

A REPRINT
of the Preface to
'WASTE HUMANITY'

BY

MR. F. A. MCKENZIE

THIS little book tells something of the work done by The Salvation Army for the poorest and the most friendless people of this country. It is written as the outcome of my personal knowledge of The Army's work, extending over a long period, and of special investigation into its present position. When first requested by Mr. Bramwell Booth to undertake the preparation of this review of the philanthropic section of the work in this country, I was glad to agree, for experience in the drab and grey back streets of London and other great cities has long since convinced me, not only of the unselfish devotion and the strenuous labours of The Salvation Army Officers, but also of the prudent, economical and business-like management of their work.

The time has surely gone by when it is necessary for any writer upon The Salvation Army to assure his readers of the financial probity with which its affairs are managed. Men are still to be found who believe that it does not publish accounts, and that its Leaders are actuated by motives of personal gain. There are also people who still believe that the earth is flat. It is as hopeless to argue with the one as the other, for the evidence is final and conclusive, except for those who have irrevocably made up their minds. But personal honesty in the administration of public funds is not in itself enough. Philanthropists can be meticulously honest, and yet spendthrifts. Some of the most disastrous waste of money has been made by men who would scorn to take a penny illicitly. It is on this point that The Salvation Army is above suspicion. Its funds are not only spent honestly, they are well spent.

The very magnitude of its work gives it an advantage here. The Army Leaders have been able to establish a standard of business

efficiency for their assistants, based on experience obtained from large numbers of branches, each doing a similar work. Every one interested in modern philanthropy has recognized the enormous advance in the administration of many London hospitals since the King Edward's Fund created a standard of efficiency for them. In The Salvation Army the same result has been attained by co-ordinating experience and by the constant supervision of experts at Headquarters. These know from their records what ought to be done, and they learn, week by week, what is being accomplished in each part of the Movement. If results fall short, investigation quickly follows.

Possibly the causes are due to local circumstances beyond control, or maybe they are owing to some misapprehension or mistake on the part of local workers. Whatever the reason, it is discovered and, if possible, remedied. The matter is not left to chance or to guess-work. Moreover, the spirit of emulation is provoked; each centre seeks to improve its

plans, and the improvements of one are used for the benefit of all. I need hardly point out to any man of affairs that this is the method by which the most successful undertakings of modern times have been created. System takes the place of unorganized and inexperienced endeavour.

Thus one finds in the Social operations of The Army an unceasing process of evolution. Methods, like machinery, become obsolete when more efficient are discovered, and The Army never hesitates to abandon old ways for better. Its Leaders have no intention of allowing their work to become stereotyped. General Booth asks his Officers for results, actual, tangible results, and he obtains them.

Those directing The Salvation Army Social Scheme are not mere sentimentalists. They recognize that they have a tremendously difficult problem to attack, and one that must be approached from every possible way. But while their methods are constantly developing, their principles remain the same. They go forth endowed with splendid optimism.

'Despair of none' is their motto. They believe that no man, however low, is hopeless while he lives. Time after time I have been amazed at their perseverance among people whom I would have considered beyond expectation of social recovery. The Army succeeds because it seeks not merely to produce an external change, but to turn the hearts and build the characters of its Converts. Modern science and discovery have taught us much, but when we want to turn men from evil to good there is no sure way but old-fashioned, heart-searching, and heart-changing religion.

In this work one sees bad men made good, and scoundrels turned towards decency. Many are rescued who must otherwise have come upon the Poor Law; wives and deserted husbands are reunited; children are saved from the Union brand; and the unfortunate are given a fresh chance in life. The workman who finds that conditions in our cities afford no prospect for his children is encouraged to establish himself in the opening

lands of Greater Britain. The starving are first fed, and then approached by the most powerful religious appeals. Tens of thousands of single working-men are provided with decent homes, in place of the old and degrading lodging-houses they formerly had to inhabit. The loafer is taught to help himself, and is given an opportunity to work for his own board and lodging. When the woman on the streets recoils from her life of shame she is taken in hand, not as a semi-criminal to be lectured and scorned, but as a sister to be loved and helped out of the mire into which she has fallen. This Social Scheme touches the problems of poverty and vice at a thousand points. It meets the prisoner at the jail gates; it takes the outraged child and makes her forget the past in a present of joy and hope; its women workers search the slums day by day; its Officers and volunteers walk the streets of London every night, seeking out the homeless; it teaches the lazy industry, the drunken self-control, and the self-centred self-denial.

Work like this is good work, Christlike work. It is of real service to the State as well as the individual. We may not be able to subscribe to all the theological tenets of General Booth and his followers—I am by no means sure that I could—but we can at least admire and help the tangible philanthropy they display. When I study the actions of these campaigners, when I see them devoting themselves to tremendous and often heart-breaking toil for pittances little more than enough to sustain life, when I note how they sacrifice many of the home ties and comforts which we average men and women consider essential, I feel ashamed of the petty criticism, the cynical suspicion and the refined scorn too often meted out to them.

If ever there was a time when work such as this was more especially required, it is now. From all parts of the country the cry of the unemployed is already being heard. Even in the autumn—I write this in the month of September—we are having rioting in Glasgow, unemployed marches in Manchester, great

suffering in Liverpool, and short time in Birmingham. Lancashire, the home of our greatest industry, presents a melancholy spectacle of 'shut-down' mills. Sunderland has had a year of depression such as it has never known before in modern times, and all the north-east coast is under a long-enduring shadow of bad trade. The railways are discharging numbers of men. Those of us whose daily lives take us much in the poor quarters of our great cities are heart-heavy because of the cases we meet of people—honest, industrious, sober folk—brought to the very point of starvation through declining trade.

A few days since a leading bailie of a great Scotch city told me that in one morning's committee work he had before him three men, each of whom had lived for two or three days without food before they would come and appeal for help. Last week, a London coroner held his fifth inquest within a few days on homeless people who had killed themselves rather than endure the misery of workless and unwanted lives. Within a quarter of an

hour's walk from my London home I can see each afternoon a long line of men waiting for hours outside a door in a side street lest they be too late to secure a pauper's bed, a pauper's meal, and a pauper's task of stone-breaking in the casual ward. In the parks of London and many another great city, one notes the verminous and crouching men and women, who either have no work to do, or who have lost the desire to work, and by their presence drive away decent people.

I may be told that many of the people who are thus in need are thriftless, ungrateful, and undeserving. If we admit it, what then? Are we only to help the righteous? Are we to confine our charity to those whom we are pleased to consider the deserving? Such a theory, however it may appeal to the precisians who would measure out kindly acts by actuarial scale, is neither common Christianity nor good citizenship. Some of the poor, let me admit it, are thriftless and ungrateful. But behind them lie a vast body who are striving hard on narrow means, who have bravely faced

the grey dull and monotonous lives of mean streets, who have tried to make their children good men and women, and who to-day find themselves crushed down by the overwhelming blow of national trade depression. I beg my rich friends not to close their purse-strings to the cry of the poor because of the rioting of mobs, or the wild talk of orators who claim to speak for the unemployed.

Why should voluntary charity do this work? I am asked. Is not the State taxing us all heavily for poor relief? Have we not poor-houses on every side, sick asylums, villages for pauper children, casual wards, committees to administer the Unemployed Workmen's Act and Old Age Pensions? Why do more?

We have to do more because the State aid is insufficient, and because much work can be done better by private charity than by the most elaborate and costly State intervention. I would be the last to deny that the State agencies for poor relief command the generous services of large numbers of self-denying and

benevolent men and women. But Poor Law Guardians are best aware how costly, how clumsy, and how inadequate this State relief often is. It has to be surrounded by all manner of restrictions lest it should be abused; every act must be done according to form and regulation; its scope is rigidly limited, and the most experienced workers are at the mercy of chance agitators. The man who devotes his life to serve as a Poor Law Guardian, can be thrown from office by a glib-tongued organizer who promises the poor easier and more liberal aid. 'Vote for Blank and outdoor relief' was a placard at a Guardians' election in one of the East London districts not long ago. Poor Law administration has been in many cases the prey of the crank, the doctrinaire, and the 'man on the make'.

In some parts we have amazing severity. The casual is treated as though he were a criminal; people overcome with misfortune, seeking temporary aid, are given worse accommodation and poorer food than if they were confined in His Majesty's jails; children are

herded in barrack schools and are condemned to a life of soulless regulation; the aged end their days, husbands separated from wives, lonely, unloved and provided with the minimum of comfort that the harshest interpretation of the Local Government Board regulations will allow.

On the other hand, we have workhouses built with extravagance so excessive that the story of them sounds more like the imaginings of a romancist than sober fact, and managed with a careless prodigality of the ratepayers' money. The series of sordid and wretched scandals exposed during the past two years has given abundant publicity to this. We have one workhouse adopting a system of electric lighting that was rejected by Buckingham Palace as being too expensive; another stipulating that only the most costly food should be given to its inmates; a third building children's homes, where the expenses of maintenance works out at from a guinea to thirty shillings per child per week. There are workhouses where the mere rental charges

for each five persons exceed the total income of the average lower middle-class family.

The Poor Law, as administered during the past half century, has not solved the problem of the pauper. It inflicts an almost intolerable burden by its rates on the industrious mechanic, the small shopkeeper, and the younger professional man. It fails to reform the idler; it makes our land the happy hunting ground of the professional wastrel to an extent no other country in Europe is, and it is hated by the honest poor. 'I would die on the streets before I would enter the workhouse', is the common remark among the decent old labourers and their wives.

Doubtless the next few years, and maybe the next few months, will see an enormous improvement in the administration of State funds for the relief of the poor. But by the very necessity of the case, State aid must be less flexible, slower to apply, and more expensive in administration than the best private charity. The State official, however conscientious, is largely barred from employing to their full

extent the strong, impulsive forces of moral and religious appeal. It is his business to help. It is the business of The Salvation Army to help and to reform. And where I have worked out costs on both sides, The Salvation Army does for £1 what costs the Guardians £3.

None of us can look around the streets of our cities to-day without being conscious of some misgiving regarding the future of our nation. The amazing problem of poverty confronts us as never before. A considerable and growing section of our people are born in misery, brought up amid want, inured to hunger, cold, and neglect from infancy, untaught any proper means of earning a living, and thrown on life ill prepared to meet its burdens. In the back streets of our cities we are raising up multitudes, who, humanly speaking, are without a chance in life. At the best, they can look for a dull, drab, monotonous life. Many of them will be forced to the lowest of vices for a living. Many, no doubt, are the children of parents

whose very poverty has been caused by their own vicious ways.

A man need not be a pessimist to regard with apprehension the vision of these multitudes of the almost inevitably poor that our slums present. We put away from us the idea that England may yet follow the path of Carthage, Greece, or Rome, and that our greatness and glory may be the prelude to our fall. But if anything could lead to the decline of England, it is not the attacks of outward foes, but the dangers within, the dangers that spring from an ill-taught, untrained, underfed and discontented poor. 'Let the four quarters of the world come armed', and we need not fear. But let the decay go on among our own people and we may well tremble.

The Salvation Army attacks this problem of misery and degeneration in its most vital point by dealing with the individual. In the poorest streets of the great cities of the Empire and, indeed, of other nations also, its agents are working to-day. The servants of the community, its workers have given up their lives

to fight the evils which threaten our nation. While others of us talk of or debate on the problem of the poor, The Salvation Army acts. The funds administered by it give immediate relief to the lowest and the poorest, without degrading or pauperizing.

I have long since satisfied myself of the sincerity of its aims, and the soundness of its general policy, and my hope is that some who read this book will be led to look at its campaigns apart from ancient prejudice or idle calumny, and help it as it deserves to be helped.

F. A. MCKENZIE.

LONDON,

September, 1903.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to WILLIAM BOOTH, crossed 'Bank of England, Law Courts Branch', and sent to MRS. BOOTH, 101 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.