

Figures that Tell

As to the alleged inability of the men who come to us to secure outside employment, we may mention that the office records show that for months past—in spite of the depression in the trade which has been so noticeable this year—scarcely a week has passed in which one or more of the ex-stranded colonists do not leave for situations secured before they go, while others, having been nursed back to fitness and ability, leave the Homes to seek employment on their own account.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SO-CALLED
SWEATING CHARGES

OFFICIAL DENIALS

BY

COMMISSIONER STURGESS and COLONEL JACOBS

(The Salvation Army Officers Responsible
for the Management of the Hanbury Street
Home and Factory)

As an absurd series of charges against The Salvation Army still obtains some publicity, we think it best to give the official statements on the matter made by Commissioner Sturgess, the Officer in charge of our Men's City Social work, and Colonel Jacobs, his Chief Secretary.

It is said that there is or has been a system of "sweating" at one of our Men's Social Labour Factories, that these men work scandalous hours, are subjected to bad feeding, and are given wages much lower than the Union rate of pay.

A catalogue of prices paid for work done was published, but these prices are all imaginary! As a matter of fact, the labour in our various Social Factories costs more, rather than less, than the amount which would be paid to fully qualified men.

It is just because so many of the inmates of this Factory are not qualified physically or skillfully that they are there at all.

As to the food, the bill of fare, which is given on pages 20 and 21, at once disposes of the suggestion that it is not ample and of good quality.

The following statement by Colonel Jacobs deals, in detail, with these charges:—

"I. Our Labour Homes are really hospitals. We take in broken-down men, unfortunate people for whom the Trade Unions do nothing, some of them drunkards and loafers, and other poor fellows who have lost heart in the battle of life.

"We do not pretend to pay this derelict class of labour wages in the ordinary sense of the word, unless they rise to be foremen, or regular employés, of whom we have not more than half a dozen at any given time; we set them to work in the best way we can, and at the best they can do. Some we teach to earn their living later on. We befriend them all, so far as they will allow, and in return for their labour we see that their temporal needs are supplied. If they were ordinary workmen, able to obtain work, and able to keep it when they had obtained it, they would not, of course, come to us, and if they were we

should not take them in. Destitution is the sole qualification for admission.

"II. We do not sell, and never have, under any circumstances, sold any of the articles manufactured and produced at our Labour Homes under the ordinary trade prices. Nearly all our work is done in competition with other firms; and, I may mention, that so close and careful are we in this matter that we do not succeed in obtaining a third of the work connected with other Departments of The Salvation Army for which we tender.

"III. The Institution in question pays no profit. On the contrary, the accounts show a considerable financial loss. This alone should be a sufficient answer to the insinuation that we exploit this class of labour in order to enhance our profits.

"The Officers who manage the work could command elsewhere much more than their present salary; but have dedicated their lives to help their fellows by means of this Home.

"IV. As to the 'facts' and figures that have been published, they are totally misleading. Take, as an example, the price paid for a certain number of seats for a public hall, which are given as follows:—

"Salvation Army price, 30s. the lot; builder's

estimate, £5 5s. for the labour. But the figure so hastily put down for The Salvation Army price is an imaginary one. It is the price paid merely for the putting together of the various pieces of wood after they have been prepared.

"The charge for the seats would be about £14, of which we should pay for labour alone between £5 and £6.

"Then take the matter of the 'Tabs.' 'Tabs' have been held up by speakers all over London as if there was written on them the handwriting of our self-condemnation. But what do these 'Tabs' represent? I reply they do not represent the whole of the labour on a job. They only represent a section of the labour on a job, and for this reason, that we use the 'Tabs' not merely to estimate the labour, but to bring the amount of work done by the worker weekly or fortnightly before him.

"This matter was dealt with in the 'Daily News' last year.

"One gets rather weary of meeting criticism of this kind, and not a little annoyed with people who have not the common decency to inquire as to the elementary facts of the case before they level charges of such a character at us."

Statement by Commissioner Sturgess

"I am astonished that any intelligent person can be found either to write or believe such statements as have been circulated. The Labour Factories are harbours of refuge for the poor shipwrecked fellows whom nobody else will look at. It is pretty hard work to find anything that they can do, and it is often still harder to keep at it those who can do anything; but we do the best we can, and, as a whole, the men are very grateful, though, of course, there are black sheep amongst them, as in every flock.

"As to the prices quoted, they are not correct. If they were, then we should soon be full of orders, and help a larger number than we do at present, whereas now we do not get sufficient to keep us going always. But we do not turn out the men as soon as business drops, as is usual with the trade.

"If I could find out how to make bay window frames at four shillings each, as alleged, I should for a time, at any rate, be delivered from the miserable want of funds from which we always suffer. Such statements are positively ludicrous. I call them wicked when they are employed to create prejudice against us in our work for the poor fellows for whom nobody cares.

"I have a suggestion to make to the Trade Unions, with my compliments! Why do not each of them start a labour factory of some kind, and employ these poor fellows themselves, and thus keep them from starvation and the workhouse, enabling me to retire from the business, and spend my energies on something that would be much more agreeable to myself, and apparently more appreciated?"

It is almost impossible to overtake a lie when once it has had a good start, and altogether impossible to remove its effects.

One support which this truism receives is supplied in the attempt that has been made to give a death-blow to the charge that our Works in Hanbury Street, Whitechapel, for providing poor social wrecks with temporary employment, is nothing more nor less than a sweating-shop. We fancied we had at least weakened the force of the lie, but we were too sanguine. We denied the charge right "in the teeth," and refuted, one by one, a number of gross and misleading misstatements that accompanied it.

Decline of Gratitude

No matter! These charges have been repeated and circulated broadcast throughout the country, with all the greater force, inasmuch as they

emanated from a quarter where—considering what The Army has done in the way of creating new industries as well as in assisting old ones, for the benefit of the *bona fide* working-man—one would naturally expect the reverse to have been said. Especially is this so when one considers that the organisation which lent the weight of its influence to repeat the charges represents something like 1,700,000 working-men, whereas our little Hanbury Street Works—the object of attack—provides work for only a few men, the majority of whom come to us in abject distress, and but for Hanbury Street would probably to-day be penniless and friendless, occupying places in the casual ward, workhouse, or worse! But gratitude is, we fear, a declining grace.

The attack is not without its humorous side, however. The persons who launched it now declare, with a show of innocence, that they have been *occupied for seven years in collecting information and facts against us!* The mountain in travail brought forth a mouse! But seven years to bring it forth is—well, a trifle comical!

Why the Attack?

Commissioner Sturgess, interviewed on the subject, was asked, "How do you account, Com-

missioner, for this unexpected and unwarranted attack?" answered:—

"There is no accounting for it, I think," he replied. "It may be that the doctrine of the Good Samaritan is on the wane. One argument employed against us is that the workless men for whom we provide temporary labour, come into competition with the more respectable and deserving. That strikes me as very much resembling the Priest and Levite attitude, and is an inhuman reason for letting the poor fellows die in the ditch of despair, or tossing them into the sea, or passing them through a lethal chamber."

"It is also said that, by helping your unfortunate friends in this way, Commissioner, you are usurping the functions of the State."

"Ah, yes, they do say so. Well, if our opponents will only get the State to provide them with work, food, and shelter, I am prepared, as far as I am concerned, to hand them all over to its tender mercies to-morrow. Till then, what shall we do with them?"

"Yes, what?"

"We shall do as the Good Samaritan did with the man that fell among thieves—relieve them by the best possible means in our power, and try to get them on to their feet again."

"But one of the chief insinuations is, that the

men who do avail themselves of these means are not the maimed and halt of our civilisation."

Who are the Sweated?

"Then who are they?" asked Commissioner Sturgess. "They that be whole need not a physician. People that are well off do not go to the workhouse, and you may depend upon it that the men who knock at our gates are in sad want."

"You can be more specific, however?"

"If you wish it, yes. There is a sad, sad reflection about the facts when you come to the details. Two-thirds of the men who enter are maimed by drink, either in character, body, or mind. My Trade Unionist friends demand that these should be paid for their labour according to their scale, irrespective of their moral and physical condition. Let me say, however serious it may sound in some people's ears, it is not wages that these men are in need of most. Some would even be better without a sixpence, until such time as they are morally strong enough to spend it outside an aleshop. They need, in a word, re-making. As it is, their greatest temptation is to spend the grant they receive in the public-house, and our greatest task is to prevent

them doing so. If wages alone could have saved them, some of them would have been glorified saints on earth long ago. But money has almost damned them!"

"That, surely, will be conceded by all who know anything about your work?"

Industrial Patients

"But they do not *all* come under that classification. Ill-health, inefficiency, partial knowledge of their craft, and sheer poverty—in some instances absolute hunger—drive them to us. What would the Trade Union secretary have me do, for example, with the man who, through a poisoned arm lost his job, then his tools, and then his strength? Would he have me say, 'No, my dear fellow, we have no use for you here. Wait till you are stronger. Go into the country. Get some flesh on your bones. Purchase new tools and apply for a job through the Union.' That would be equal to saying, 'Go and drown yourself!' We took him into Hanbury Street just as he was, and gave him food, shelter, work, tools, a small grant of money to start with, and what is better than all the lot, we inspired him with hope.

"Take the very man whom they have dragged

into publicity without telling the whole truth about him. As a workman, he could handle his tools all right, but they did not add that he came to us from a London casual ward. They did not inform the public that his wife had left him owing to his misconduct, and that his father, on hearing that he had entered a Salvation Army Institution, wrote to him, 'Are you going to abuse them as you have done your friends?' They did not provide the further information that, when he left us to take up the job which he secured, after using our Works as a temporary shelter in the storm, he told us he was going to join his wife and family—an untruth. No, like the majority of statements hurled at this Poor Man's Industrial Hospital, only a modicum of the truth is told, and that quantity is so put together as to convey a totally different impression from that which the entire facts of the case warrant.

"The fact that the man obtained a job outside clearly proves that Hanbury Street is not, as has also been said, a penal establishment."

"A penal establishment, indeed! Why, it is to our, as well as the men's, interest that they should obtain permanent work. We have no bolts or bars. There is discipline, of course. Without that we should soon have moral and

social chaos. But the men can go when they please, and no reasonable request is ever refused them for going out to find a job. The lying spirit was in the man who stated otherwise, for the average stay of the men in the Hanbury Street Works is three or four months—a fact which business men will understand militates against our obtaining paying labour."

"Which makes me ask, Commissioner, What proportion of the men leave the Workshop as satisfactory—that is, temporarily or permanently helped?"

"I place it at seventy per cent; but, after making all allowances, say, sixty per cent."

"But the most damaging charge is made, Commissioner, that you employ this class of labour to undersell—to cut out firms who pay their men Trade Union wages."

Commissioner Sturgess indignantly replied: "It is a lie—deliberate, wicked, and unprovable! We cannot undersell—we dare not undersell—and do not undersell. Look yonder," he went on, pointing to the new Emigration Offices of The Army on the opposite side of the street. "We lost the carpentry and joinery contract for that because our prices were too high. We lost the Congress Hall renovation scheme for the same reason. Read that," placing one out of a

sheaf of letters on the desk: "I find that you are charging me 12s. 6d. per pair for B. and B. shutters which I can get at a much lower rate."

"But you will admit that your labour is cheap, Commissioner?"

"No. You are mistaken. The labour is so dear that the Hanbury Street Labour Home is run, as stated again and again, and as our accounts show, at a loss. If I had only experienced, steady mechanics, I could make the builders of London, as well as Trade Union officials, open their eyes, and add hundreds of pounds of profit to our impoverished coffers. But that is not our business."

"Then your loss is on the class of labour alone?"

"That is so. Rents, rates, management, and wages for the foremen and a few employés are all reasonable. The loss is on the labour, and in consequence of the fact that we do not dismiss the men, as do the ordinary builders, when trade is slack."

"So that the charge of underselling is——"

"As hollow as a drum, and the men who make it are not in a position to produce a single case to show that we have ever sold below the regular trade prices. Others may have done so, but not The Salvation Army in Hanbury Street."

"And what have you to say to the further charge that you sweat the men?"

"That it is more cruelly false than the others, because it is designed, I conscientiously believe, to breed mischief. What is meant by this charge of sweating? Will our traducers have the courage to say that we sweat these poor men to swell the salaries of the Officers of the Men's Social work: men who have given up their lives to help and bless, and save them for this world and the next? They are reckless enough, in all conscience, but they will not go as far as that. If not, well, then, the very fact that the Shop does not pay—and, in the nature of things, I cannot see how it can pay—brings to the ground the charge of sweating to make a profit. It is a twin lie to the other."

"Then what is your system of remuneration?"

System of Remuneration

"I have already stated our position as regards wages. We do not profess—it would be unblushing folly—to pay wages in the ordinary sense of the term. The system of remuneration is graduated to the circumstances I have explained, and to the ability of the worker. Trade Union principles—which, I admit, have done much to

raise both the standard of the work and the worker—do not apply here at all.

"A home is not run on the same principle as a hospital. Here we have an industrial hospital, and principles in harmony with the same are applied to the relief of our patients. We could do more for the men if we had the money. For example, the question of tools has been raised, and raised in a way which leaves the impression that we do next to nothing for men to redeem or renew their tools. A little thought would have convinced these people that it would be detrimental to the very object we are striving to attain if we advertised all that we do for the men. We should require a millionaire's purse if it were given out that The Salvation Army provides tools when a man leaves its care. We know our business—which means we know whom to assist, and how to assist them, and the friends who have been disgusted by this unwarranted attack upon an interesting branch of our Social work might help us by donating a few pounds to enable us to do more than we can at present.

"But, generally speaking, the system is at best a splendid rough-and-ready method for helping the lame dog over the stile. It puts a man from the street on his mettle. The grants average in

money from 1s. to 7s. 6d. per week, in addition to board and lodging, and, judged by results, and the very appearance of the men after a short stay in the Home, is the very best arrangement for coping with the varied and trying circumstances of this class of unfortunates."

Paltry Questions

"Excuse me troubling you further, Commissioner. You are charged with selling second-hand clothes and boots to the men which were given gratuitously by friends."

"Not a word of truth in it. No second-hand clothes are sold there. We sell only boots and clothes direct from the warehouse, and at the exact price they cost us. Next question!"

"That the food is —"

"Now, steady. Life is too serious, and time too precious to answer every lie on the board. Come, and take breakfast, dinner, and tea with the men, and you shall be able to judge for yourself." So saying, the Commissioner bundled up his papers and walked out, meeting as he did so a man for whom, I am happy to say, the Commissioner was able to at once find the work of which he was in such sad need.

And thus we continue, doing what good we

can according to our poor ability, and the opportunities which Providence puts in our way.

Treatment of Patients

The majority of them, on arrival, are totally unfit for any but the lightest tasks. They are absolutely unable to endure anything like regular habits of labour, and their first day's work produces a feeling of intense weariness, and at times acute physical suffering.

During the days and weeks that follow, however, the rusty machinery of the body gets into running order, and although it takes some time for the different parts to run smoothly, even a month's stay produces a remarkable effect on the "unemployable" and "unfit."

The secret of the success—and from the standpoint of the Gospel of Uplift is a success—of this work lies largely in the regularity of the arrangements of the Workshop and Home. It is the getting of these unfortunate men into regular habits that tells on them.

Combined with the regular hours, there is the abundant supply of good food. No half-starved man can do a good day's work; hence the minute attention paid by our Officers to all matters pertaining to the feeding of the Colonists.

Bill of Fare

A perusal of the weekly bill of fare will make it abundantly evident that the man who is suffering from weakness caused by starvation, at the end of three weeks in the Workshop, or Elevator as it is called by us, must either be an epicure come to the wrong place by mistake or—something else.

Sunday

BREAKFAST.—Fish, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, one pint of tea.

DINNER.—Three ounces of prime roast meat, greens, potatoes, bread, boiled pudding or stewed fruit, pint of tea.

TEA.—Two slices of bread and butter or margarine, two slices of cake, pint of tea.

Monday

BREAKFAST.—Two ounces of corned beef, three slices of bread and butter or margarine (seven ounces), pint of tea.

DINNER.—Meat-pie or stew, beans, potatoes, bread, rice pudding and stewed plums, pint of tea.

TEA.—Two ounces of flank, or rice and jam, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, pint of tea.

Tuesday

BREAKFAST.—Two ounces of cold bacon, three slices of bread and butter or margarine (seven ounces), pint of tea.

DINNER.—Three ounces of prime roast meat, blue peas, potatoes, bread, jam tart, pint of tea.

TEA.—Two ounces of bacon, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, pint of tea.

Wednesday

BREAKFAST.—Fish, three slices of bread and butter or margarine (seven ounces), pint of tea.

DINNER.—Stew or meat-pie, carrots, or beans, or peas, bread, bread pudding, pint of tea.

TEA.—One saveloy or two ounces of sausage, two slices of bread and butter or margarine, one slice of cake, pint of tea.

Thursday

BREAKFAST.—Two ounces of corned beef, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, pint of tea.

DINNER.—Three ounces of prime cold meat, pickles, potatoes, bread, rice pudding and stewed plums, pint of tea.

TEA.—Three ounces of flank, or rice and jam, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, pint of tea.

Friday

BREAKFAST.—One egg, or fish, or two ounces of sausage, three slices of bread and butter or margarine (seven ounces), pint of tea.

DINNER.—Pie, or stew, beans, potatoes, bread, boiled pudding, pint of tea.

TEA.—Fish, egg, or sausage, three slices of bread and butter or margarine, pint of tea.

Saturday

BREAKFAST.—Two ounces of corned beef, three slices of bread and butter or margarine (seven ounces), pint of tea.

DINNER.—Meat pudding, beans, potatoes, bread, rice and jam, pint of tea.

TEA.—Two ounces of flank, two slices of bread and butter or margarine, one slice of cake, pint of tea.

SUPPER consists of one slice of bread, jam, marmalade, cake, butter or margarine, half pint of tea.

It has been freely stated that, as a result of the intolerable sweating system practised by The Army in its Hanbury Street Workshop, it is impossible for any poor human derelict who drifts into this den of inhumanity to ever fit himself for the battle of life.

Is this statement true? Is there even the shadow of truth in it?

No!

We are in a position, after conducting special inquiries into the matter, consulting records, and interviewing some of those more immediately concerned, to give a flat denial to this statement.

To the Rescue!

Let us begin at the beginning.

Fully ninety per cent of the men who come to us are men who cannot be helped by any other organisation. In giving this figure we do not wish to write down all who come to us as drunkards or loafers. Many have, unfortunately, been worsted in the battle of life through physical weakness, ill-nourishment, the approach of old age, and a hundred other causes.

But no one else will, or can, help them.

In our Hanbury Street Institution a proportion of these unfortunate fellows find a hospital and a chance.

Do they make good use of it?

Yes. As witness the following stories, picked at random from a record which could furnish scores of similar cases. Here is the first:—

Within two hundred yards of Hanbury Street there is to be found, at the present time, a steady mechanic, hard at work in a regular situation, drawing elevenpence an hour, week in, week out, who turned up some time ago at the Blackfriars Free-Breakfast in a destitute and famishing condition. He was sent to Hanbury Street. Regular food and regular work (the course of treatment which is so successful in such cases), pulled him round. He left us, went into lodgings, got married, and is still in regular correspondence with the Hanbury Street Manager.

Difficult Cases

Another story is that of a young fellow who came to us from Blackfriars in a pitifully destitute condition. Could we do anything for him?

Hanbury Street's doors were opened. He was taught to use his tools, became a good workman, and rose to a position of trust. Then he left for a good situation in the North of England, married a Salvationist, and is still in touch with the City Colony Officers.

What would our critics have done with J. D.,

a man who came to Hanbury Street from our Whitechapel Labour Bureau? He had, time and again, filled good positions in the outside labour market, but, because of his insatiable thirst for strong drink, had continually been turned adrift. His wife and children refused to recognise him, and thus it came about that he was stranded at our doors, hopeless, helpless, friendless, and unfit.

We took him in. The drink craving was driven out by the power of God. He became a sober man, and longed to be reunited to his wife and family.

Our Officer made a special journey to Bedford, where the wife was living, on his behalf. She, having had some previous experience of his promises, refused to have anything to do with him. Months passed by. The man gradually, painfully, but surely climbed back to his old position. His wife and children, marvelling at the change, were reconciled once more. A home was got together, and to-day the ex-drunkard is doing well, has regular employment, earns good money, and takes it home regularly to his grateful better-half.

We are reminded of a scene we witnessed not long ago at our Blackfriars Shelter. A tall workman stood on the platform, his fourteen-

year-old boy by his side. The man told how he had regained his strength, his manhood, and his self-respect, through the kindness of The Army, and the devotion of his son.

After his wife's death, he said, he deserted his children, and went on the drink. The children were sent to various institutions, the boy got work in the city. Coming home one day the boy met his father, now a homeless, wretched outcast.

With his last coppers the boy persuaded the man to seek a night's lodging at The Army Shelter and get converted.

The Army gave him a chance—set him to work, enabled him to regain his tools, and fixed him up in a situation.

It would be imagined, from the vehemence with which this haven of hope has been assailed, that the colonists who find refuge within its doors are discontented, rebellious, and surly, but see the men, watch their faces, and think of what they were before they came to us. As a matter of fact, they are more than satisfied with their surroundings. Some men would grumble whatever position they were placed in; in fact, it may be generally conceded that it is largely as a result of their chronic dissatisfaction that many have become the failures they undoubtedly are.