

**IN  
THE SLUMS.**

BY  
**BRAMWELL BOOTH.**

*Dupe*

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*(Reprinted from "Light in Darkest England.")*

Pam/R 59

THE SALVATION ARMY IN  
THE SLUMS.

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THE new Slums are worse than the old. I do not for a moment suggest that the old are not as bad and demoralising as they have been described for twenty or thirty years gone by, but there is no doubt that by reason of the mere increase in ground values they are gradually being swept out of existence. The law of profit and loss must prevail. Sermons have failed; bitter cries have failed; sanitary science has largely failed; local authorities have signally failed; but now that it has become tolerably clear *that they do not pay*—the Slums must go.

By whatever means this conclusion is reached, we, at any rate, warmly and cordially welcome it. The Slums have been a standing menace to the

very foundations of life amongst the poor of our great cities for half-a-dozen generations. In proportion, the increase of human life is naturally the largest on the ground in which the population is most crowded, and the children of the Slums are at once the most numerous, the most inhumanly precocious and morally saddened among their contemporaries.

Every now and then the whole nation is shocked by some incident of abnormal horror, in which the chief actor is a child, who would, a hundred years ago, have been regarded as an irresponsible baby. For a moment a gleam of lurid light is flashed upon the doings in these dark places of the earth, which are indeed full of cruelty. But interest dies down again, and the Educationalists promise better days; just as if a villain who can read is any better than a villain who cannot. The daily horror goes on. The squalor, the blasphemy, the horrible crowding, the filthy surroundings,\* unite to produce, all the

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\* I refer to such inadequate drainage, etc., as is common to many of these centres. I heard, quite recently, of a case in which there was only one w.c. to fifteen cottages, every one of them crammed with human life. There is no doubt that things are better in some quarters, and that this is an extreme case; but it is not without its lesson for all that.

time, even worse conditions; for one inevitable result of this state of things is, that the people settle down to a morbid hopelessness and helplessness, which is the very despair of those who desire to help them.

In his *Problems of a Great City*, Mr. Arnold White says:—

“ Birth into certain quarters of London is birth into an environment from which there is no escape. At three years old, baby lips lisp oaths so bestial as to be coarse in the betel-stained mouths of the crew of a Coromandel *dhoney*. At six little girls are initiated by their mothers into practices so loathsome the gorge rises at the thought. At ten, girls and boys alike are unclean spirits, limited in their power for evil only by their abilities. Dynasties of criminals and paupers hand down from generation to generation hereditary unfitness for the arts of progress, and all that brings greatness to a nation, and engage themselves in warring against all forms of physical and moral order.”

It is on this, the native heath of malaria, physical and moral, that our devoted Slum Officers toil night and day, carrying with one hand the message of the Bread of Life, and with the other such present consolation and help as opportunity will allow to meet the temporal necessities of their unfortunate fellows. The “ Slum Sisters,” as they are called, generally occupy one of the tenement rooms either

in or immediately on the outskirts of the slum centre, and, so far as possible, they conform to the habits of the population amongst whom they work. Every Slum Post is in reality a "settlement." It is the Sisters' duty to work as both spiritual and temporal advisers, holding small meetings in the streets and cottages, visiting the sick and dying, caring for those who, as the result of bouts of drunkenness or quarrelling, are temporarily disabled, and are largely left alone in their misery. The dying and the little children are their especial care. It is indeed a work of mercy.

This Slum labour is not confined to London. In many of the provincial cities Slum Posts have been established, and in some of the chief Continental towns we are also carrying on the same beneficent plans. This work is a very vivid and modern interpretation of the words of Christ, bringing into practical life one of His programmes, which is materialised under nineteenth century conditions, and is, it seems to me, not merely worthy of financial support on the part of the rich, but worthier still of a much wider imitation than it has yet conceived on the part of the followers of Christ of every Church and name. For "I was an hungred," Christ said He will say, in the day

when men's lives are measured by His standards, "I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

But what of the New Slums? In the judgment of our officers who are most competent to form an opinion, they are rapidly becoming worse than the old. Contrast the healthiness, the happiness, the cleanliness, the good order, and the good feeling which prevails in our Shelters, with the following account of life in that modern miracle of sanitation and of ample cubic air-space, the Model Dwellings of London, which I take from a writing of Miss Octavia Hill in *Life and Labour of the People*, Vol. II.

"Regulations are of *no* avail; no public inspection can possibly for more than an hour or two secure order; no resident superintendent has at once conscience, nerve, and devotion, single-handed, to stem the violence, the dirt, the noise, the quarrels; no body of public opinion on the part of the tenants themselves asserts itself; one by one, disheartened, the tidier ones depart, the rampant remain and prevail, and often, with a very

fair show to the outsider, the block becomes a sort of pandemonium. No one who is not in and out day by day, or, better still, night after night; no one who does not watch the swift degradation of children belonging to tidy families; no one who does not know the terrorism exercised by the rough over the timid and industrious poor; no one who does not know the abuse of every appliance provided by the benevolent or speculative, but non-resident landlord can tell what life in blocks is where the population is low class. Sinks and drains are stopped; yards provided for exercise must be closed because of misbehaviour; *boys bathe in drinking-water cisterns*; wash-houses on staircases—or staircases themselves—become the nightly haunt of the vicious, the Sunday gambling places of boys; the yell of the drunkard echoes through the hollow passages; the stairs are blocked by dirty children, and the life of any decent, hard-working family becomes intolerable.”

“Let us hope that when we have secured our drainage, our cubic space of air, our water on every floor, we may have time to live in our homes, to think how to make them pretty, each in our own way, and to let the individual characteristics they

take from our life in them be all good as well as healthy and beautiful.”

And it is amidst this condition of things that our Slum Officers in some districts are already called to work, and it is here also that they are carrying the same words of hope and love.

Difficult as it is to tabulate returns of such work, I think the following figures will be read with interest by all:—

*The Slum Work.\**

Number of Officers (London, 32 ;		
Provinces, 52) ...	84	
„ of families visited ...	58,723	
„ „ prayed with..	49,723	
„ visits to sick persons		
visited for nursing	3,887	
„ „ Public-houses	15,702	
„ „ Lodging-		
houses, Brothels,		
etc.... ...	1,500	

\* These figures refer to work in London only; 52 officers are engaged in similar work in various provincial towns in Great Britain.

### THE SICK IN THE SLUMS.

Everybody, who knows anything about the subject, knows how appallingly ignorant many of the poorest of the people are with regard to the very first essentials for dealing with sickness. And even where this ignorance is not so lamentable, the dwellers in the Slums live so close to the verge of starvation that sickness generally finds them absolutely bare of the most common necessaries; furniture, they have scarcely enough for the days of health and vigour; extra clothing and bedding they have none; and as to those small additions of material comfort, which seem, to some of us, to be so imperative in the most trifling disorders, they have never so much as heard of them. The consequence is that they often sicken and suffer and die in conditions which are ten times worse than we find it absolutely necessary to provide for the cattle and pigs on the Farm Colony we have established in Essex!

What is to be done? Wait until you can take them away, or rebuild their dwellings, or provide them all with hospital accommodation to which they would not feel the antipathy that they now generally entertain for everything of the kind? That will take a long time, and day by day they starve and die.

These considerations have led us during the past year to make an important development in connection with our Women's Work, and to establish under some sort of organised plan what has hitherto only been attempted on occasions—an effort to provide medical aid and trained nursing, at any rate in some cases, for the starving sick.

In connection with the Maternity Hospital and Nursing Institution, which is under the direction of Mrs. Bramwell Booth, it has been found possible to organise a brigade of half-a-dozen qualified nurses to commence this work of attending the sick in the Slums. At present the direction taken has been chiefly that of Maternity work, but it has been extremely successful, both in alleviating physical misery and in bringing the light of Christ and His salvation to some unexplored corners of this dark continent.

The following incidents, which are from the pen

of one who herself ministered to the sufferers, will, better than any words I can write, describe at once the nature of our method of meeting it.

Perhaps the greatest call of all is for additional workers. Surely there must be hundreds of women who love Christ who have sufficient courage to undertake work of this kind, even if they cannot assume public responsibilities, who, when they see what can be done, will offer themselves to join the devoted helpers who are already engaged in it! Previous training in nursing would, of course, be valuable, but it is not absolutely necessary, as we can supply in a few months what is needed. Women who have means of their own would have the satisfaction of knowing that their work was done without any increase of the demand upon our funds, and they would find others already working on these lines. But don't let the want of private income deter anyone who feels in her soul a spark of Divine longing for these sufferers from offering herself to join in carrying on the work.

In connection with this Slum Sickness Visitation, the following are recorded figures for the last five months:—

Total No. of Cases	-	-	283
Visits paid to the Sick	-	-	8,813

"We go to anybody and everybody," says the Officer above referred to, "whether they can pay or whether they cannot. We don't pauperise the people. If they can pay ever so little we charge them. Some will pay us by instalments, so much a week. If they are quite unable to do this, we beg the money from some friend, and tell them it has been paid for. We find they value us and our services far more than if it was all given free. Also with gifts of clothing or covering. We charge a trifle simply to preserve their independence. Some of the better-off folks pay better, and so make up for others. We get people of all sorts—very respectable, deserving cases, and the very opposite."

*In Nakedness.*—A young couple, who had been married about 10 months, sent for our nurses one Sunday morning. The poor girl said she had been ill since Friday. She went to a mission-room to try and get some soup, and the crush was so great she got knocked down. She was weak and hungry. Her husband, an electrical engineer, had only done six weeks' work in ten months.

The girl had been in a warehouse in the City before her marriage. She had not a single thing to cover her but an old red tablecloth. The mattress on which she lay was otherwise perfectly bare! A little old table, two chairs, and a wash-stand with a brown dish (in which the baby had to be washed) completed the furniture of the poor, desolate room. No carpet, no food, nothing in the place!

The young husband went and implored the nurses to come. It was bitter weather. The poor fellow was walking about all day, anxious and hungry. When the nurses found the state of affairs, they just attended to immediate needs, covering the poor girl with her husband's coat, which he took off and handed over. Then they hurried home and

fetched blankets and food. Both these poor creatures were in a state of despondency and helplessness pitiful to see in such young things. "It's nothing but sheer misfortune," said the Captain, "in this case. Oh, they were glad! We got her well, and are now supplying her for a little while with needlework, which we pay her for and then sell." She was quite broken-hearted with gratitude when Capt. Frost gave her the money for her first work. She wanted to leave it towards paying for her nursing, though she needed it so much. "How she got to hear of us," said the Captain, "was that they called in a midwife near, and she couldn't go, and knew she'd get no pay if she did; so she referred them to us."

Another couple were found living in a filthy hole. The girl makes dolls for her livelihood. Her husband does anything or nothing. It was a wretched little hovel. Just a dirty mattress, and the room in an awful state. The nurses were nearly poisoned with smoke and dirt. Not a bit of anything could be found in the place, and the pair confessed that they were not married, but were "going to be." Necessaries were procured, the girl was nursed through, and then the couple were married through the influence of our nurses.

Cases of this sort require such *infinite patience*. "Talk about the heathen," said the Captain, "no one could be darker about salvation."

I must, in conclusion, have one word with regard to the officers engaged in all departments of this Slum work. They are, beyond question, followers of Christ in both the letter and spirit of His commandment. They labour, to the utmost of their

strength, without a penny of earthly reward; indeed, some of them give much more than they receive of this world's store. The rich and those who help this work need not have fear of their gifts being spent in salaries. The great difficulty is to see that the Officers take necessary care. The world has very little idea of their love and patience, and perhaps less still of their resources and practical common-sense in the presence of every conceivable kind of difficulty. Their very existence is a constant inspiration and strengthening to our faith. Some words I wrote of them last year seem to me still so appropriate that I cannot forbear to quote them again:—

"Many a home is brighter because they enter it; many a man gets a job by their skill; many a suffering soul begins to think that God has really not forgotten His mercy; many a little famishing child grows up to remember how God sent a Slum angel to feed and warm him; many a lost woman in despair is dragged so as by fire from the pit, and landed on the Rock. Do they not suffer many defeats? Of course they do. They sow and sow and sow, and water the seed with tears, and gather in the harvest with hope; and when it is garnered, there is much, very much chaff, but, thank God,

*there is some wheat.* Golden and thrice precious grain ripened for God's glory, uncounted, unknown often by human ken, but there all the same ; and what is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord."

Verily they have their reward, and to God be all the glory.

