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CECIL HOUSES

[INCORPORATED]

11th REPORT
• 1938-9



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CECIL HOUSES

INCORPORATED UNDER THE BOARD OF TRADE

ELEVENTH

REPORT

1938-9



Offices:

11 GOLDEN SQUARE

LONDON

W. 1.

TELEPHONE: GERRARD 3391

363.592060421 CEC

CECIL HOUSES

(INCORPORATED)

WOMEN'S PUBLIC LODGING-HOUSE FUND AND RESIDENTIAL CLUBS

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MRS. S. T. T. JAMES.	THE COUNTESS OF WESTMORLAND

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE :

LAURA, LADY LOVAT, *Chairman.*
 MRS. CECIL CHESTERTON, O.B.E., *Founder and Hon. Secretary.*
 ADRIAN C. MOREING, ESQ., M.P., *Hon. Treasurer.*
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 MRS. DENSTON FENNELLE.
 REV. T. J. FITZGERALD.
 MISS HELEN HOPE.
 RAOUL NICOLE, ESQ.
Office Organiser : MRS. E. GORDON PHILLIPS.
Hon. Physician : HAROLD SINGTON, ESQ., M.D.
Hon. Solicitors : MESSRS. STONES, MORRIS & STONE.
Auditors : MESSRS. BAKER, SUTTON & Co.
Bankers : MESSRS. BARCLAYS, 366 STRAND, W.C.2.

HOUSE COMMITTEE :

MRS. CECIL CHESTERTON, O.B.E. *Chairman.*
 MRS. K. E. BOUGHEY.
 MRS. J. BRUNEL COHEN.
 MRS. H. FLETCHER.
 MISS HELEN HOPE.
 MRS. A. J. MCLEAN.
 MISS G. STUART MACRAE.
 MRS. W. H. POWELL.

OFFICE :

11 Golden Square, London, W.1.

Telephone No. : Gerrard 3391.

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AIMS AND OBJECTS

- (1) To provide suitable premises for Women's Public Lodging Houses.
- (2) To meet at cost price the acute need of clean beds, bathing and washing accommodation for homeless or vagrant women.
- (3) To secure, by public appeals, the capital funds necessary for this purpose. The capital expenditure having been made, each house speedily becomes self-supporting.
- (4) To appeal for donations and annual subscriptions for replenishments and extension of activities, such as establishment of employment bureaux, boot and clothing depôts, etc.
- (5) The Society has been established solely for the purpose of social service, and in no circumstances will any profit be made.
- (6) Cecil Houses are entirely non-sectarian. Women applying for beds will not be called upon to answer any questions whatsoever.
- (7) Generally to promote the welfare of the poor and the relief of distress by social agencies.
- (8) To do all such other things as are incidental or the Association may think conducive to the attainment of the above objects.

HOUSES

- Nos. 34/35 Boswell Street, Theobald's Road, W.C.1.
Tel. No. : Holborn 5711.
- Nos. 47/51 Wharfdale Road, King's Cross, N.1.
Tel. No. Terminus 6996.
- No. 194 Kensal Road, N. Kensington, W.10.
Tel. No. : Ladbroke 2843.
- No. 179 Harrow Road, W.2.
Tel. No. : Paddington 3973.
- No. 266 Waterloo Road, S.E.1.
Tel. No. : Waterloo 5752.
- Residential Club, 195/201, Gower Street, Euston Road, N.W.1.*
Tel. No. : Euston 5500
 [To be open October 1939]

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS
 SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO
 ADRIAN C. MOREING, ESQ., M.P., HON. TREASURER,
 AT THE OFFICES OF THE FUND,
 11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W.1.

OF
LONDON'S PUBLIC LODGING-HOUSE
ACCOMMODATION

87½% IS AVAILABLE FOR MEN
WOMEN STILL HAVE 12½% ONLY

CECIL HOUSES EXIST TO REMEDY THIS DISCREPANCY

AT

34/35 BOSWELL STREET, THEOBALD'S ROAD, W.C.1.

47/51 WHARFDALE ROAD, KING'S CROSS, N.1.

194 KENSAL ROAD, N. KENSINGTON, W.10.

179 HARROW ROAD, W.2.

AND

266 WATERLOO ROAD, S.E.1.

All Houses are open to visitors every Thursday from 3.30 to 5 p.m.

Gifts of shoes, coats, skirts, jumpers, underwear, old linen, etc., for free distribution to those who need them most, will be gratefully received at all Houses.

FOR ONE SHILLING A NIGHT A WOMAN CAN GET A GOOD BED, HOT BATH, HOT TEA AND BISCUITS, AND FACILITIES FOR WASHING HER CLOTHES. COTS 3d.

OWING TO THE HIGH PRICE OF PROPERTY
A MINIMUM OF £7,000 IS NEEDED
TO FOUND EACH CECIL HOUSE.

After the initial expenditure each House is self-supporting.

"The need of the vagrant women is to my mind infinitely greater than that of the vagrant men, yet the care bestowed upon the men is far, far more than that we have given to the women."
—*The Bishop of Woolwich.*

"It is a curious position that all men of the homeless class are better cared for; they have warmth and food, they have shelter, but the women who want to earn their own keep are living in circumstances of hardship and, maybe, are driven to the shelter of the street."—*The late Mr. J. A. Cairns, Thames Police Court Magistrate.*

"I need not cross my t's or dot my i's. The poorest of the poor, the homeless wanderer, *even if she be a woman, does not* lose, cannot lose, her essential human rights—her right to sleep and shelter. Such is provided by the L.C.C. in the case of men; there is a thousand times more reason for such accommodation being provided for women."—*The Chief Rabbi (Dr. Hertz).*

Eleventh Report

1938-9

WHAT WE ARE DOING

This last year has been very vital and productive for us. It will be remembered that the Committee decided to expend legacies of some £7,000 in acquiring a site for a Residential Club for girls, where, for 14s. 6d. a week, young London workers could find a home together with comfortable conditions in sleeping, eating and recreation.

A site in Gower Street, Euston Road, N.W.1—a central point for every part of London—has been bought for £6,750, and plans for the building of the Club, by Mr. E. Maxwell Fry, B.Arch., F.R.I.B.A., approved.

The Club at the present time is in process of construction, with large dining-room, lounge, games room, study, bicycle shed, washing-room (fitted with automatic ½d.-in-the-slot electric irons), cloak-room, and indeed every possible amenity and convenience which go to the making of happiness and content.

The Club will hold 72 members. This provision is, of course, but the tiniest contribution to the solution of that homelessness which presses upon thousands of young girls. But it is hoped that once the Club is started, and proved to be a self-supporting proposition at the moderate figure named, it will blaze a trail that will be followed up by other organizations equally concerned with the well-being of youth, as happened after the inception of Cecil Houses. Whereas ten years ago hot baths, facilities for washing clothes, etc., were almost unknown in public lodging-houses, at the present moment various societies have amenities equal to our own.

The sleeping arrangements of Cecil Residential Club will be of the most modern type, with four beds to a room, and curtains round each for privacy. Every girl will have a wardrobe, fitted with a mirror, for her clothes, shoes and hats. Bathrooms and washing accommodation (including showers) are in the corridors, together with ample cupboard space for suit-cases, etc.

The games room is very large and spacious, and will include table-tennis, darts, and other indoor sports. Members will be at liberty to ask their boy friends to the Club every Saturday night for dancing, games, etc., under the supervision of the Principal. A library will be installed at a charge of a penny a week.

A small study will be reserved for the use of those who, wishing to extend their education, may have homework after attending evening classes. If a general wish should be expressed, arrangements could be made for instruction in dressmaking or any other

homecraft, while talks may be given on popular subjects. A Girls' Committee will, it is hoped, take an active part in the social organization of the Club to assist in its smooth running, thus inculcating the sense of responsibility which is so essential in the building up of home atmosphere.

The constitution of the Club will necessitate social recommendations for a prospective candidate from friends, relatives, or employers, and every girl will have to produce her insurance card as proof that she is in steady employment.

The Club will be entirely non-sectarian, though every facility will be given to those wishing to attend religious worship.

For 14s. 6d. weekly a good breakfast and ample evening meal will be supplied, with full board on Saturdays and Sundays.

We have been able to raise £21,115 towards the expenses of the Club, the total cost of which—with equipment—will be £30,000. This leaves a balance of £8,885 owing. The Committee would urgently and emphatically appeal to all friends and supporters of this work to subscribe as generously as possible, so that by October 1939 we may open its doors free of liability.

Since the inception of our work for the homeless we have never yet opened a building in debt, and it will be with the greatest heart-sinking and disappointment that we should contemplate saddling our new and youthful venture with such a burden.

It must not be supposed that Cecil Houses (Inc.) is departing from its fundamental purpose. As the necessity arises we shall take steps to found more 1s. a night lodging-houses. At the present time, however, the extreme need in this direction is not so imminent as provision for those desiring permanent accommodation.

During the last twelve months our five houses have extended the scope of their utility. We still have a number of social and emotional wrecks, elderly women unable to hold their own against the increasing difficulties of life. To many such Cecil Houses are a haven.

Our youngest Matron reports as follows:—

"A very poor elderly woman, very pale and thin, and a cripple (using two crutches) came to the house one night and asked for a bed. She came back each night for a fortnight, and then one evening asked very tentatively if we could trust her a night as she was penniless. We took her in of course, and the next night she came again, with only sixpence towards her night's shelter, and again she had her bed. She was quite unable to earn a regular living but sold matches and sang in the streets. The second night we "trusted" her she asked for an early call, and though we ask no questions I could not help exclaiming: 'Why ever do you want to go out so very early?' 'I have business to do,' she replied, and she got her early call. At about 9.30 a.m. the bell rang and I found the little cripple on the doorstep with the 1s. 6d. for the beds she had had. She then told me that she had the Old Age Pension but had to go to Holborn to draw it—our house is in Paddington—so the early call was to enable her to get to Holborn on her crutches. It was so pathetic and so wonderfully brave of her—though quite unnecessary—to have come all the way back to discharge her debt. But it had worried her to think she owed any money. But such courage and independence is often found amongst those who come to us."

The same Matron says:—

"Miss W., returning from a theatre just after midnight, found a poor, forlorn soul sitting on a step in a dazed condition, with her nose covered in blood. This woman stated she was errand woman to a lavatory attendant and had suddenly felt giddy and faint. Miss W. brought her to our House, where the wounded nose was bathed and after a hot cup of tea the little woman was put comfortably to bed. After a good night's rest—and another dressing for the nose in the morning—she was able to leave and return to her 'errand running.' Her heart was full of gratitude to the kind lady who had picked her up and brought her to us."

"A young thing of about 18 came to us for a bed. She looked very thin and poorly, but did not seem to want more than the usual cup of tea and biscuits. After she had been in bed about an hour she was seized with pains so violent that I called in the Doctor, who ordered her admission to hospital. On examination it was found that she was suffering from starvation. She had come from the provinces to seek work but had been unlucky and had gone without food until she was seriously ill. I am glad to say that when she left hospital she was able to get a situation and is now doing well."

Our 34/35 Boswell Street, which re-opened in October 1937, has regained its old popularity. Women flock to this House knowing the pleasant welcome they receive, and it is good to note that Cecil Houses having been accepted very generally by officialdom, certain guests, on the recommendation of our Matron, have been granted public assistance while staying there.

No. 266 Waterloo Road is a very early House. It includes a number of young girls in steady work who, until such time as they can find a permanent home, are happy and content under our roof. Parties are very popular there. Friends bring refreshments—sandwiches, cakes, fruit, etc.—which are shared round during entertainments got up by the women themselves.

The same spirit of fellowship has overflowed into 179 Harrow Road, where high jinks to a piano accompaniment take place most evenings in the Club-room, while the quieter lodgers sit around upstairs in the sitting-room and sew or knit. Kind gifts of shrubs and tubs, a garden-seat and deck-chairs have enabled the Matron to make a pleasant garden in which our guests can rest and enjoy themselves on summer evenings.

Christmas Day is still a peak in the social life of Cecil Houses. Thanks to our friends, the annual dinner in 1938 was good and plentiful and the cider, cigarettes, oranges, etc., so generously given us brought a cheery note. Entertainment parties were at each House and the sacrifice of the performers who left their own firesides for others' pleasure is deeply appreciated by us all.

H.M. Queen Mary, graciously remembering Cecil Houses, sent lovely presents for the women and children, which gave delight and happiness.

The following show in some part what Christmas Day, with free bed, good meals, and a momentary respite from penury, means to our women:—

"We started Xmas Day with a good breakfast of ham sandwiches and plenty of hot tea, and at 12 o'clock a kind friend came in and gave little gifts to everyone. At one o'clock dinner was served, and it was good to see the

happy expectant look of the women. The dinner was everything that could be desired and was greatly enjoyed. We had just time to get the room in order when the Concert Party arrived and as usual was greatly appreciated—some of the guests even passed little notes to Mr. Frederic Stone, who was a great success. One of our old lodgers excelled herself by singing 'Daisy, Daisy,' and we were all sorry to see the party go. But soon it was tea time and all ready for the Xmas cake and biscuits. The evening, too, passed very happily. Queen Mary's presents were drawn for, the two Toilet Sets in cases very much admired, and the shawl was given to Mrs. O'N——, our oldest lodger, who uses it every day. A good supper of sausages, pickles, cheese, bread and butter, cider or tea finished the day's feed. I never saw women eat so much!"

And from another Matron:—

"We had an exceedingly happy Xmas, and all the lodgers were so very grateful for all that was done for them. One guest had to be sent into hospital on Boxing Day as she was taken ill with influenza."

Again:—

"We had a wonderful Xmas Day. The dinner was very good, and everyone enjoyed the afternoon concert. As for eating—nothing was forgotten! All our kind friends sent everything our guests could wish for. Miss M. came in the evening laden with cream cakes, but as she had to leave again immediately it was not possible for her to see how much they were appreciated. Everyone had a gift from the Xmas Tree, and Queen Mary's presents were distributed. We had supper at 11 p.m., and all retired feeling well satisfied.

"Our guests were thrilled by their New Year's Party, and especially did they appreciate having sat down to dinner in the evening with Mrs. Chesterton and the Committee Members. It was a great joy to me, and I know that some of the sad souls who took part in the entertainment they themselves arranged were living 'Happy Memories' over again. Many of them were speechless with joy. The Lucky Dip given by Miss M. was a wonderful surprise. They say they will never forget the evening.

"One woman was sent to Lambeth Hospital—her brain was troubled, and she desired attention, and another girl was sent to hospital by taxi as she had strained her leg and was quite unable to walk. The doctor said this would be better than waiting for the ambulance."

Many "troubled souls" pass through Cecil Houses:—

—— Hospital.

"I have not been able to write and thank you for all you have done for me; we are only allowed one letter a week. You must think me very ungrateful but still I know you will understand. I shall be so glad to see you on visiting day if you can spare the time. Love and best respects to all.—Mrs. W."

This little note was written on a paper bag!

"Will you kindly hand the enclosed bob to little M (with stick and red hat). She was good enough to lend it me last Sunday, and I should have sent it before but only now to-day out of bed—and off to the country for a few days. On my return shall come to you again. Yours, I.A."

"Forgive me, but even at my age I am still ridiculously shy. I want to ask for a pair of shoes, size 4. I am going to see someone important about a job and my shoes are awful. Also a vest and white blouse if possible. Thanking you for all your kindness.—A.G."

"I want to thank you for the many kindnesses shown to me at different times, and for the many useful articles given me from time to time. For the



"THE LAMBETH WALK—'OI!'—AT CECIL HOUSE, WATERLOO ROAD

fact that I have been able to move and climb back up the ladder of this work-a-day world, I owe to you having put my work in my way. I am more than indebted to you for this and I do hope you will understand how appreciative I am."

(Matron says: "This guest came to me a very unhappy woman. I started her very humbly in a job as washer-up, and I am glad to say she is now in a fairly good position and able to keep a nice little room.")

"I am writing to thank you very much indeed for making me so comfortable during my stay in London. I did not know where I could sleep until I met Miss D. (a lodger) who sent me on to Cecil House. It is such a boon to know of so comfortable and clean an abode."

And this from a lodger who had a street accident and was taken into Hospital:—

"I am glad to say my wrist is on the mend now, and I can use my hand more freely. Could you come and see me to-morrow and bring a few cheap grapes—I will pay you for them when I can. I do thank you so much for all your kindness, but my pen has run dry.—E.M."

Thanks to friends, here is another way in which our guests have been helped:—

"A number of our women have gone fruit picking," writes a matron, "and we have supplied them with thick coats, to act as blankets, and shady hats. Also they have been given large old-fashioned nightdresses from the wardrobe room which they have sewn up at the bottom and cut off the tops and made them into warm sleeping bags."

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE, SINCE WE STARTED, TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR 985 WOMEN AND GIRLS AS GENERAL SERVANTS, WAITRESSES, CHAMBERMAIDS, AND DAILY HELPS. THE MAJORITY OF THESE HAVE DONE VERY WELL.

Here is an extract from a typical letter:—

"Up to now I am so happy and really want to stay here. Thanks a lot to you, and I am very grateful. To-day I heard the cuckoo for the first time this year—it is so much better than London. We have quite a nice garden, and yesterday I was in it quite a lot because it was washing day.

"Well, I think this is all for now. Thanking you once again.

"Yours truly, G.B."

GIFTS OF SHOES, COATS, SKIRTS, JUMPERS,
UNDERWEAR, OLD LINEN, ETC., FOR FREE
DISTRIBUTION TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM
MOST, WILL BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AT
11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W.1.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

For the information of new friends it should be pointed out that the Cecil Houses already established are the outcome of the experiences of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton and of the facts as stated by her in her book "IN DARKEST LONDON"* which showed that while municipal bodies supplied ample sleeping room at reasonable charges for men, it was left to private enterprise and philanthropic societies to cater for women.

Up to date five Houses have been established:—

March 28th, 1927—35 Devonshire Street, W.C.1 (opened by the Lord Mayor of London. Closed for rebuilding April 6th, 1936, re-opened by the Lord Mayor of London, October 7th, 1937, for 50 women and 4 babies).

January 18th, 1928—47/51 Wharfedale Road, King's Cross, N.1, for 60 women and 8 babies (opened by the Lord Mayor of London).

March 15th, 1929—194, Kensal Road, N. Kensington, W.10, for 60 women and 18 babies (opened by the Home Secretary).

November 19th, 1930—179, Harrow Road, W.2, for 60 women and 18 babies (opened by the Prime Minister).

March 14th, 1934—266, Waterloo Road, S.E.1, for 49 women and 2 babies (opened by the Lord Mayor of London).

Funds for the establishment of these Houses were raised at Public Meetings held at Sir Philip Sassoon's; the Mansion House; the King's Theatre (Hammersmith); Wyndham's Theatre; the New Theatre; His Majesty's Theatre; the Shaftesbury Theatre; the Piccadilly Theatre; the Cambridge Theatre; Daly's Theatre, Basnett Gallery (Liverpool), and the Gaiety Theatre (see p. 13) when Mr. J. A. Cairns (late Thames Police Court Magistrate); Lady Violet Bonham-Carter; The Bishop of Woolwich; Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P.; The Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P.; The Very Rev. The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz; Mr. St. John Ervine; Lady Barratt, M.D.; Mr. G. Bernard Shaw; Lord Ebbisham; Mr. Robert Hale; Dame Sybil Thorndike; Mr. W. Clarke Hall; Mr. John Galsworthy; Sir Gerald du Maurier; Mr. G. K. Chesterton; Miss Margaret Bondfield; Mr. John Drinkwater; Miss Gladys Cooper; Mr. Hugh Walpole; Mr. Alfred Short, M.P. (Under Secretary for Home Affairs); Miss Clemence Dane; Mr. Conal O'Riordan; Miss Edith Evans; Lady Moyers; Lt.-Col. Robert Loraine, D.S.O.; Miss Ellen Wilkinson; Miss Marion Lorne; Dr. Hall Morton (Late Governor of Holloway Prison); Mr. R. C. Sheriff; Commdr. Oliver Locker-Lampson, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P.; Miss Maude Royden; Miss Peggy Ashcroft; Sir Cedric Hardwicke; Mr. Ian Hay; Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, Lady (Cedric) Hardwicke (Miss Helena Pickard); Mr. Louis Golding; Mr. J. B. Priestley; Mr. Ernest Milton; Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart.;

*Copies of the new CHEAP EDITION OF "IN DARKEST LONDON" (Price 1s. including postage) can be obtained from Cecil Houses (Inc.), 11 Golden Square, W.1.

Mr. Aldous Huxley; Mr. James Laver; Miss Mary Borden; Miss Margery Pickard; the Lord Mayor of Liverpool; Miss Edith Rose; Mr. Alec Waugh; Miss Helen Simpson; Mr. A. J. Cronin; Mr. L. A. G. Strong; Miss Lesley Wareing; Mr. Robert Nichols; Lady Simon; Mr. S. P. B. Mais; Mrs. Beatrice Kean Seymour; The Hon. Harold Nicolson; and Mr. Peter Haddon spoke of the urgent need of beds for homeless women and in support of the work of Cecil Houses.

The Houses open at 8 o'clock every evening and remain open while there is a bed to let. The women leave by ten o'clock each morning. The Houses are closed during the day, it being impossible otherwise to run them on an economic basis with the same comforts and accommodation at the price charged. For one shilling a night a good bed, hot bath (towel and soap included), facilities for washing clothes, hot tea and biscuits at night and tea and bread and butter in the morning are provided. A charge of 3d. per night is made for a cot.

In every necessitous case Cecil Houses provide a free bed from a Needy Fund subscribed for the purpose by friends and sympathisers; but the homeless and destitute—to their everlasting credit—only apply for free shelter in circumstances of real want. In 1938 1,700 free beds were given at the five Houses through other charities and ourselves.

The police of certain areas always send a woman in emergency to Cecil Houses, and Probation Officers, Missionaries, Welfare Societies and Charitable Guilds have an understanding with our Matrons whereby any stranded woman or girl can be put up and the money for her bed sent on at specified intervals.

The Houses are entirely non-sectarian and no question is asked of any applicant who books a bed. No one is interrogated or advised unless help or counsel is asked for. All sorts and conditions of women apply for a lodging, but their past history is not inquired into, nor the reasons why they have come to a common lodging-house. It is sufficient that a bed is wanted. Our lodgers include casual workers, paper sellers, flower sellers, match sellers, itinerant charwomen, unemployed domestics, waitresses and women of better education who have fallen on evil times.

The gradual change in social and economic conditions has brought us into touch with a number of women outside the usual scope of charitable activities.

Since Cecil Houses opened some 771,598 beds and 40,225 cots have been occupied up to the end of March 1939.

Inquiries have been received from our supporters as to the matter of endowment. An annual sum of £20 or £14 respectively entitles the donor to name a bed or a cot in perpetuity.

Questions are frequently asked as to what safeguards are adopted to prevent the spread of vermin or infectious disease. The Committee take this opportunity of explaining that a very careful inspection is made every morning of the beds throughout the Houses. If any vermin be discovered or a trace of disease found,

the bed and bedding are immediately sent to a disinfecting station. The percentage of such cases is extraordinarily small, but when one occurs, and the occupant of the bed again applies for a night's lodging she is asked, privately, if she would like in the first case go to a cleansing station, and in the second if she would wish to see the doctor free of charge. If these suggestions are declined, it is explained that in the circumstances she cannot be admitted, as to do so would unjustly expose other lodgers to infection. Such refusals, however, are extremely rare.

Our warmest thanks are due to the doctors who voluntarily visit the Houses and are available in all cases of emergencies, and to the faithful helpers who make tea, etc., when the assistants are off duty.

We find that Cecil Houses are regarded more and more as the information centre for every kind of social inquiry and help. All queries are most fully and carefully dealt with though the answering of so many and such diverse points entails patience and resource and presses considerably upon the time of our small but ever-responsive staff.

Cecil Houses are open to visitors every Thursday afternoon, from 3.30 to 5 o'clock (*see page 4*) when the fullest information will gladly be given.

Women's Institutes, Clubs, Toc H gatherings, etc., often ask for someone from the Fund to attend their meetings and give an account of Cecil Houses and how they are run. By this means we have made many new and valued friends. Applications for speakers, literature and collecting-boxes should be made to the office, 11 Golden Square, London, W.1.

The purchase price of the freehold, cost of constructing and equipping each House is raised by public subscription. We have received support from every social grade and sometimes the same post that has brought us a handsome cheque has included a small but equally precious offering from those less financially equipped.

Once a Cecil House is open it must stand on its own financial feet, the monies paid by the lodgers meeting the cost of upkeep, salaries of staff, provision of cleaning materials, tea, biscuits, electric light, rates, etc., with allowance for depreciation.

The Committee would urge all those who, more happily placed, have no need to seek shelter in a public lodging-house, to contribute what they can. No sum, however small, is too insignificant. **THEY WOULD ESPECIALLY STRESS THE NECESSITY OF SECURING ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS, FOR WHICH THERE IS VITAL NEED.**

It is with the greatest regret that we record the death, in June last, of Mr. D. G. Somerville. He was associated with Cecil Houses from the first, and for just over two years acted as our Honorary Treasurer.

Mr. Adrian C. Moreing, M.P., has kindly consented to fill the vacant position and is in close association with the work, with which he has always sympathised.

March 1939.

The following are Extracts from Speeches of our Supporters

At the Gaiety Theatre, London, May 31st, 1938

"HEARTS THAT FEEL AND BRAINS THAT THINK"

Before beginning this very important meeting I wish to tell you of a couple of apologies which have come to hand. I am happy to say that there are only two. One is from Miss Rebecca West, who was to have been with us, but is at the moment marooned in Jugoslavia by the floods. We have been very fortunate in getting Mrs. Beatrice Kean Seymour to take her place. When I call on Mrs. Kean Seymour I shall not deal with her so summarily because we all owe her a great deal as she takes a great interest in us. The other is from the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. D. G. Somerville, M.P., who has sent this letter, which I think you will agree is worth reading aloud:

"It is one of the greatest disappointments of my illness that I shall not be able to attend the meeting of Cecil Houses (Inc.), of which I am Honorary Treasurer. I have been associated with the initiation of Cecil Houses with Mrs. Chesterton ever since the first House was promoted, and it has been one of the greatest pleasures of my public life to have been of assistance to the organization which has been so successful, thanks chiefly to the Hon. Organizing Secretary, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. I trust that this next venture will be as successful as the previous ones have been."

We are very sorry, because of his illness, he cannot be with us, and we will send to Mr. Somerville a message to say how very successful this meeting is—but, of course, it depends on you whether it is successful.

As regards Cecil Houses, I would just like in a very brief speech to give my own impression of them. You may possibly think that I know nothing about such things; and I certainly will not say that I have the courage of Mrs. Chesterton, who was the beginning of all these Cecil Houses. I think she stands out as a woman in a thousand in having gone through what she did in order to learn of the poor and their great necessities. My own work among the poor was from a different angle. I nursed in the slums in London, and I became a C.M.B. in order to learn how women got on in such circumstances in their poor homes. One of the things that impressed me very much, apart from my work, was the dread in the hearts, especially of the old, of institutions, and their anxiety for fear that they would have to go into institutions and be separated from those whom they loved. Mrs.

Cecil Chesterton's Houses have fulfilled a great want in the hearts of those people and in the hearts of the younger people who come to London and who have passed through Cecil Houses.

But this particular meeting is organized for a new venture: and that is, to help those women and girls who come to London and do not earn sufficient money to go to the places that they ought to live in, and so get into undesirable surroundings. From my own point of view, I believe in the crusades of Mrs. Chesterton because she combines two essential qualities, neither of which by itself would achieve success, but which, when combined, are invincible—she and I believe in “hearts that feel and brains that think.” All reforms in the world have been successful because of that combination. What could Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Abraham Lincoln and William Wilberforce have done if they had not had a deep feeling for personal suffering, combined with detailed practical plans for remedying or overcoming the causes of that suffering? I have no use at all for emotional sentiment which wastes itself in useless pity and does nothing. Nor have I any sympathy with the hard material outlook which says, in the face of wrongs crying out for redress: “Let us be practical,” and does nothing. Mrs. Cecil Chesterton is made of some of the stuff of which practical reformers are made. She is the founder and organizer of Cecil Houses, where, for 1s. a night, one can sleep in a comfortable bed, for I have looked at them, and get a hot bath, tea and biscuits, and bread and butter, with that other wonderful comfort—lots of hot water and opportunity for washing your clothes. Well, to-day she is endeavouring to expand this work of good citizenship by providing Residential Clubs for working women and girls whose wages are not sufficient to enable them to utilize the accommodation available at the present moment. To this new venture she is bringing as a contribution her wonderful organizing capacity and her unquenchable enthusiasm. It is for us to follow that up and make it the success that it deserves. I want each one of you to think that you are individually responsible to make it a success. If it is true that “Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn,” let us in this age do what we can to help her as a woman whose life has been devoted to alleviating the sufferings and conditions of her poorer sisters in this vast Metropolis. Thousands of distressed and desolate women call her name blessed, and I do hope that what I say to you will go to your hearts, because I myself feel it very much. When I have gone with her to the different Houses for which she is responsible, I have thought: Here is a woman who carries out a motto that I have carried through all my life: “I know what pleasure is for I have done good work.”

With these few words, which I hope do not sound too like a sermon, I will call on the speakers. You will have a great treat in front of you in listening to what they have to say, perhaps in a more practical way than I have put my plea for this new venture.

Lady Simon, D.B.E.

“A ROOM OF OUR OWN”

Will you come back with me to a Welsh mining village—if you do not know much about Welsh mines you may know Cleator Moor in Cumberland, you may know Tyneside—it does not matter a hoot which area you come to when you come back home.

The pitiful thing about this visit is the sight of men standing at the corners of the streets. In your walk through these areas, doubtless you will have remarked upon the absence of the women. If you go to the Clubs, as I know you will, the Occupational Clubs for men, you will again be surprised at the absence of any women. The answer to that is that a woman is not like Doctor Johnson. Most Englishmen are like Doctor Johnson in so far as they are clubable: but I have found as a mere male that it is extremely difficult to impress upon women who are not too happy the virtues and advantages of being clubable. One has to start all over again. Were you girl undergraduates of the University of Cambridge, I would have no more to do than to quote to you Virginia Woolf's own title in her admirable lecture to them: “A room of one's own.” Let us put aside any highfalutin' nonsense about a mansion in the skies—but let us content ourselves with “A room of our own.” That is the title of the book. Doubtless you also remember Joanna Cummins's phrase “a life of one's own.”

Well, on this platform to-day we are not pleading for anything so exciting or anything so highfalutin' as a life of one's own, or anything so exorbitant as a room of one's own. We are begging and imploring—it seems to me it is disgraceful that one should have to do so in 1938—for a temporary roof of one's own. What is the use in making this peregrination through the village, of saying to these women: “It is no good standing idle in the market-place, but go to this great London, where there is money and where there are jobs.” They say: “We are terrified of your London, terrified at being cut adrift from the people we know.”

Then they say: “There is the loneliness, Mr. Mais, of the people downstairs—to be alone and to have no-one with whom to talk and have nothing but this letter to Merthyr to write. Perhaps, Mr. Mais, we are wiser to starve here than to go to London and take this job. Presuming that there is a job, what guarantee have we of a home from home? Placed as we are, we would rather not be in a private house; we would like still to be our own mistresses inside a hostel. Is there a hostel?”

You and I have for a great many years admired Mrs. Chesterton as we have admired few women of our age. She has gone out in the wilderness, and she has seen what very few of us have dared to see. It is pretty easy for me to wander round, because I am able to come back and get my bath and return to civilization. She has been through it in a way that I have not been through it; and she

has had the courage to go through it in a way that few men I know would have the courage to do. Having planned this grand foundation of shilling-a-night hostels, she is suggesting a scheme whereby this hostel idea should be carried right through by means of this magnificent proposal of 14s. 6d. a week hostel, where women can go with confidence of living in comfort.

I wish I had the knowledge and training of people who can speak of these things, as I find it so difficult to find the actual words. I come from places in which these women are, where there is no work, or where there are no wages, or where one is living on unemployment pay of 21s. 3d. or 25s. a week, and paying 15s. a week for rent; and then there are insurances and other things to pay. I ask you to go over in your own mind what in those circumstances is left for food. What sort of condition must you get to where you are earning or receiving 25s. a week. The whole business is economic. Well, if Mrs. Chesterton's scheme is successful, there will be a suitable place where, for 14s. 6d. a week, those girls will be able to find food, comfort and companionship, a place where they can be free, and where no questions will be asked.

This is not a kind of charity. It is making financially secure for them this home to which they have every right. That is the point of it. They have a right, living in this country at this time of civilization, to a home and you have it in your power to give them this safety; so that from thence they can go and get on with the work which they are only too willing to do.

S. P. B. Mais, M.A., F.R.S.A.

“THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD” . . .

If this were a somewhat different kind of meeting, I should think that my first duty to you this afternoon was to offer you an apology for not being Miss Rebecca West: but since you are drawn together on this occasion not by your interest in literary personalities, or by your curiosity concerning them, or even by your desire to hear a clever speech by a clever and witty woman, but solely by your regard for her sex and by your desire to hear something which will benefit those of the less fortunate among us, I feel that I may be perhaps allowed to forego the apology. But if I do not want to apologize this afternoon for a fact which nobody deplores more than I do, I do want to make a confession. I think that Mrs. Chesterton will bear me out when I say that I was one of the earliest subscribers, though in a modest way, to her Cecil Houses scheme. I was enthusiastic about it and I felt that it was an excellent idea, which made one desire to do all that one could for it.

But—and here comes my confession—for many years I have been content to know of this work only through the reports of other people, or through my friend Mrs. Chesterton, or through the official report which occasionally reaches me. For a variety of reasons I have never actually paid a visit to a Cecil House; and,



AMATEUR THEATRICALS BY OUR GUESTS AT WATERLOO ROAD

therefore, I did not get to know by personal contact the precise nature of the work which was being done—at least, not until a few days ago. Of this I am now very much ashamed. None of those reasons which seemed to me then so very good and sufficient seem to me now anything of the sort—in fact they were totally inadequate. From that first visit to Cecil House I took away the impression of an immensely important work being done by women of practical sympathy and insight. I also took away an impression of something else, difficult to give a name to, but very warming to the human heart; because at Cecil House you have not only practical assistance and kindly sympathy, but an enormous sense of cheerfulness, friendliness and companionship; and a complete lack of that patronage and condescension which do creep so often and so regretably into the good works to which men and women put their hands.

It so happens that I am one of the women who are responsible for their own livelihood in the present and for the years to come; that is to say, I rely upon my imagination—for what I can get from it, and for what I can by my pen convey to paper—for my continued existence on the face of this earth with any degree of comfort. There are no pensions for writers: and of no class of workers is it, I think, truer to say that the younger generations tread us down. Therefore, it seems to me not at all unlikely that at some future date London may be enlivened by the spectacle of me begging my bread in the streets with a row of my novels put neatly in front of me as proof of my credentials. Or London may see me hastening as fast as my legs can carry me to the Waterloo Road, or to Boswell Street, or to one of the other roads in which the light from Cecil Houses shines out with so warm an invitation.

And then, thought I, last Saturday evening, when I was paying my first visit to Cecil House, I shall be as grateful for that friendly spirit and that blessed lack of inquisitiveness as to how I came to be in so dire a condition as I shall be for the hot bath and the comfortable bed. This sad day is not yet; and if I am lucky it may not come: but I do feel this afternoon that I must pay my tribute to Cecil Houses in the spirit of "There, but for the grace of God, goes Beatrice Kean Seymour."

In exactly the same spirit I would like to ask your support for this new scheme which has emanated from Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's very keen social and practical sense, which is to be outlined to you this afternoon.

I suppose it was inevitable that in connection with her work for Cecil Houses Mrs. Chesterton would come face to face with many other social problems, many of them as vital and as pressing as the one with which Cecil Houses are now wrestling. This particular problem of which you are to hear this afternoon, of the girls and women in London who earn insufficient to allow them to avail themselves of the opportunities of the existing hostels, does seem to me one which no civilized community can afford to neglect. What, after all, is to happen to those girls and women who find themselves in a big town like this, with nothing but their work

and a small salary at the end of the week, and practically no sort of private life at all? If they cannot afford the ordinary hostels, there seems to me to be absolutely no alternative but the ugly furnished room, entirely lacking in convenience and in all the little touches which make for at least the semblance of home. These rooms, it seems to me, must be more often than not shared with companions not of one's own choice, so that to all the other miseries one must add lack of privacy.

I am frequently told by people that I make a very great mistake in passing on my reactions to other people. I am told that what I may call this small change of comfort and recreation is not so necessary for people who have been differently brought up. I think that is complete nonsense. I think that people who work are entitled to relaxation and healthy amusements. If they are away from their own homes, they are entitled to have surroundings which have at least some resemblance to a home, and to some of the things that make for home. All work and no play, we know, makes Jill a very dull girl. But to-day it makes Jill something else. The modern Jill is not content to sit at home and be very dull, and have only for company the bogey of loneliness, of which Mr. Mais has spoken. Jill will go out and find her amusement somewhere else, sometimes in less desirable places, involving undesirable acquaintances, which is very easy in a large town. It does not need very much imagination to know where that sort of thing leads.

This suggestion of Mrs. Chesterton's, it seems to me, fills a very necessary gap; and we should, I think, if we have any regard for the well-being of our sex at all, do our very level best to support her new scheme. I think even the most superficial reading of social history will show us that women have never been lacking where pioneer work for the benefit of their own sex is concerned. I have always thought that my friend, Mrs. Chesterton, is a lineal descendant of Elizabeth Fry. I believe if Elizabeth Fry's ghost were here this afternoon, she would approve of our meeting. I do want most warmly to ask you for your support of this scheme. I feel perfectly sure that not only will it do the practical work of providing girls with sound meals, good beds, as well as the comforts and proper recreation for people who work for their living, but that the Club will be run in the spirit which has worked so successfully in the case of Cecil Houses, that is to say, you will find respect for the ego of even the humblest member, and also regard for the infinite possibilities of the human heart by which we live.

I do ask all you middle-class women, who have a certain amount of leisure and money to spend, to come to Mrs. Chesterton's aid in this matter, not only by giving sympathy and money, but also by interesting your friends, because the more of us the merrier. I am quite sure that this scheme can be got going, and once we launch it we can make it self-supporting, as has happened in the cases of Cecil Houses.

Beatrice Kean Seymour.

"INTOLERABLE LONELINESS"

I am here in a good cause, a cause which I seriously feel to be one not only for casual assistance, but for active co-operation. I have been attracted to the Cecil Houses scheme for several reasons. First because it is one of those extraordinary schemes which really is self-supporting. We are always being told that in any social service in which we are asked to help, or in any new idea which we are asked to further, that in a year or so it will be self-supporting. In this case that idea is really working. You put the money down to start the thing going, and thereafter the thing runs itself. That, I think, is the most satisfactory form of benevolence that one can find.

But also, I am keen on Cecil Houses because, unlike most of you, I should imagine, in the audience, or even on the platform, I have once in my life been without a bed; and I can tell you it is a most unpleasant experience. It happened owing to some miscalculation. When I was a young man travelling in Germany, it happened that I was left with nothing but my railway ticket and the price of one meal. I was stranded at Frankfort-on-Main with those two barriers between me and complete destitution. Being a greedy man, and even in those days well-fed, I decided that I could do without a bed, but I must have a meal. I could not get a train till the next morning, and I calculated that if I had a large meal, it would be perfectly open to me to spend the night in the open air and walk about—it would be rather a pleasurable experience. Well, I had a large meal, and then I started walking about. At about 12 o'clock I was simply dropping with fatigue.

I went into a park and I sat on a bench, and I was turned off the bench. Then I went walking again till I got to the zoo; and I sat near the zoo where all night long the awful regurgitations and mouthings of the animals were going through my head. It was not sleep, but semi-somnolence. Although the month was August, I may tell you that the cold at 3 a.m. in the open air is something quite unbearable. So I got up and started to walk again, and I walked along the pavements. As my footsteps echoed through those deserted streets, a terrible feeling of loneliness assailed me.

Then, unfortunately, I remembered the story of De Maupassant—I dare say some of you have read it—of a man who does the same sort of thing, and who walks in a great city at about four in the morning. Nothing is moving, all the doors are closed, all the shutters are barred, all the lights are out. Gradually a certain uneasiness, a certain feeling of almost intolerable loneliness comes upon him. He begins to get afraid and starts to run. He runs screaming through the streets, knocking on the doors, rattling the knockers, ringing the bells. But the whole place is in silence and he is lost in it. In the story he ends rather foolishly, I think, by jumping into the Seine.

I did not jump into the Main on that occasion, but I went to the railway station, where I might have begun. After all, I had

got the ticket, and I could have gone to the waiting-room. When at about half-past three in the morning my aching limbs were at last stretched upon a bench in the waiting-room, I thought first, I might have come here before; and, secondly, if I had not got a ticket, I would not be allowed even to be here. It then dawned upon me how incredibly selfish it is of us who, night after night, cuddle up into our beds, hug our hot-water bottles, turn out the light and just float off into the warmth of a happy slumber, not to hear the sound of those tired footsteps rattling along the empty pavements.

The sort of imagination which Mrs. Cecil Chesterton has got realized that; and she started her scheme. Already there are these flourishing houses in which not only the young women—they are young and healthy, and youth is never much of a tragedy—but the older women receive a warm welcoming hand. That is a tremendous thing, and it is something more.

I think you, Lady Simon, referred to the horror which the poor have of the institution, a blind fear of the inhuman, cold machinery, the sort of forceps of Local Authority institutionalism. If charity is to mean anything, you must have the personal touch. You must get away from the charity idea; because the moment you have this idea of charity, not only do you introduce the idea of patronage, which is a bad thing, but you also introduce the idea of humiliation, which is a very evil one. Then do not forget that touch of co-operation which you get in these Houses. From the very fact that they pay their shilling, they say: "We are concerned in this, this is a bit of ours." That is the first point. The second point is the position of the matrons, a very difficult and very responsible task; but one which must give to any woman of heart and intelligence the most extraordinary opportunities for human service. Amazing things can be done by an intelligent, self-sacrificing and sympathetic matron in helping people towards the solution of difficulties which seem at the moment quite insurmountable, and in helping these women out of morasses into which they felt it was quite inevitable that they should become involved.

I think the success of Cecil Houses does make us hope that this new scheme will be conducted upon equally sound experience, and will be carried forward with equally realistic good sense, and will be impelled towards success by equally Christian sympathy and ardour. In asking you to further this scheme, we are not asking you to further anything which is an experiment which may or may not succeed; but we are asking you to further something which has as its preliminary one of the most successful co-operative schemes in London, which will be directed, controlled and planned by a woman of very great intelligence, very great wisdom and of tremendous determination. I think if you help with this project, you will know not merely that you are giving that help in a form which relieves you for one minute of some slight want of conscience, but that you are investing in something which is going to be of great and lasting benefit to lonely people in this great and cruel city.

The Hon. Harold Nicolson, C.M.G., M.P.

"THE MOST FORLORN" . . .

Our meeting this afternoon has, I think, a special significance in the history of Cecil Houses. It links up what you and we have done, and what we hope to do. We started from very small beginnings, but have achieved something of what we originally set out to achieve. We have provided beds for the homeless, and that provision must remain the first consideration of Cecil Houses.

But the problem of homelessness changes continuously, shifting in intensity from one point to another, and I have realized—and my Committee have realized with me—that at the moment there is an almost tragic need for the establishment of homes for the women and girls working in London for a pitifully small wage—often a mere 18s. to £1 a week.

There are many most admirably run hostels in London, but these cannot and do not cater for girls and women who earn small wages. The average price for hostel accommodation is 22s. 6d. There are some five or six at 18s. 6d. but if you are only earning 18s. a week you cannot afford to pay away the whole amount.

Then again there is the question of what to do with your leisure time. You cannot go back to a wretched ill-kept little room. What remains?

There is only the park or Trafalgar Square or the café bars which are open all night. In that hunger for human contacts, that terrible emotional hunger which so preys on women and girls, many will eagerly snatch at any kind of acquaintanceship. And this so often brings with it terrible disaster.

Remember, they have not any sort or semblance of home.

I had a very tragic letter from a young thing quite recently. She was only nineteen and wrote to me in the greatest distress. The poor child was going to have a baby. She said:

"Please do not think I am very wicked. I want to tell you about it. I am 300 miles from my people and my friends, and I am so lonely. I am a daily domestic, and when I leave my place I can only go back to my little room. I know nobody to speak to, and I almost pray sometimes that I may see a face I recognize.

"And then at last I made friends with a young man. He was kind to me, and I was so afraid of losing him and finding myself completely lonely once again that I think I went mad, and I did just what he wanted me to. And now he has gone, and I am going to have a child."

Just think of that poor girl. She was in this position not out of passion, but owing to the dreadful desolation which comes because she had no human contacts, no opportunity of healthy recreation or amusement which surely should be part and parcel of young life.

I feel we often forget that girls and boys of to-day from twenty to twenty-four have a terrible inheritance. They are war babies. They were conceived in terror and begotten in fear. Their infancy was punctuated by panic-stricken flights to the nearest place of

shelter during enemy air raids. They have not the nervous stamina of us older people. They have not our steadiness of will. They fall easily into panic and get frightened, longing for something or somebody to turn to.

It was in the consciousness that youth to-day has to carry this inheritance that I felt it should be possible to start what I and others, who know the psychology of the working girl, think should be called a Residential Club. A place, in other words, where human contacts can be found, decent conditions, good food, and above all, a warm and comfortable environment materially and—if I may say so—spiritually.

It has been suggested that women are not clubable, but I have found that given certain surroundings they may become very clubable indeed. We have found that to be the case not only amongst girls but the elder women in Cecil Houses.

I remember Clemence Dane, who spent a night in one of our Houses as a lodger, said at a theatre meeting that to her it was like a club and that what astonished her so much was that a place for women, run by women, should carry on so peacefully and happily. I think that shows that at Cecil Houses women can be clubable and can develop the club spirit. And I think that if we start a Residential Club on human lines the members also will have the same outlook.

While I was thinking about the possibilities of this new venture a wonderful thing happened. We had a legacy—a legacy of £5,000. And we have had other money besides. But Major Cohen is going to talk about that. What I want to dwell on is the human side of the picture. I thought to myself that it would be rather wonderful if those women and girls in London who cannot afford to go to ordinary hostels could come to us.

I calculated that if we were very careful we could provide them with board and lodging for 14s. 6d. a week each, and at the same time be self-supporting. It may be asked how on earth are we going to do this on such a sum. My answer is that it will be accomplished through the knowledge and experience we have gained in the running of Cecil Houses.

We propose, if you agree with us and give us your help, to have accommodation for 72, not only girls—I am not going to impose an age limit—but women as well, who cannot pay the price they are charged at other hostels. It will not be a case of how much can you pay. We shall ask "how little do you earn?" because I feel that save in exceptional circumstances we should not have residents earning more than £2 a week.

I shall be able to provide good meals and sleeping quarters and what to me is quite as important—facilities for meeting friends in a homelike atmosphere. We want those young girls and women to feel that they will have a home which will show them exactly what that means, in which they will know that they are standing on their own feet and at the same time sharing a community of interests. In this home they will be able to study, make their clothes, and

above all will be able to enjoy laughter and the love of friends as only youth is able.

You may say it is a very stiff financial proposition to be able to run such a club on a self-supporting basis at 14s. 6d. a head. But we can do it in the same way that we have been able to run our entire organization—by a strict economy and organizing capacity. Our establishment charges have always been extraordinarily small.

Moreover, we still have the same devoted voluntary service. We have at least a hundred voluntary helpers who go to our Houses, make tea for the women on the night that the assistant is out and talk and laugh and play with our guests.

We shall continue the same practical administration and the same economy if we run this club as we have observed in our lodging houses.

It is difficult to estimate just how much it is going to mean to those girls and women who find themselves alone in London. You have only to go into any of our open spaces to see how terribly a club of this kind is needed. There you will find young girls from our depressed areas terribly lonely, aching to hear a familiar voice. Everything is strange to them in this big city. They have come here because things are so difficult at home. But when they have got a job they are faced with this desperate dilemma—they cannot find a decent home-from-home.

Most of our supporters and subscribers have written to me heartily endorsing the idea, but—and I say this in all earnestness and sincerity—if any of you feel that you would rather have your money ear-marked for our next lodging house we shall respect your wishes. I beg you not to think that we have come to the end of building Cecil Lodging Houses. Emphatically we have not done so, but remember that we exist for the purpose of helping the homeless, and at this immediate moment the homeless who are paid such pitiful wages seem to us most in need of our protection and our help. But if you are in doubt, I say again, the money you give us shall be reserved for the project nearest your heart—that one-night home where women can go without question.

But I am hoping that you will come with us in this our new venture which I think should achieve the success which our first has attained.

I would ask you to remember that Cecil Houses were started to help the most forlorn, those women who had lost their homes so long ago that they could not even remember them. Those women who, as Mr. Nicolson has said, walk the streets in the loneliness and silence of a great city as I walked once when I wanted to find out just what it felt like to be destitute and friendless on the street.

Those women are still our care, but at the moment it seems to us that the most in need of help are those who—hundreds of miles from friends and families—are derelict and desolate.

Will you please help us, so that Cecil Houses shall go on from meeting one social need to meeting another, always and ever ready to help the most forlorn?

Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, O.B.E.

"YOU HAVE THE MONEY"

I think, after the moving speech of Mrs. Chesterton, it is very dangerous for anybody to try and follow her because after being lifted on to the very high plane to which she has raised you it is a very hard thing to have to bring you down to earth; but I hope I shall be able to do so with as little a bump as possible.

You have heard about the scheme and know what we want. But probably you are rather wondering in a hazy sort of way how exactly you can show your willingness to help and it is my duty, perhaps, to assist you in that. You have the money and we want it, quite a lot of it. This is a new venture which—beyond the site—is going to cost us £24,500. We have a certain amount of money towards that—we have rather more than half, as we have £13,000. So we are not coming to you as beggars, but are coming to you to ask you to join us as partners in this scheme for which we want another £12,000.

I do not think we are going to get £12,000 from you to-day. Generous as you all look from up here I think probably you have not got £12,000 in your pockets. But I do think, and I have every hope, that we shall get a good proportion of that £12,000. I am hoping we shall get something like a fifth or a fourth of it. My reason for saying that is this. At the very first meeting that we had, at Sir Philip Sassoon's house, when Cecil Houses was first started, and Mrs. Chesterton was known by the fact that she had just written her book "In Darkest London," but Cecil Houses itself was a conception which no one knew anything at all about; though it was a small meeting, solely from the people there we collected twelve years ago £1,500. That was a large sum to collect from people who did not quite know what was going to be done with their money.

You, ladies and gentlemen, know very well now what is going to be done with your money. In fact you may say that you so very much approve of all we are doing that you have already given a certain amount of money and are subscribers. I think that is very true, but, after all, you are continuing year after year to pay income tax. You do not get out of that by saying you have paid last year. Look upon this in the same way as you pay your income tax. It does have this advantage, that some of you who pay large sums in income tax will be able by giving us money, treating it as a charity, to recover some of your income tax.

Well, I do not want to keep you any longer, but I just want you to think about that £12,000 and to see how you can help us to get it. But I do want you to be thoroughly satisfied that you do approve of this new Club of Mrs. Chesterton's. I am quite sure you do, but will you by a show of hands just indicate that you do approve? I think we can tell Mrs. Chesterton that this very large audience has approved of her suggestion absolutely unanimously, and they want us to go ahead.

Major J. B. Brunel Cohen.

"SAFELY ON THE LADDER"

When first Mrs. Chesterton rang me up and invited me to come along this afternoon, I had just arrived back from America and was enjoying the rest and fun of being with my small son Edward after being away from him for six months.

My first inclination was to refuse. These occasions always make me nervous for days; and then Mrs. Chesterton reminded me of the last time I made a similar appeal for the Cecil Houses. It was my maiden speech. Perhaps times were good, but anyhow we managed to collect quite a lot of money.

So this afternoon I appeal to you not to let me down, when in a few moments together with Mr. Peter Haddon we intend entirely emptying your pockets and making a large hole in your bank balance.

Last night I had a very unique experience; I went down to the Cecil House in the Waterloo Road. It was about 9 o'clock when we arrived. My brother and his wife, on their way to birthday celebrations, drove me down, and I asked them to come in with me. I think a little grudgingly they came, but their amazement and enthusiasm were such that we stayed a couple of hours community singing and talking to the various types of women, who, but for the kindness of Mrs. Chesterton would last night have been sleeping on the Embankment.

One woman whom I spoke to referred to Mrs. Chesterton as an angel. I think that really describes her, and when they knew that I was coming here to-day, they whispered to me: "say something about our Matron, Miss Wilson, and her assistant." I am only mentioning this to give you an idea of the lovely friendly atmosphere of these Houses; which now brings me to the real point of my appeal.

We have listened to many eminent speakers this afternoon, and we know the real reason for this meeting. Mrs. Chesterton's battle is half won already; she has £10,000 tied up in an old stocking, so all I want from you to-day is another £10,000 for the other stocking, and then she will part with both to build her club for these young girls.

You may wonder why she wants to build a club for girls in London. Well, I suppose most of you here to-day have homes of your own, and families and friends, but have you ever thought how very lonely a large city like ours can be? Now this club is to fill a very big gap for the working girl. I don't mean the destitute or fallen woman, but girls with a regular job of work whose homes, if they have any, are either in the provinces, or too far out to permit them living there permanently. It is for these girls Mrs. Chesterton wants to build a club. Not just a rendezvous for their leisure hours, but a real home which will make all the difference to their lives.

Where can homeless girls in London make friends? Everyone round them appears to have a life mapped out of their own, and

it is impossible to make friends. Week-ends must be a nightmare to such a girl. She leaves her work, the streets are buzzing with excitement, and like a small child suddenly let out of school, she wants to play. But what can she do, and where can she go, not knowing a soul? Remember, she hasn't money to go to the cinema or theatre, because I am speaking of the girl who earns perhaps 18s. or £1 a week. There is nothing for it but walking the streets and from sheer loneliness picking up undesirable acquaintances.

The girl from a decent home alone in London is in dire need of help, and Mrs. Chesterton is coming to her aid. She wants to establish a club where a girl can have her meals, the facilities to do her laundry, and all for 14s. 6d. a week. In addition to this companionship, someone to talk to at the end of the day; the kindly interest of the Matron in charge. I believe a monthly dance is to be arranged. The girls are to be allowed to invite their boy-friends in once a week. That, I think, is a tremendous thing. A thing which impressed me tremendously last night, was to see these elderly women enjoying a cigarette. In a great many hostels I imagine this would not be allowed, but here in the Cecil Houses they are treated like human beings, and their appreciation is something to be remembered.

Among the women last night was a very fine pianist. She played and they all sang in this very cheerful room with its orange paint and soft blue curtains.

Just picture a young girl returning home to this little social world of her own, perhaps making life-long contacts, and giving her a background that will enable her to plant her feet safely on the ladder of our very hazardous life.

Now I'm sure I've talked far too long, but I would like to say a word or two about Mr. Peter Haddon. When I spoke to him on the 'phone yesterday he was feeling very sorry for himself, and so he should, because he has come here to this meeting without food, and without even a cup of tea, or glass of water, as he has to be X-rayed immediately after he has emptied your pockets; and I think it is really noble of him to be here.

Lady (Cedric) Hardwicke.

"WILL YOU FURNISH A ROOM?"

I am not going to make a speech. As a matter of fact I do not know why I came here at all. Lady Hardwicke rang me up because I am the one person amongst her large circle of friends whom she knows as being pressed terribly for money. But I must not talk about my own creditors because Lady Simon's husband—as Chancellor of the Exchequer—is one of them. As a matter of fact, he is the fellow who heads the queue every morning outside my house. He is longing for an opportunity to put me into the Bastille of Brixton—I do hope Lady Simon will tell him that. He

is a most objectionable man. He talks about his duty to the State, but he never talks about his duty to my state, and my state is perfectly awful! As I am rather accustomed to being bullied for money I feel I am in a position to bully you. It is just a gentle way of getting my own back.

Last Tuesday I had the pleasure of lunching with Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, and she told me that she just wanted a mere sum of £24,000. Well, I ask you, what is that? It is just an ordinary fleabite. Major Cohen has just told you that overnight they have found £12,000 of it—just like that. Therefore last Tuesday I said: "All right; I will get you £24,000. Leave it to me."

Well, I come here now and I find I have only to get £12,000. Now is there anyone present who will be a sportsman and give us that £12,000? Apparently there is nobody. Is there anybody here who will give half of it? Is there anyone who will give us a twelfth of it, or even a twenty-fourth of it? That is £100. Well, we will go the other way round. Will anybody give a shilling?

Mrs. Chesterton has reminded me that you can collect from your friends if you like, and I am sure you will like.

Last Tuesday Mrs. Chesterton gave me a list of things she wanted for each room. I feel as my contribution to the effort to-day I would like to get one room furnished. I can only do that with your help.

The first item on this list is a wardrobe unit costing £8. Is there some lady or gentleman who will give us the cost of the wardrobe unit? Thank you. I have got the wardrobe unit plus £25. Thank you very much.

The next thing in this bedroom is the bed and mattress and curtain which cost £6. Would somebody kindly quickly come to my aid and give me the bed, the mattress and the curtain? Thank you. Then there is a locker per girl, and there are four girls in each room, so I am sorry to say I want another £8. Thank you so much. I have got that. The next thing is the bath fittings and plug which cost £10. Well, will you give me the plug, and do not worry about the bath for the moment. Well, I have got the promise of £50. Is not that fine? Thank you very much, but I do want my plug. I have £1 towards the plug and so I have £9 to go. Let us take the cold tap next. Will anybody offer me the cold tap? Thank you very much. I have got £3 10s. for the cold tap and £2 for the hot tap. Thank you. That is all right. Thank you very much. Next I have to have a door and the door costs £2 10s. Thank you. The next thing is a lino for the dormitory which is going to cost me £7. Will you please give me £7?

The Chairman: I may say I have just had a promise of £100.

Is not that grand? That £100 must go against the lino, but now I have to get the electric light point and fitting and then I have furnished the room. That comes to £1 15s. Thank you; we have now furnished one room for our new club.

Peter Haddon.

A DAY IN TOWN

By

WALTER DE LA MARE.

The morning hours of the May day I have in mind were spent in ease and comfort—apart from a strong disinclination to do a little “work.” My window looked out on sunlit trees in their new bright-green coats, and a field of buttercups. In the early afternoon, I set out for London, and was taken by car to a girls’ school in Clapton, there to give a reading. Rows on rows of children in *their* spring-time, who were not only delightful to look at; but listened! And how very welcome, even in private, is a listener at times.

Tea, very select and genteel, was given me by a friend in the discreet splendour of an establishment which I will refer to as the Fritz. These marble halls were not mere dreaming, either. They were cold to the touch, and the “vassals and serfs at our si-i-ide” were alive. My friend had brought me a slightly belated birthday present for an extremely belated birthday—a rose, and one of a delicious fragrance. A rose (for a sexagenarian) that was neither dream nor real, but something in between, and sweeter than either. We idly sipped, and talked and talked.

Heavy rain was falling when (with sixpence for the vassal) we retrieved our hats and coats and went out. An immense cloud of a lovely leaden grey was over the soot-dyed buildings of St. James’s Street and the charming dark-brick turrets of the old Palace at the foot of it. How drear that scene might look to unhappy eyes—how ineffably romantic it actually was. We took shelter for a while in the Burlington Arcade, its plate-glass windows crammed with expensive gew-gaws on either side of us.

About half an hour afterwards, having decided that I sadly needed food and drink, I found myself in an establishment not far away, but very much more populous and “popular” than the Fritz. There, the marble was certainly no less conspicuous, but there was plenty of brass and drum in the orchestra which discoursed sentimental and patriotic airs with the utmost spirit and abandon. I watched the rest of us, feeding like one and thoroughly enjoying ourselves; and was therefore somewhat shocked at overhearing a bald little old man with a large moustache at an adjacent table exclaim angrily to his waitress: “Dam’ fools!” His grievance, it appeared, was not that what he had ordered was wanting in any respect, but that it had been served on too small a dish. A little squabble of Man’s with Nature.

I lingered out a pleasant hour, paid my bill, and found myself on the streets again. Having little more than a hollow where a

bump of locality should be, I then asked a jovial outsize taxi-driver to deposit me at No. 34 Boswell Street. To our mutual astonishment, he had never heard of it. Nor had his neighbours: a positive affront. However, we knew it was somewhere in Holborn, and he assured me that he would find it by “a process of elimination.” Sure enough, he did. Indeed, not only did Boswell Street prove to be my old, familiar Devonshire Street, disguised under a new name, but No. 34 was where the Poetry Bookshop used to be. Vivid memories indeed *that* brought back: of a very old friend now gone, Harold Monro, his gallant enterprise, a dark old beautiful staircase, and the happy hours I had spent with him when the Readings were in full swing. A complete transmogrification had taken place. The bookshop had become the first of the Cecil Houses. This was my first visit to one of them. I had arrived at my day’s destination; and was now, for the first time, to meet Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. What, then, is a Cecil House?

Well, about eleven years ago, penniless but unafraid, and by command of her editor, Mrs. Chesterton had set out into the wilds of London to discover what happens to woman also penniless but not necessarily unafraid: particularly at night. For the next fortnight she lived as best she could on any job that turned up—selling matches (“If you *need* to sell your matches, trade is apt to be poor”), cleaning steps, washing up dishes in obscure little Soho restaurants, *etc.* She wrote a book about it all; and was then fired—not from any job—but with an IDEA, which was also an ideal. No. 34 embodies both.

All-welcoming No. 34, like the rest of the Houses, opens at eight o’clock in the evening, and shuts, not because it would but must, about 10 a.m. next day. The Matron, to whose ample hospitality I would willingly confide even the most deplorable of my secrets, showed me over it—dormitories on three floors containing some half-dozen to a dozen beds, neat as a new pin, clean as a whistle, with iron bedsteads, and to every bed a locker. The paint on the walls was an enlivening orange and a rich Devonshire cream—and although it was twelve months old, it looked brand-new. There were full-sized baths and (Victorian modesty being not wholly a thing of the past) there were also little ones, and low benches for the weary-footed. Hot water *ad lib.* There was a room for the washing of clothes, containing a great cage of wire and hot-water pipes for drying them. There was a lock-up cupboard for bags and cases. And, last, there was a gay and cheerful sitting-and-dining-room, a large fire merrily burning on its hearth, its walls hung with unframed pictures, lovely in colour and design, which London owes to the enterprise and insight of its London Passenger Transport Board. And a precious debt that is.

Not many of Mrs. Chesterton’s nightly visitors had yet arrived. It was too early. About 11 p.m. is the usual bedtime. By then the House is usually full (and the five Houses between them have over 250 beds); but late-comers are admitted if there is still any room. Here was company for the lonely, quiet, rest, shelter and

the promise of a good night for all; and if I have any inward nose for "atmosphere," then all was well at 34. I looked about at my fellow humans, every face telling something of its secret story. I positively pined to ask questions, but always find it difficult to talk in any comfort if I can be overhead. Besides—and this is one sovereign grace of the Cecil idea: "No questions are asked." Another is that, *pace* my taximan, there is no "eliminating process." And last, apart from the initial cost of the Houses, the shilling that provides all the "amenities" recorded above, together with cots for occasional babies, tea and bread-and-butter for supper, tea and bread-and-butter for breakfast, and a like welcome for all, not only pays its full quota of all running expenses, but there may be a little bit over—which accumulates as a nest egg for the House concerned. Every visitor here, then, comes on precisely the same terms as those at the Fritz. All this, I know, is old news enough—for those, at least, who have heard of these Houses. But it is intended for those who have not.

A little before ten, I said good-bye to Mrs. Chesterton, and—took another taxi, to Paddington. If at that moment we had encountered the Angel Gabriel, he would, I am certain, have smiled at one of us, and would have added for my benefit "I see you have had a good day." I certainly had. All this sounds egotistical, perhaps; but really good days with plenty of trimmings can be the reward only of many ordinary ones. They are apt to lose their novelty and glamour unless they are to some extent few and far between. And this, although nothing is ordinary if we pay due attention to it. After all, you cannot even eat the same slice of bread-and-butter twice. I have recorded it solely in order that it may be noticed that during it I was never for a moment at a loose or difficult end. If I wanted anything, I got it and paid for it. If I didn't care to walk, then I rode. There was, however, an as-yet-only-mentioned half-hour or so which was spent in the rainy, crowded streets. In this I merely loafed, watching the people, eyeing the police, gazing into the shop-windows; and I began to reflect.

For the time being, as I say, I had become a loafer. And loaf you must if, as Mr. W. H. Davies advises, you wish to find time to "stand and stare." Nevertheless, every word like loafer, when applied to those who keep moving not because they would but must—stray, tramp, vagrant, vagabond, street-walker—is the very reverse of complimentary. Whatever the reason, to be homeless is to be an outcast. Now, any acute and positive realization of this would necessitate a radical and devastating change in my circumstances. Well, I have been frequently hard up, but never positively on the rocks. I have always had somewhere where I could lay my head. But supposing that gloom over St. James's Palace had portended snow, and frost was in the air, and it was winter and nearing midnight, and, hungry, roofless and practically friendless, I had either nothing or only a few pence in my pocket. What should I have done? There are doss-houses, there is the

crypt of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, there are travelling free canteens, police stations and mortuaries; but if in this state I had done my best to get a roof over my head—I forget how many miles Mrs. Chesterton told me I should have had to walk before a workhouse finally offered me its welcome. A fortnight or so of *that* kind of loafing might very well finish me off. None the less, being a man I should have had nine chances, as compared with one if I had been a woman, of getting accommodation in one of London's public Lodging-Houses. Why? In the early days of the Cecil Houses, the powers that be gave their reasons. Mrs. Chesterton proved them false. Judging by the universal acceptance of the statement that "a boy's best friend is his mother" and the wholehearted unctious with which such melodies as "Keep the home fires burning," "She's my Sweetheart," and "Just a Song at Twilight" are declaimed at Cup Finals, most men, I assume, are, like myself, philogynists—confirmed or unregenerate. A few, I heard of one that evening in May, may invite a stray young London female to take a joy-ride, and ten miles out, perhaps, if the fare demanded is refused, may dump their cargo at the wayside. Philogynists or otherwise, there the fact is. And until Mrs. Chesterton thought things over, a homeless woman in London, of any age, and perhaps with a baby in her arms, even if she had a shilling in her pocket, would have had the slenderest chance of a night's shelter, let alone a bath, a fire, and a warm welcome. And, be it constantly remembered, whatever the kindness, counsel and consideration freely given in a Cecil House, there is nothing in the nature of what is called charity. There is no shade of any loss of self-respect.

Now Mrs. Chesterton has another idea. It is that of opening a House—a resident Home for women; it mustn't be called a Hostel because, in the North, the word is a synonym for Reformatory! For women, that is, who earn a wage, say, of twenty to thirty shillings a week, to *live* in. There is nothing of the kind in London—not, at any rate, of the kind that Mrs. Chesterton has in view. Marvellous to state, she computes that an all-in charge of 14s. 6d. a week per head will suffice. That will keep the home fires burning—as soon as the home is there. It will cost £30,000; of which £23,000 is secured.

No words could tell how priceless a blessing the Cecil Houses have been and are being to multitudes of the lonely, the jobless, the hopeless, the atrociously hard-up, the worn-out, the forsaken and the forlorn. Yet again: *No questions are asked*. Not that I would suggest that there is not great merit in any confessional, even if it be only a railway carriage, and one stranger sharing it. But there is less conspicuous merit when a night's lodging depends on it, and a censor takes the place of the priest. Yet again, there is no "eliminating process." And every guest pays her way. What, then, of this new scheme—hardly less urgent, no less practical, no less practicable? What kind of music will Mrs. Chesterton be permitted to play on this, her second string?

NOTICES FROM THE PRESS

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, author of 'I lived in a Slum,' whose name figured in the New Year Honours List, is to publish another book on a subject she knows so well through direct contact with the characters involved.

"She calls it 'Women of the London Underworld,' and describes life 'with the lid off' in the shady resorts of the City. Without mincing matters, she deals with the experiences of women and girls mixed up with jewel thieves, shop lifters, bag snatchers, motor bandits, dope merchants, dealers in all unpleasantness. Some of the girls have climbed out of the pit; others have sunk out of sight. She tells how boys and girls from all over the British Isles, newcomers to London, go to Trafalgar Square, a recognized meeting place, where they may by chance find someone from their own home town. Acquaintance made 'on The Square' may be for good, or it may be for ill.

"She attacks those clubs and café bars in London's foreign quarters where, behind a non-alcoholic and apparently innocent exterior, unspeakable things go on. And the lodging houses, crowded to suffocation, where 'it would not pay' to know the neighbours' business. Not only girls of the working classes have come within her ken. Daughters of wealthy men of rank, society butterflies, lured into hectic night life, have been 'broken on the wheel.'—*Birmingham Daily Mail*, February 5th, 1938.

"The Twickenham Sisterhood spent a very interesting afternoon on Thursday, when Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the founder of Cecil Houses for Women and Girls, paid her tenth annual visit. During that time Cecil Houses have grown from one to five, and there is need for still more.

"Mrs. Chesterton said that ten years ago, when her first house was opened, she paid a visit to the Sisterhood. It was the first women's meeting she had addressed, and she found such sympathy and generosity with her work that she looked forward to her visits and wanted them to know how the work was progressing.

"All sorts and conditions found their way each evening to Cecil Houses—match-sellers, poor old souls who sold odds and ends from door to door, young girls in ill-paid jobs—all the flotsam and jetsam of the industrial world, ill-paid and under-fed, and a never-ending stream from the country. Over 1,000 of them had been found work.

"Mrs. Chesterton told some very amusing and also pathetic incidents of the women, and said her next venture was to open a home for working girls, where they could find healthy friendships in happy surroundings at a cost within their earning capacity. She found the girls drift into wrongdoing through loneliness and a craving for companionship. The home will be called a residential club, and is well on its way to fruition.

"A collection was taken for the work, and the members responded generously."—*The Thames Valley Times*, March 2nd, 1938.

"Just over ten years ago Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the well-known journalist, authoress, and playwright, decided to find out just how the woman without a home, without a reference, without money, friends, or a decent wardrobe, manages to live. She discovered just how it feels to exist by selling matches and scrubbing doorsteps.

"I believe the main object of Mrs. Chesterton's enterprise was to provide a certain paper with copy on the subject. Now, to be someone other than yourself is not so easy as it sounds; but Mrs. Chesterton did not set about the undertaking in anything but a whole-hearted fashion.



THE CLUB ROOM—CECIL HOUSE, 179 HARROW ROAD, W.2.

"In two respects only, I understand, she 'cheated.' She was indeed penniless when she set out, but she allowed herself a raincoat and a pair of watertight shoes.

"I cannot here touch on Mrs. Chesterton's adventures as 'Annie Turner,' which she has so vividly chronicled. Neither does space permit me to quote from her conclusions to be found in 'In Darkest London.' I wish it did.

"But after the publication of her adventures men and women all over the world wrote to Mrs. Chesterton and expressed a wish to help her in her scheme for providing human places for destitute and homeless women.

"Thus the Cecil Houses, called after Mrs. Chesterton's husband, who was killed in the war, came to be founded.

"Here for the sum of a shilling a woman is provided with a night's lodging, a hot bath, hot tea and biscuits at night, and tea and bread and butter in the morning.

"She is also supplied with soap and a towel and facilities for washing clothes. Accommodation for a baby, including a cot, is provided for an additional threepence.

"An account of the Cecil Houses was given last night, at a meeting of the Leicester Association of Social Workers by Mrs. E. Gordon Phillips, who is connected with the work.

"Mrs. Phillips' address was the outcome of a suggestion made by Police Sergeant Miss de Vitre, at an informal meeting of the Social Workers' Association, for the discussion of certain gaps in Leicester's social services.

"Miss de Vitre declared that Leicester made no provision for the homeless woman, with, maybe, just a small sum at her disposal for a night's lodging, and that there was a real need for such accommodation.

"I do not think even Mrs. Chesterton herself could have given a more human, vivid, or delightful account of the Cecil Houses and the events leading up to them, than did Mrs. Gordon Phillips. The utterly unaffected and fluent talk of this charming speaker was an education in itself.

"There are now five Cecil Houses in different parts of London. Once these houses are equipped and started, they are expected to be self-supporting on the nightly shillings paid by the lodgers.

"At the same time, no one is ever turned away because the necessary shilling is not forthcoming. A few sympathisers send small sums of money to be ear-marked for the special purpose of paying for the beds of those who have not the money.

"The matrons of these houses, who, by the way, are experienced social workers, have each a small reserve fund for this purpose.

"There is one strict rule at Cecil Houses. It is that no question shall be asked of any girl or woman applying for a bed; it is sufficient that she is homeless and in need of a shelter.

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's own experiences as a homeless wanderer made her emphatic on this point. But the very fact that she is not subject to any interrogation often gives a woman the courage to confide her troubles, and the matrons are practical people, ready with wise counsel and advice, if it is asked.

"To each house is attached an honorary woman doctor, and Mrs. Phillips described the good services given by a chiropodist, who appeared to be able to doctor damaged minds as well as damaged feet.

"During the time the Cecil Houses have been open over 900 jobs have been found for women and girls from these places.

"The different kinds of 'boarders' were most sympathetically described by Mrs. Phillips. Just now the Cecil Houses are having to deal with one type for which they are not really intended.

"It is the girl who has come up to Town from one of the depressed areas to seek work.

"These girls, Mrs. Phillips pointed out, often only get 18s. to a pound a week, maybe in positions which demand that they shall look smart. The only accommodation they can hope to get within their means is a back room in a slum, shared with other girls. Mrs. Chesterton is, I understand, hoping to start a hostel for such people.

"Queen Mary is among those who have taken a keen interest in Mrs. Chesterton's scheme. Her Majesty gave £100 towards the first Cecil House, which was opened in Devonshire Street with accommodation for 44 women and two babies.

"She paid an informal visit the day before it was opened, and noticed that the matron's room still lacked an arm-chair, a point that had already been debated by the committee. Queen Mary herself presented the arm-chair."—*Leicester Mercury*, March 15th, 1938.

"Anybody wanting to give thank offering for this year's almond blossom, or finding that she has some of last year's suits and jumpers eating their heads off, might remember the Cecil Houses, for which money and gifts are urgently required. The newly published report of the Cecil Houses shows that of the public lodging-house accommodation in London only 12½ per cent is as yet available for women. The position of the woman who has no refuge is generally admitted to be a shade worse than that of a homeless man, but far more care is given to vagrant men than to women, who may be decent and hard working, and yet occasionally unable to find a lodging. For a shilling at a Cecil House a woman can get a good bed, a hot bath, tea and biscuits, and facilities for washing her clothes, and this without any questions being asked. The houses are self-supporting as far as running expenses go, but their establishment costs a lot.

"Queen Mary keeps in close touch with the wonderful work of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton in founding and running these homes, and not long ago, on a visit to the one in Boswell Street, Bloomsbury, decided that the arm-chair she presented ten years ago needed repairs, and paid for these to be done by an upholstress who was in sore need of employment. Donations should be sent to 11 Golden Square, W.1."—*The Lady*, March 31st, 1938.

"During the last ten years, the Cecil Houses have provided food and shelter for thousands of homeless and destitute women. Now, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton—their founder—and her committee are turning attention to the needs of another class—the many girls and women who have obtained employment in London with wages of a pound a week or less. In the average hostel, the charge for bed and board is 22s. 6d. to 25s., with a few at 18s. This leaves the poorly-paid workers, away from their homes, unprovided for. Mrs. Chesterton reports that there are hundreds of girls in small cinemas and cafés, half-timers in the multiple stores, work girls and junior typists who have to choose between a public lodging house or a poor room shared with three or four others, often badly furnished, with wretched beds and no proper cooking or washing accommodation. Debarred by poverty from any healthy recreation or amusement, these girls wander about the streets and the parks, and too often make undesirable acquaintances, with sometimes tragic results. Experience gained in running the Cecil Houses has convinced her that, once the cost of site, building and equipment is defrayed, it would be possible to run a self-supporting residential club for as little as 14s. 6d. a week a head. This would provide two meals daily, with full board at the week-ends and comfortable beds in curtained cubicles of four to a room.

"Mrs. Chesterton aims at creating a club that would give these workers a homelike atmosphere with kindly care and interest. It is the constant complaint of the clergy, social workers and others that girls earning less than 25s. weekly become social derelicts merely from the lack of this kind of accommodation at charges within their means. Unemployment in other parts of the country has brought a stream of women and girls to London, who are thankful to take any post as long as it is permanent. Before embarking on this enterprise, Mrs. Chesterton's committee wishes to be assured that it will have the support of friends and subscribers, and a meeting will be held in London shortly to ask for opinions. It is pointed out that this new venture will in no way affect the future of the existing Cecil

Houses scheme. But those who are in close contact with industrial life in the Metropolis know how urgent is the need for cheap residential clubs. In the meantime the good work at the five Cecil Houses continues, and, between the time they were opened, and last month, 691,338 beds and 39,403 cots have been occupied. An annual sum of £20 for a bed or £14 for a cot will entitle the donor to name a bed or cot in perpetuity."—*Birmingham Post*, March 1938.

"The more one hears and reads about the work of the Cecil Houses in London the more one appreciates the remarkable work being done. At the moment there are five of these Houses in existence, and up to the end of February the beds had been occupied on 691,338 occasions, and the cots on 39,403 occasions. For a payment of one shilling a woman can get a bed, hot bath, tea and biscuits, and facilities for washing her clothes.

"Although the organizers of the Cecil Houses are by no means satisfied that they have yet met the full need of the homeless woman, they intend without neglecting their original aim now to tackle the question of suitable and cheap accommodation for low-paid workers in London. This, at any rate, is the hope of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, and provided that the money can be raised London will have at least one 'residential club' on the lines indicated."—*Sussex Daily News*, March 22nd, 1938.

"The enterprise on which the founder of the Cecil Houses, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, wants to embark next is a residential club for girls and women earning £1 a week and under. It seems that hundreds of girls are employed in small cinemas and cafés, as half-timers in multiple stores, work girls and junior typists who do not receive more than that sum, and if they are away from their families where are they to live? The average charge for bed and board in a hostel is from 22s. 6d. to 25s. weekly. Picture their plight! From experience gained in the Cecil Houses it is calculated that, once the cost of site, building, equipment, etc., is defrayed, a self-supporting club for such workers can be run at 14s. 6d. per week each, supplying two meals a day, with full board at the week-ends, and comfortable beds—four in every room with curtains to secure privacy. A game room, a lounge, laundry and dining-room would be among the amenities provided. The woman in her own comfortable house will surely be the first to feel for the girl in steady but poorly paid employment who may become a social derelict for want of a home within her means."—*Eastern Daily Press*, March 23rd, 1938.

"Women owe much to Mrs. Cecil Chesterton for what she has done during the last eleven years in providing those in need with 'beds, comfort of soul, and warmth.' . . .

"It is interesting to find that the inevitable has happened and that, besides providing suitable sleeping accommodation for necessitous women who have nowhere else to spend the night, 'Cecil Houses are regarded more and more as the information centre for every kind of social inquiry. . . .

"The need for home-like hostels for girl workers in London has already been a subject of discussion in this paper and its urgency is beyond all question. The number of quite young girls who earn a good deal less than thirty shillings a week, and who have to find their own board and lodging as well as otherwise keep themselves, is much larger than some people guess.

"Satisfactory solution of the living problems of the small-waged 'under twenties' on a basis of happy housing and good feeding, is a matter of the greatest importance, which would contribute constructively to national welfare."—*The Star*, March 24th, 1938.

"The story of how decent lodging-houses have been provided for women in London was interestingly told to Weybridge Townswomen, at their April meeting last Thursday in the Guides' Hall.

"The speaker was Mrs. Denston Fennelle, a member of the Executive Committee of Cecil Houses. She related how these were founded as the result of a tour by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, a journalist, of London's common lodging-houses."—*Surrey Herald, April 29th, 1938.*

"The problem of the girl working in London for a very small wage, who is not living with her family and has to keep herself completely, is an acute one, for the amount required for board and lodging is almost as much as the wage itself. Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, whose work in establishing the Cecil Public Lodging Houses for Women is deservedly so well known, is now turning her attention, energy and sound business methods to this other problem.

"She hopes to establish a Residential Club for girls and women earning not more than £1 weekly, at which some seventy members can be accommodated. . . . It is to be hoped that as many people as possible will lend a hand to this practical and charitable scheme."—*The Lady, May 26th, 1938.*

"Encouraged by the success of her lodging-house scheme for homeless or stranded women, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton is now hoping to open a cheap residential club for seventy working women and girls. There are many hundreds of them, she says, earning less than £1 a week, who have to choose between a lodging-house or a shared room in a back street, because there are at present no London hostels under 18s. to 22s. 6d. a week, and probably not more than half a dozen in all London at the lower price.

"The Cecil Houses provide a bed and a morning cup of tea and biscuit for 7s. a week, and manage to be self-supporting. Mrs. Chesterton believes that for 14s. 6d. a week she can provide a girl with lodging, two meals on week-days, and full board on Sunday by running the hostel with a small staff and buying food wholesale. The hostel must be in Central London to save the girls from having to pay bus or tram fares, a big consideration to girls so poorly paid that many of them buy their clothes on the instalment plan and pay a few pence a week for a permanent wave."—*Manchester Guardian, May 30th, 1938.*

"To my regret I was unable to attend the meeting at the Gaiety Theatre this afternoon in support of a scheme I have much at heart, the inauguration of a residential club for working women and girls in London who are earning less than £1 a week. The amenities provided should open up a vista not unlike Paradise for those who have been miserable, lonely, and uncomfortable. First of its kind, the club will be under the auspices of Cecil Houses, the shilling-a-night lodging houses for women started by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, in which Queen Mary shows so warm an interest. . . . I hope funds will come rolling in, especially from women who have happy homes of their own."—*Liverpool Daily Post & Eastern Daily Press, June 1st, 1938.*

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton is one of those magnetic personalities who can enlist the sympathies of people of varying interests for any scheme she has at heart. Her work for women in London (born of her own experiences when she threw herself deliberately on the cold charity of London to gain a knowledge at first hand of the fate of the unwanted woman) has yielded the rich harvest of the Cecil Houses, offering cheer and comfort for the few coppers that women in these circumstances can afford.

"Now she and her helpers are tackling the problem of the girls in London who have to clothe and keep themselves on 18s. a week. It is not her belief that such wages must be accepted by a civilized community as fair play, but, until the wages improve, she is determined to see that the girls have some chance of living decently. The sum of £12,000 is still required for a residential club for working women and girls in London."—*Birmingham Daily Mail, June 1st, 1938.*

"It takes a good deal of courage voluntarily to give up a good home, comfortable bed, good food and hot baths to join the unfortunate band of destitutes and homeless who never know where they are going to get their next meal and night's shelter.

"But Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, a member of a famous family, but better known personally perhaps as the founder of the Cecil Houses in London, for a fortnight joined this large army of women and yesterday told the Ladies' Luncheon Club at the Grand Hotel her experiences. It was as the result of her investigations that she realized the colossal need for lodging houses for women, and since that day has founded five in London, all self-supporting.

"Many people will perhaps wonder why Mrs. Chesterton decided to live as a destitute for a fortnight. The answer is that she was a journalist on one of the Sunday papers, and wanted to write a series of articles, and suggested to her editor that she would live among them to find out their conditions. He said that she would stand it for three days, but bet her sixpence she would not remain the whole fortnight.

"But Mrs. Chesterton is the type of woman who, if she undertakes anything, carries it through. She dressed herself in old clothes and began at Euston Station. She pretended that she had arrived from Liverpool from domestic service, her employers having gone to America, and that she had lost her suit-case containing her references.

"She asked the policeman if he could direct her to a lodging-house for women, having a few coppers in her pocket. He directed her to Hackney. She arrived at the Salvation Army Hostel under the name of Annie Turner. The only question she was asked was whether she had been there before. She was given a night's lodging, and was delighted to find the water in the tap ran hot in the morning.

"She tried to find a job, but to no avail, and during her fortnight as a destitute took odd jobs of scrubbing steps, selling matches, begging and washing up in restaurants in Soho, being desperate to get enough money to buy food to eat and to earn sufficient for a night's lodging.

"The lodging-houses were equally as difficult to secure as work, and they were all on the other side of the river. When she had the money she managed to get into some of these hovels, but on every occasion except at the Salvation Army Hostel there was no hot water, the beds were uncomfortable and in many instances dirty.

"Mrs. Chesterton said that previous to her investigations she had always looked at the women selling matches in the streets and begging, and thought to herself that, at any rate, there was no need for them to look so dirty. But in those days Mrs. Chesterton said the most difficult thing for the down-and-outs was to keep clean. Even to-day there is no place in London where you can have a free wash or a bath except at the public cleansing station, where it seems one has to be verminous before having this 'luxury.'

"The speaker said that it was a fallacy to state that the majority of women came to destitution through crime or drink; in many cases it was through ill-health or ill-luck. Further, she explained how especially difficult it was for a woman to procure work.

"Further, a woman looks as she feels. In an old mackintosh, a bedraggled hat, shoes down at heel and stockings with holes in them, it is extremely difficult for her to impress anyone, whereas so often a man after a shave, a clean collar and brush-up can look quite respectable, however shabby his suit.

"One night was spent by Mrs. Chesterton in the Poor Law Institution. That, she said, was terrible. She was put through an inquisition on her arrival as to where she was born, her height, etc. She was so annoyed that she said she was born at sea, had no education, and, always desiring to be a tall woman, stated that she was 5 ft. 9 in., although I should imagine she is quite six inches shorter than that.

"But it was all put down, and she was told that she would be in 'Cell 29.' That rather frightened her, and still more when she was put into the cell, and although the door was not locked, the handle was taken off. She spent the night with that awful feeling of being shut in.

"Mrs. Chesterton carried out her bargain, wrote her articles and subsequently wrote a book on her experiences called 'In Darkest London,' but best of all realized the dire need for lodging-houses for women, and through her writings got the interest of several wealthy people who financed her first Cecil House.

"Since that day she has been able to open five of these places, which house over 260 women each night for 1s. a night. Once the initial outlay has been provided the homes are self-supporting, and for the sum of 1s. the homeless are provided with tea and bread and butter or soup, a clean bed, a bath and the wherewithal to wash their clothes.

"A new problem, however, has presented itself. There are so many girls and women in the provinces who think that London is paved with gold and jobs, and they go to the Metropolis and find themselves either destitute or able to earn only about £1 a week. There are no hostels for these girls and few clubs. Mrs. Chesterton has just launched a new scheme to provide lodgings for these girls and women at an inclusive rate of 14s. 6d. a week, which includes bed and breakfast, a meal at night and meals at the week-ends. The Hon. Harold Nicolson, M.P. for West Leicester, was on her platform at the Gaiety Theatre for her inaugural meeting."—*Leicester Evening Mail*, June 15th, 1938.

"The Cecil Houses, London, where women are able to obtain a hot bath and a comfortable bed for 1s. a night, formed the subject of an interesting address given by Mrs. Denston Fennelle at the monthly meeting of Plumpton Women's Institute, held at Laines, Plumpton, by invitation of Mrs. Churchill Hale.

"Mrs. Fennelle told how Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the authoress, was commissioned by a newspaper to find out how 'down and out' women in London's underworld lived. The facts she discovered so appalled her that she wrote a book on the subject called 'In Darkest London,' and took practical steps to provide better hostels for working women. Thus came into being the Cecil Houses, the first of which, in Devonshire Street, London, was opened in 1927. Now, added the lecturer, there were four other hostels in London. Queen Mary had visited the Houses and took a great interest in them."—*Sussex County Herald*, August 12th, 1938.

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, widow of the well-known writer and sister-in-law of the more famous Gilbert, has created for herself a lasting niche in the social life of the country for the way in which she looks after young women and girls who come to London, thinking the Metropolis is filled with jobs. Some years ago she began a personal investigation into the life lived by homeless and friendless women of London, and so startling were her revelations that many people assisted her appeal, and the Cecil Houses for homeless women were established. 'Cecil' lodgers pay a shilling a night for a friendly home, full of light and colour, hot bath, breakfast and the chance to wash and dry their clothes. There are never any vacancies. The shilling a night from five of the Houses now established produced £3,500 a year, and this sum makes them self-supporting. Help in money and in kind also came from people all over the country, until Mrs. Chesterton had an address-book of 10,000 names of people from countesses to kitchenmaids, bankers to buttonholers. Now she is about to open a new club in the West Central district, and no member will pay more than 14s. 6d. per week. For this they will get a week's accommodation, all the amenities of a home, such as bath, fire, lighting and laundry facilities, daily breakfast, meals on Saturday and Sunday, and doors will not be shut before 11.30 at night."—*Ipswich Evening Star*, December 16th, 1938.

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton is about to launch another effort on behalf of London women workers.

"This time it is her wish to help the many young girls and women employed as unskilled workers who live in dark, dingy back rooms, for which exorbitant rents are charged.

"She is opening a club in Gower Street, where 72 people will be able to enjoy good residential accommodation with facilities for baths and laundry, games and entertainment, as well as a good breakfast and dinner each day, full board at week-ends, for the modest sum of fourteen shillings and sixpence a week."—*The Star*, December 16th, 1938.

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, who, 11 years ago, set out to find how outcast women live in London, recalled some of her experiences at the ninth annual dinner of the Soroptimist Club of Leeds last night. The outcome of her inquiry was the establishment in London of five Cecil Houses, where homeless women can get a bath, bed and refreshment for 1s. a night; and no questions asked.

"As to that (writes a woman reporter) Mrs. Chesterton had a story to tell.

"I had taken over for a few minutes from matron one night when an old dear came in and asked for a bed. 'What name?' I asked. We are bound to put some sort of name down when allotting a bed. 'Greta Garbo,' was the reply. 'All right,' I said, 'Miss Garbo. Your bed's No. 35.'"

"Mrs. Chesterton said that all the Houses are self-supporting. Almost every post brings them contributions, sometimes a cheque, sometimes a few stamps from an office cleaner, or a shilling from a servant, now in a job, who once found a bed at a Cecil House.

"Last year they were left legacies of £7,000, with which she felt they should branch out in a new direction, for though a sixth Cecil House is to be established in a year or so, the need for it is not immediate.

"A far more urgent problem was that of the crowds of young girls, chiefly from the North, who kept pouring into London looking for work—cinema attendants, waitresses, half-timers in stores.

"Though unemployment in London is decreasing,' said Mrs. Chesterton, 'the wages for the unskilled are falling badly. These girls are paid about 18s. a week in jobs demanding a good appearance. When they have had their hair waved and bought themselves silk stockings, what is there left for food and lodgings? How are those girls to live?'

"Most of them had to exist in slum lodgings, where they were terribly lonely. Night after night they strolled about hoping to meet people with a Northern accent.

"Occasionally they do—decent people, too, but more often than not they form undesirable contacts.'

"There were hostels in London in plenty, but the bulk of them charged 22s. 6d. a week; others, perhaps, 18s. 6d. What good was that to a girl earning 18s. a week? Therefore, it had been decided that the legacies should be used to establish the first Cecil Residential Club in London, where a girl would be able to have a well-fitted cubicle, a very good breakfast, a good meal in the evening, and full board on Saturdays and Sundays. That would cost them 14s. 6d. a week. They would be able to entertain their boy friends every Saturday; dances would be arranged, and there would be scope for social contacts.

"I am hoping,' said Mrs. Chesterton, 'that this club will be a pioneer.'"—*Yorkshire Post*, December 1938.

"... My daughter has been offered a post in London, which she is anxious to accept, but I am worried about her going so far from home and all her friends. She is just 18, and the salary is only small to begin with,

but there are excellent prospects, so I do not want to stand in her way. If only I knew of somewhere she could live. . . .

"That's just it—somewhere she can live! Mothers are first to feel that tug of apprehension, but the problem is a hardy perennial—where is the small-wage worker to live?

"Pioneer work in housing business women was done in war-time days. A glance through any up-to-date list of hostels and clubs satisfies the casual eye that there are plenty of congenial homes from home.

"Undoubtedly the average residential club is well run and offers good value to all who are able to live there. It also bridges the gap successfully between school days or college until a girl is able to make her own circle of friends.

"But facts must be faced. Demands only increase with the years, and proportionately more women need housing at a price they can afford to pay. And there are always large numbers of just-starting-in-business girls who honestly cannot budget to usual hostel fees. What then?

"If a girl earns 20s. to 25s. a week there are startlingly few instances where she can live under 21s. a week for part board-residence and full board at week-ends. Lowest ever is 18s. 3d. weekly.

"That is why it is heartening news to hear that Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, famous founder of Cecil Houses Inc., plans her next scheme to help working girls. She takes the view that the right kind of residential club, run in the friendliest way, is likely to solve the twin problems of loneliness and lack of money.

"Work has already begun for the new Cecil Club now being erected in Gower Street, to the design of E. Maxwell Fry, the well-known architect. It will house 72 business girls in a very central position for the inclusive charge of 14s. 6d. each per week.

"This secures a cubicle bedroom, with thoughtfully designed, cheerful modern furnishings, a good breakfast and evening meal daily, and full board for week-ends.

"But that's not all. Much space is given over to club activities. There is a big lounge for reading, and a separate games-room. The girls will run their own library, with books at a penny a week. Up on the roof will be a sun terrace, with flower-gardens laid out for the summer.

"When pennies are scarce the use of a laundry-room with slot-meters for gas or electricity is a real help. With a bicycle in the shed below for week-end rides to the country, outings do not cost much, as they take their lunch with them.

"Sincere thought for their happiness and a refreshing freedom from irritating restrictions spell success from the start for this enterprise, so let us hope there will be many more like it."—*News Chronicle, December 1938.*

"Although Christmas approaches, it is easy to forget the men and women who have been broken on the wheel of fortune, for their cause is lost amid the rush of appeals from good causes which can afford to advertise. There are the women who are friendless in London this Christmas and would be homeless but for that noble inspiration of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton which brought Cecil Houses into existence.

"Queen Mary remembers them, and is sending crackers and gifts.

"All the friendless women in London who are staying in Cecil Houses this Christmas will have a real Old English dinner. About 200 will have their bed on Christmas night free, because London is deserted and stagnant that day and there is no hope of the women being able to earn the shilling for their lodging. Even a bed for Christmas is appreciated.

"Some women in the Cecil Houses love the luxury of a Christmas Day spent in bed. They are indulged."—*Bolton Evening News, December 10th, 1938.*



SORTING H.M. QUEEN MARY'S GIFTS AT THE OFFICE OF CECIL HOUSES

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, whose social work on behalf of women and girls has resulted in the establishment of a number of hostels in London, made an appeal yesterday to members of the National Trade Union Club for the extension of her work.

"Mrs. Chesterton spoke of the lonely lives of many hundreds of young girls who came to work in London from the provinces. She said that a large number of them, employed in cheap cafés, cheap cinemas, and poorly paid unskilled labour, were unable to afford to live at hostels where the charges were from 18s. 6d. to 23s. a week. She proposed, therefore, to start a residential club where for 14s. 6d. a week a girl could have a comfortable cubicle, breakfast and an evening meal, and full board on Saturdays and Sundays. . . .

"She hoped that would be the forerunner of other similar clubs which would do much to relieve the lives of lonely girls, exposed to the perils of a great city."—*The Times*, December 15th, 1938.

"Women are included in generous numbers among the hundreds honoured by the King. . . . Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, founder of public lodging-houses for homeless women, is designated an officer of the Order of the British Empire."—*New York Herald (Paris)*, January 1st, 1938.

"One of the most beloved humanitarians honoured was Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, founder of public lodging-houses for homeless women. For years Mrs. Chesterton has carried on her good work in London, a city where 18,000 persons are said to be homeless every night. Some months ago she opened a larger foundation, and her charity now has become one of London's recognized services for the poor."—*Montreal Gazette & Daily Star*, January 25th, 1938.

"LONDON, in October 1938.

"It is now five minutes to eight. It is autumn and dark, and fine rain falling. An evening much like any other in London. Flocks of women are gathered outside a grey stone building in Waterloo Road. There are women of all ages, some old, tired, and worn, and others young, pale, of about 18. The younger women talk about the day's happenings, the older ones lean up against the walls. But all of them have their eyes fixed on the closed door, all of them long for a rest after the day's wearisome work, or the even more tiring task of looking for some suitable occupation. It is eight o'clock at last! The doors are flung open to London's most hospitable home. . . .

"The homeless in London have long been a problem, not so easily solved. Even to-day there are people who do not know where to sleep when night comes. According to the authorities there is not much unemployment in London itself, but thousands of people from the Welsh mining districts come to the great Metropolis to look for employment from their homes where there has never been enough work for them all. They are solely dependent on the dole, and that does not go very far in London. It is perhaps possible to get something to eat for 6d., but to get a bed as well is almost impossible. It very often happens that the parks are largely used as sleeping-places in the daytime. But the parks are closed after dark, and the homeless are turned out into the streets. Who has not heard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, the church which is open all night long in order that the homeless may snatch a few hours' sleep? London has done something to provide cheap shelters, and there has for some time past been excellent night shelters for men.

"But the women, where are they to sleep? This question was asked by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton when she tackled the authorities on this subject

about twelve years ago. And this was the answer she obtained: 'We cannot provide homes for women: they cannot live together in peace and always create scenes and quarrel among themselves.'

'As a result of this, Mrs. Chesterton, who is a lady of tremendous energy, decided to start her own hostel movement. In March 1927 it was possible to open the first of Mrs. Chesterton's popular homes, called the Cecil Houses. To-day there are five homes of this kind, and the latest one is in Waterloo Road.

'Every woman in London who has ever had occasion to ask in despair: 'Where shall I sleep to-night?' knows what the Cecil Houses are. Some kind policeman may advise her to go to the Cecil Houses. But she may never have heard of Mrs. Chesterton except as the kind hostess of the Cecil Houses. But in large circles in England Mrs. Chesterton's books and her descriptions of the poorer parts of London are well known. These books of hers have not been the least factor in causing the social problems—and particularly the housing problem—to be investigated and solved.

'Mrs. Chesterton knows the poor of London. She has given much time to the study of their problems, in order to do which she herself has lived in slums, suffered nights of agony in fear of rats and lice, felt the damp streaming down the walls, making friends with the homeless woman in the street. She studied already existing shelters, and soon came to the conclusion that a girl earning 18s. a week has nowhere to live, if she also must eat. The same applies to the older women who depend on a small pension, and also, of course, to those women who have neither pay nor pension.

'The way Mrs. Chesterton has been able to start her five hostels and make them economically pay their own way is almost unbelievable. It costs a shilling a night to stay at the Cecil Houses, but morning and evening tea with biscuits is included in the price. Should anyone not be able to pay her shilling, she is not compelled to do so. Nearly all the great authors and actors in England are supporters of this enterprise. Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, John Drinkwater, and Hugh Walpole, to mention only a few, are supporting, or have during their lifetime supported, the Cecil Houses. Queen Mary is one of the most faithful patrons of these homes.

'The Cecil Houses can shelter nearly three hundred women, plus a few children. Each home can house fifty to sixty women. Beautiful, light, and inviting, each night at eight o'clock the Cecil Houses are ready to receive women who are in need of shelter. Shop assistants, women cinema attendants, domestic helps from houses where there is no room for them to sleep, those are the women who mostly frequent the Cecil Houses.

'Bed and tea are not the only blessings in the Cecil Houses. A hot bath is provided every night, facilities for washing clothes and ironing them. For 25 öre (3d.) a special small bed is provided for a child. Every night there is entertainment in the common room; there is a fire, tea, music, party games, and dancing. The Cecil Houses have their own doctor, and this has proved to be of the greatest importance, as so many young girls who have to work for their living do not get the medical treatment and care they ought to have. All the Cecil Houses are equipped with the very latest devices: central heating (which is not usual in London, except in the most up-to-date West End homes), a light kitchen with all the possible labour-saving devices which a Swedish housewife would think it only natural for her to have, such as hot and cold water, etc. In order to make ends meet, it has not been possible to provide everyone with a room of their own. It is necessary for several women to sleep in the same room, but they all get on well together, and no trouble, such as predicted by the authorities, has ever occurred.

'There is one thing which is not allowed in any of the Cecil Houses, and that is the cross-examination system. A woman looking for shelter is not asked how much she earns, whether she is married or single, where she has lived before, if she has ever been in gaol, and so on. She is treated exactly in the same manner as well-to-do people are treated at

their hotels; she leaves her name—and payment if she is able to do so. Because there is no need for the humiliation of cross-examination here, these hostels have proved much more popular than the majority of cheap lodging-houses. Mrs. Chesterton thought that it was quite enough for anyone not to be able to satisfy her most humble needs without having to be humiliated into the bargain.

The Office Organiser, Mrs. Gordon-Phillips, acting for Mrs. Chesterton during her absence abroad, showed me around the latest of the Cecil Houses, and she told me that 691,338 women and 39,403 children have been admitted into the hostels since they were first opened. But she also told me that the need for beds and shelter for the homeless women of London has not by any means yet been satisfied. 'As long as we have one bed left, we admit guests all night long, but very often we have to refuse applicants. To-day the authorities warmly praise Mrs. Chesterton's work.

'Of course,' Mrs. Gordon-Phillips continued, 'we have heard a lot of objections against our system of not cross-questioning the women who come to us. We have been warned that our hostels will be used partly by women who can afford to pay more than a shilling a night, and partly by so-called "bad women." We have not yet had cause to regret not taking the warning. Bad women do not like it here, and no person of better means has yet attempted to take the place of some more unfortunate person. We have also discovered that the less we ask, the more we get to know. Besides, the Cecil Houses have become a sort of social information bureau, and people also send us clothes, and if someone needs new things, we allow them to go and choose what they want among our stock. For a special reason we do not allow our guests to tidy their rooms or to make the beds. It is easier to keep the place absolutely clean through having a paid staff to do the work.'

'*Optimism and Faith.* In everything that Mrs. Chesterton has undertaken there is an undercurrent of optimism and absolute belief that it pays to be daring. I have seen the unemployed asleep in London's parks in the daytime, I have seen their faces marked with that listlessness which constant unemployment has given them, and I have seen the street girls standing everywhere both in the poorest and in the richest quarters of London. I have seen people pressing up against the walls of the largest hotels so as to get some of the warmth which penetrates to the surface from the kitchens. It is easy to give up hoping to get all these people within the friendly walls of a warm and cheery home when night falls, that it should be possible to solve the problem of the homeless in London. But Mrs. Chesterton has not harboured one moment's doubt that, should nobody else do it, she herself will build a home for all those who need a cheap home. She has also succeeded not only in being enthusiastic herself but in imparting enthusiasm to the literary and stage talents all over the country. Maybe this is because so many of these people come into close contact with want.

'Mrs. Chesterton is planning new schemes: £26,000 she hopes to collect, then she will start a 'residential club' in London. That is to say, a club where one can also get bed and certain meals. She has calculated the cost and has come to the conclusion that 14.50 kronen per week should cover bed, breakfast, supper, and three meals on Saturday and Sunday for one person. She means to equip the common rooms for dancing, party games, study, bicycle garage, etc. The club is meant to be a real home, where the young girls may receive their friends, their respective fiancés, etc. There is no doubt that the club will be immensely popular with young girls all over London. Mrs. Chesterton is also an expert on interior decoration, and in particular is she at home on the question of kitchen equipment. A Swedish Aga oven will be installed in the new club's kitchen. Some of the welfare and prosperity of Sweden will thus come to the bravely working but poorly paid shop assistants and cinema attendants in London.'—*La Petite, October 1938.*

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED). Balance Sheet as at 31st December, 1938

LIABILITIES			£	s. d.	£	s. d.	ASSETS			£	s. d.	£	s. d.
SUNDRY CREDITORS	...	...	206	4 11			CASH AT BANK ON DEPOSIT	...	...	3,199	15 10		
ACCRUED CHARGES	...	...	65	11 2			CURRENT ACCOUNT	...	...	365	18 8		
					271	16 1						3,565	14 6
SPECIAL DONATION, as per last Account :							POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK	...	...			4,194	9 4
As per Contra (War Loan)	...	...			1,000	0 0	CASH IN HAND	...	...			3	8 3
SPECIFIC DONATIONS :							INVESTMENTS AT COST :						
As per last Account	...	...	168	18 10			£2,100 3½% War Loan	...	...	2,150	4 9		
Received during year	...	...	346	14 9			£1,000 3½% War Loan (Special, as per Contra)	...	...	1,000	0 0		
							(Market value, £3,030 5s. 0d.)					3,150	4 9
Less Expenditure for year	...	...	515	13 7			War Savings Certificates, as at 1st January, 1938	...	...	379	3 4		
			309	17 9			Interest accrued due for year	...	...	6	5 0		
					205	15 10						385	8 4
SKIRROW ENDOWMENT FUND AT KENSAL ROAD	...	...			600	0 0	SUNDRY DEBTORS AND PAYMENTS IN ADVANCE	...	...			204	13 11
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT :							PROPERTY ACCOUNT AT COST, LESS DEPRECIATION :						
Balance, 1st January, 1938	...	...	3,180	1 1			Boswell Street (formerly Devonshire Street)	...	...	7,682	3 1		
Add—							Wharfdale Road	...	...	972	18 0		
Boswell Street	...	...	101	5 3			Kensal Road	...	...	1,314	0 0		
Wharfdale Road	...	...	42	18 2			Harrow Road	...	...	2,259	18 0		
Kensal Road	...	...	5	16 3			Waterloo Road	...	...	5,151	13 6		
Harrow Road	...	...	5	15 9								17,380	12 7
Waterloo Road	...	...	10	5 3									
					3,346	1 9	ADDITIONS :						
CAPITAL ACCOUNT :							Boswell Street	...	...	46	12 8		
Balance as per last Account	...	...	30,354	13 10			Wharfdale Road	...	...	15	0 0		
Add—							Kensal Road	...	...	105	2 0		
Excess of Income over Expenditure for year ended 31st December, 1938...	...	...	2,710	7 9								17,547	7 3
					33,065	1 7	Less Depreciation, 10%	...	...	1,754	14 8		
												15,792	12 7
							GOWER STREET CLUB. Expenditure to date	...	...			8,476	2 2
							FURNITURE, FITTINGS AND EQUIPMENT :						
							As per last Account	...	...	2,804	0 0		
							Additions	...	...	167	5 7		
												2,971	5 7
							Less Depreciation, 10%	...	...	297	2 6		
												2,674	3 1
							STOCK OF BOOKS AT COST	...	...			41	18 4
												£38,488	15 3

TO THE MEMBERS OF CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).

We have examined the above Balance Sheet dated 31st December, 1938, and Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended the same date, and have obtained all the information and explanations we have required.

In our opinion, the above Balance Sheet is properly drawn up so as to exhibit a true and correct view of the state of the Association's affairs, according to the best of our information and the explanations given to us and as shown by the Books of the Association.

Dated this 2nd day of March, 1939

ELDON STREET HOUSE, ELDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

BAKER SUTTON & CO., Chartered Accountants

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED)
MAIN ACCOUNT

Income and Expenditure Account, for the year ended 31st December, 1938.

To—	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	By—	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES :					Donations	1,001	13 9		
Salaries and Insurance	687	11 11			Annual Donations	891	0 10		
Printing and Stationery	67	6 6			Collection Boxes	36	14 8		
Travelling Expenses	30	3 10			Discount	9	10 10		
Postage	62	1 3						1,939	0 1
Telephone	35	5 3			Subscriptions			1,283	19 6
Light and Fuel	30	5 1			Legacies			2,857	13 7
Insurance	4	8 6			Interest on Investments, Post Office Savings Bank, Current and Deposit Accounts			191	13 4
Rent	220	0 0							
Cleaning	24	19 3							
Advertising	1	7 6							
Carriage on Parcels	8	0 11							
Audit Fees	15	15 0							
General Charges	31	3 6							
			1,218	8 6					
Cost of Annual Report			177	18 2					
Cost of Theatre Meeting			113	14 11					
DEPRECIATION :									
Amount written off Properties, 10%			1,754	14 8					
Amount written off Furniture, etc. 10%			297	2 6					
BALANCE :									
Being excess of Income over Expenditure for the year, transferred to Balance Sheet...			2,710	7 9					
			£6,272	6 6				£6,272	6 6

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).

Income and Expenditure Accounts for the year ended 31st December, 1938.

EXPENDITURE

	Boswell Street.	Wharfdale Road.	Kensal Road.	Harrow Road.	Waterloo Road.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
To Salaries and Insurance	345 7 0	414 16 0	230 2 7	378 8 8	340 4 1
„ Relief Duty	19 13 2	21 15 1	14 5 10	10 17 4	23 1 11
„ Stationery	2 11	7 3	5 9	3 3	2 0
„ Postage	10 0	15 0	10 0	14 0	10 0
„ Telephone	11 13 9	11 1 2	11 13 3	13 3 3	13 0 1
„ Gas... ..	13 15 4	9 9 10	15 2 10	15 13 0	17 2 3
„ Electricity	45 4 7	23 11 11	30 4 10	24 2 8	25 16 8
„ Insurance	13 15 9	13 17 1	15 6 4	18 14 11	14 11 11
„ Cleaning	14 14 5	24 6 5	14 1 8	19 3 6	15 7 2
„ Repairs	21 18 3	62 16 0	25 10 6	80 10 0	95 17 0
„ Replacements	11 1 6	55 2 3	12 9 4	23 3 9	10 18 9
„ Laundry	34 15 1	52 12 3	32 18 7	55 3 8	37 14 5
„ Coal and Coke	34 14 2	31 9 3	16 8 7	41 9 6	28 19 5
„ General Rate	98 7 0	78 15 6	45 1 2	110 8 0	96 6 0
„ Water Rate	10 19 4	14 2 0	10 5 10	16 12 5	17 14 7
„ Travelling Expenses	10 2	1 2 6	1 3 4	2 3 0	9 0
„ Milk	14 1 2	14 19 1	10 0 10	12 14 1	17 18 10
„ Bread	7 19 3	11 18 0	7 8 9	6 19 8	12 0 0
„ Provisions	30 14 9	41 10 5	24 11 4	29 18 9	35 12 9
„ General Charges	3 14 1	6 14 1	5 8 5	2 1 11	5 0 5
„ Excess of Income over Expenditure	101 5 3	42 18 2	5 16 3	5 15 9	10 5 3
£	834 16 11	933 19 3	528 16 0	868 1 1	818 12 6

INCOME

	Boswell Street.	Wharfdale Road.	Kensal Road.	Harrow Road.	Waterloo Road.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
By Revenue from Beds and cots	788 6 0	883 6 9	449 17 0	765 15 3	793 7 0
„ Endowments	18 8 0	15 15 6	66 4 0	94 9 0	20 0 0
„ Interest :					
War Loan	19 5 0	24 10 0	8 15 0	3 10 0	—
War Savings	—	2 10 0	—	8 4	3 6 8
Post Office	8 17 11	7 17 0	4 0 0	3 18 6	1 18 10
£	834 16 11	933 19 3	528 16 0	868 1 1	818 12 6

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