the Salvation Army Shelter of which I am now writing. In other words, out



of every twelve inhabitants of this great city, one is driven to that method of obtaining a place to sleep in at night.

In this particular Refuge there is what is called a free shelter room, where people are accommodated in winter who have not even the few coppers necessary to pay for a bed. During the month before my visit, which took place in the summer-time, the Brigadier had allotted free beds in this room to destitute persons to the value of £13. I may add that twice a week this particular place is washed with a carbolic mixture!